14 Days and 14 Nights

by Bonniebird17

Summary

The boat was going on full speed, sailing further and further away from land. If she had known, Claire would never have boarded the boat in the first place. This was Geillis fault.

Royal MS.

A Singles cruise.

Who finds love in Fourteen days? No one. Or do they?

Notes

This was just a fun story I wrote to get out of my writers block. I needed something new and light so this is was happened. A modern au, where two strangers met in the most unexpected way.

Enjoy and please leave some feedback.
Day 1

Chapter Notes

The funniest, kindest and most lovely person @abbydebeaubreposts took the time to beta the entire story. So it’s now updated.

Day 1.

The boat was going on full speed, sailing further and further away from land. If she had known, Claire wouldn’t have boarded the boat in the first place. This was Geillis’s fault.

Royal MS.

A Singles cruise.

Claire scolded herself, she had been an easy target. She had worked too many shifts lately and was barely keeping her eyes open as she dragged herself home from the hospital and when her dear and loving friend suggested a cruise vacation, it sounded glorious.

Caribbean. Warm weather and alcohol.

“Why did you lie?”

“Claire, ye haven’t dated in years.” Geillis said and handed her the key card to her room. “Not since.”

“So?” She interrupted her. “Isn’t that my choice?”

“Why are ye upset?”

“Because you tricked me.”

“Oh, I’m sorry. Five different beautiful exotic islands is such a horrible lie.”

“You know what I mean,” Claire waved the cruise brochure in her face. “This is ridiculous.”

“Stop being such a bore. Who knows, ye may find the love of your life here.”

Claire rolled her eyes and read the event schedule again.

Day 1 - Speed dating. 2PM

“I just wanted to relax, read a book and enjoy the the sun.”

“Ye can still do that. It’s not that bad, just try it. Please.”

“Fine.” Claire sighed. “I guess I should be grateful that you booked separate rooms.”
“Aye, I’m planning on falling in love, once a day.”

“Fourteen men?”

“Well, I’d have hoped you’d be counting on falling at least four times.”

Maybe she was overreacting. Claire couldn’t help but laugh. She silently shook her head and she gave up. It didn’t hurt to try to have good time, just because she was attending this ridiculous singles thingy, didn’t mean she needed to actually find anyone. Just mingle and drink. The rest of the days would be full of sun and food, just her and her books.

“How about we sleep a few hours? The first event isn’t until four hours.”

They had flown from London - Miami. The time difference was already taking its toll. Claire couldn’t sleep on the plane, Geillis’s idea sounded great. The only good thing she’d said in hours.

“I haven’t even packed anything fancy.” Claire realized. “I need to go shopping or something.”

“Dinna fash, my friend.” Geillis winked at her. “I packed some extra dresses and even some pretty lingerie for ye.”

“You are hopeless.”

“Or, a hopelessly disguised love guru.”

“See you in a few hours, guru.”

They had paid a lot of money for this trip and Claire felt rewarded when she walked into her room. It was perfect and quite large-- larger than she’d thought. - Geillis probably upgraded them to suites.

When Claire stepped out on the balcony, she took a deep breathe and just instantly relaxed. All her worries and troubles flew away at the sight of the ocean. Maybe this could be life altering after all?

1.58PM

A few hours rest had been exactly what Claire needed. She tried to ignore Geillis’s over-excited cheers as they walked from their rooms to the big hall where this speed dating event was held.

The ship was massive. For a floating orgie boat, as Claire had begun to call it, it was quite impressive and luxurious. It was definitely living up to its name - Royal MS.

The first thing they had to do was to fill out a form, full of way too many personal questions about their jobs, hobbies, interest and so on.

Claire was a general surgeon, she didn’t have time for hobbies, but she did enjoy books and music. She felt ridiculous scribbling down the details of her life; but most of all, this whole thing reminded her of how dull and boring she actually was. This wasn’t her. She had been fun once, but somewhere along the way, she had lost herself and been so heartbroken that she had buried herself in work, work and more work.

The big room was already set up with multiple small tables with two chairs. It was over decorated
with red, flowers and hearts. It was too much.

Hundreds of people, all dying for a spark, desperately seeking love. Claire thought and looked down on her name tag. She rolled her eyes and sighed - she was one of them.

What caught her eye was the big group of men in the corner, they were all wearing colorful kilts - Scots. Or so she thought based on their loud and cheerful accents.

“Maybe ye will feel more as home if you land a Scotsman.”

“I’m not moving to Scotland, Geillis.” Claire replied dryly. “I turned that fellowship down, remember?”

“Sorry, no work talk, then. But that tall ginger is looking hot as hell.”

Claire turned around and searched the group, she felt stupid, she had already noticed him. Sure, his tall and broad figure stood out but that wasn’t what had gotten her attention before, it was his long, red hair. He matched the room even.

“Whatever.” Claire said, nonchalantly. “What table number do you have?”

“Four. How about ye?”

“Ten.”

It was simple. The women got a table each and the men were supposed to circulate from table to table. A two- minute mingle and then they moved on to the next as they made their way around the room.

_I can do that._

But Claire quickly changed her mind after twenty minutes. She eyed her friend, Geillis was loving the attention but she, herself, had trouble making small talk and trying to get to know anyone with the knowledge that the damned bell was going to ring any second. It didn’t help that her first few introductions weren’t men she had anything in common with, and one of them was just an asshole.

Pling.

“Gentlemen’s, times up, please move to the table on your left.” The hostess said.

Jake, the previous man she just had talked to, slipped her his room number before he left and Claire wanted to throw up. He was obviously married, not only did he forget to take off his ring, but the man actually thought adultery was sexy. 120 seconds she was never getting back.

“Hey.” The tall, red headed Scotsman sat down by her table. His eyes matched her view earlier today, blue as the ocean. “My name is James Fraser.”

_Shit._

_Talk dammit._

“Ehm, Claire Beauchamp.”

“Nice to meet ye. We have one minute and thirty seconds left. Tell me something about yerself.”

“I’m a doctor, I have a photographic memory and I like to read.”
Bloody hell.

Claire cringed at herself, she sounded so stiff and boring. But James continued to smile at her.

“I own a riding school, it’s not as fancy as it sounds but I love it. Horses are my true passion and the joy of teaching kids, it’s breathtaking. Other than that, I love adventures, hiking and skydiving.”

“That sounds, lovely.”

“Aye, ’tis. But hey, a Doctor that’s impressive. Where do ye live?”

“London. And you?”

“Can’t ye tell?” James smirked and she looked at down at his kilt.

“Scotland I presume?”

“Aye.”

“And why are you here?”

“Would ye laugh if I said, love?”

“Probably.”

“How about ye?”

“I was tricked. I never would have come if I knew.”

“Why?”

“Isn’t this silly?”

“Ye say to the man who voluntarily came here.”

“Oh, right. I’m sorry.”

Pling.

No. No. Not yet.

“Let’s make a deal.” James said as he stood up from the chair. “Yer cynicism is fascinating and I’m up for a challenge. I’m going to find ye love.”

“What’s the deal?”

“If I win, at the end of this trip, the very last day. Ye need to publicly and very loudly announce yer undying love to the lucky man, in front of the entire boat.”

“And if I should win?”

“I will pay this whole vacation. Every single cent ye have payed to be here.”

“That’s insane.”

James stared at her and the intensity almost made her blush. It was a ridiculous bet but Claire was
sure she wouldn’t find love here.

“Either way, ye are the winner.”

The next man in line for the speed mingle stood impatiently next to James but he still didn’t move. He waited for her to answer.

“Deal.”
Day 2

Chapter Notes

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Day 2.

What are the odds? That out of who knows how many men, she actually found four men she liked yesterday.

*James Fraser - The horse whisperer.*

*Joe Abernathy - The Doctor.*

*Thomas Christie - The teacher.*

*Leo Olsen - the carefree surfer.*

Two scots, one American and one Australian.

This cruise was definitely getting far more interesting but, Claire knew it was only pleasure not love. Her bet with the charming James Fraser was already won - a free vacation.

But it was confusing, Claire didn’t really know what he had meant when he said he’d be - finding her love. Did James mean he would be her wingman? Or was she supposed to fall in love with him?

Both options were okey with her. Not the love part, just the James part.

Enjoying her vacation, Claire laid on deck in her bikini, in the sun, relaxing and finally reading the novel she had been dying to re-read for weeks - Forbidden Fruits. An erotica romance novel written by her favorite author- Mary Hawkins.

Claire was already deep in her own world when suddenly the sun disappeared and was replaced by a big shadow.

Surprised, she looked up and saw James.

“Is this seat taken?” He asked and pointed to the chair next to her.

Claire felt dumbstruck and just stared at him. His red chest hair was glowing, his six pack was mesmerizing and his eyes bore into hers.

“I’ll take that as a no.” He replied to his own question and sat down.
He was holding a book, a little detail Claire had missed because she was too busy, looking at him as if he was a piece of meat. But in her defense - his naked chest was very distracting.

Get a grip, Beauchamp.

“How was yesterday?” Claire finally asked. “Did you find the love of your life?”

“Time will tell.” James smiled at her. “And ye? I saw that ye were enjoying some of the gentlemen after me.”

“Ehm, well I wouldn’t say that I’m falling in love but it was kind of fun.” Claire replied. “Just curious, is Thomas Christie a friend of yours?”

“Not a close one, but he is part of my little group.”

Claire could hear the sudden bitterness in James voice and she was curious of why.

“How many are you?”

“Ten men.”

“That’s a lot.”

“Aye.”

“You are all seemingly attractive men, what happened? Did the women disappear from Scotland?”

Bloody hell. Seemingly attractive men? What?

“Just not found the right lass.”

James opened up his book and started reading. Claire found it strange with the sudden stop of their conversation but she did the same and continued with her own book.

James’ presence was peaceful and easy. They were strangers, but it was like they were old friends just enjoying the silence.

“Forbidden Fruit.” James suddenly said. “What’s it’s about?”

Claire started blushing immediately and she thanked the sun and her sensitive skin, it was the perfect lie if he had noticed. She put the down the book and looked at him.

The book was her guilty pleasure - fantasyland filled with hot erotica. Sex, sex and some more sex.

“It's about a British woman called Alexandra, living in the 18th century. Her family is very conservative and wealthy and she is supposed to marry a man called Ronald, an older gentleman who matches her family standards.”

“Let me guess, she is in love with the handsome stable boy.” He interrupted her.

“Something like that.” Claire answered. “Leroy is a farmer.”

“And who are ye rooting for?”

“Both Ronald and Leroy are enjoyably characters.”

“Isn’t the whole point with those kind of books, that one man is bad and the other one is good?
That the reader are supposed to fall in love with the good one straight away?"

“Probably depends on the reader.” Claire answered.

*Oh god, I really am cynical.*

“Let me know when ye have decided.”

“I have already read it before.” Claire admitted.

“Ye have? Why are ye reading it again?”

“It’s my favorite.”

“So ye have read it before and still, don’t prefer one man over the other?”

“Alexandra loves both of them. It’s different each time I read it.”

“I see.” James looked at her, the same way he had yesterday when he told her about the bet. It was

a childishness in his eyes. “How about we swap books?”

“What are you reading?”

“The Black Stallion.”

“Right, you like horses.”

“Not Just horses. It’s filled with action, cowboys and other dramatic events. I’m sure you will like

it.”

“Alright.”

Claire handed him her book and their fingers brushed against each other, just for a second, time

stood still and her heart was beating frantically, echoing loudly in her ears.

And just like that, the strange moment was over.

“Are ye excited for today’s event?” James asked and looked at the cover of her book.

**Day 2: Dance class. 8PM**

“Actually, I am!”

“Oh.” Jamie sounded surprise by her enthusiasm. “Well, that’s the spirit. Does the doctor know

how to dance?”

“No, I just really like to dance. Simple as that.”

“I like simple.”

“How about you?”

“What?”

“Do you know how to dance?”

“Do the steps to Thriller count?”
Claire laughed out loud.

“It definitely counts and I desperately need to see that.”

“Buy me three drinks,” James winked at her, or at least she thought that was what he was doing. “and maybe I’ll show ye.”

“Are you flirting with me, Mr. Fraser?”

“Depends.”

“On what?”

“Did ye check me out when I came?”

“No, of course not.” Claire lied and started blushing again.

“Well, then no. I’m not flirting with ye. Dr. Beauchamp.”

Disappointment.

8.00PM

Geillis had been preoccupied the whole day with a Spanish gentlemen she had met yesterday at the speed dating event. His name was Carlos and Geillis told her that he owned a small restaurant in Torrevieja. Apparently he had invited both of them to visit if they wanted and Geillis really, really wanted to.

Their dinner had been cozy, just the two of them and Claire felt a bit tipsy from the sangrias they had ordered and she was excited for the dance event, even if she was a little worried.

“I hope ye have yer dance shoes on,” Geillis said. “Because we are not leaving the dance floor until our feet are bleeding.”

The brochure didn’t say anything except dancing. No dress code or anything. That was what she was worried about, she had borrowed another dress from Geillis. A black, short and very sexy dress that she already regretted.

It was a shame, that her self esteem were so low, but that was Frank’s fault. Because of him, Claire probably always would feel - less.

“I wonder if Carlos is a good dancer.” Geillis said, dreamy, as they walked into the same big hall where the event was held again.

This time the big room wasn't decorated in red or silky hearts but with a darker theme. The lights were dimmed, all those tables were gone - just a huge dancefloor. Claire could swear the room even felt hotter, like they purposely had turned the heat up, or was it the sangria?

All the singles were all waiting for the event to start.

Claire felt ridiculous but the first thing she did was search the crowd for James. They had talk, what? Maybe two times and he had already infected her mind - like constantly.

But he was nowhere to be found.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” The hostess said, standing on the stage. “After your speed dating
experience yesterday, I hope you found someone that interested you. Today, the tables has turned and it is the ladies turn to move around the room.”

Claire rolled her eyes, this felt like a high school prom thing.

“We have eight songs, so that means you have an opportunity to dance with different partners. Choose wisely, ladies. The partner you enjoy the most will be your date on tomorrow’s event.”

All the women acted like bloody animals, even Geillis was quick to run over to Carlos while Claire stayed where she stood - searching.

The one she really wanted to dance with was still nowhere in sight.

Her second choice was Thomas Christie and to her delight he wasn’t taken.

“Hi.” Claire felt stupid when she walked over to Thomas. “Care to dance?”

“I was scared ye wouldn’t ask.” Thomas replied. “I hope ye dinna mind that I have two left feet.”

“No worries.” Claire smiled. “I’ll try to not step on them.”

The music was slow and Thomas was a better dancer than he had led on. They swayed back and forth in the crowded dance floor. Everyone seemed to be enjoying themselves and so was Claire. It was easy and fun.

They didn’t talk much, but Thomas whispered softly in her ear that she looked beautiful.

“Ladies,” The hostess said and the song ended. “Please thank your partner for the dances and move on the your next choice.”

Claire looked at Thomas.

“Thank you for the dance.”

“I hope I didn’t injure ye.” Thomas joked. “But thank ye, for picking me first.”

Once more, Claire looked for James and found him on the other side of the room - already occupied.

Damn it.

Her next choice would be Joe Abernathy and he was hiding next to the stage, she quickly walked over to him.

“Don’t you like to dance?” Claire asked.

“Is it that obvious?” Joe answered and took a sip of his drink.

“I almost didn’t find you, so I would say yes. Why are you hiding over here?”

“Would you believe me if I said that my ex-wife is here?”

“She is?”

Joe nodded and pointed to a gorgeous woman on the dance floor, she was looking back at them - she didn’t look happy at all.
“Gayle.” Joe said. “What are the odds.”

“When did you guys get divorced?”

“Two years ago, she left me.”

“I guess you don’t want to dance?”

“With you, I will.”

Claire reached out her hand and Joe took it. She guided him to the dance floor - far away from his ex-wife.

This song was still slow, but nevertheless different- as were Joe.

“Do you still love her?” Claire finally asked.

“Yes.”

“Why did you split?”

“As a fellow doctor, you of all people would understand.” Joes said, low. “I worked too much. Neglected her.”

“Why did you come here?”

“Win her back.”

Claire stopped dancing and smiled at him.

“Then, why are you dancing with me? Go get your wife.”

“She won’t have me.”

“I promise, Gayle hasn’t let you out of her sight since we started dancing.”

“Do you really think so?”

“I do.” Claire smiled again. “Now, March over there and dance with her. That’s an order.”

“How about you? This doesn’t feel right.”

“Invite me when you get married again.”

“Deal.”

Joe walked away from her and she looked at him as he politely interrupted Gayle's dance. They started arguing but it quickly resolved into kissing and Claire couldn’t stop smiling.

Maybe love was possible for some.

Claire walked over to the side and watched everyone dance. Geillis was still dancing with Carlos - she never was one to obey the rules.

This wasn’t as ridiculous as she had thought, Claire was actually enjoying herself.

James’ head was towering over everyone else, he wasn’t hard to find and Claire felt envious of the
woman he was dancing with - A petite, blond woman who was very comfortable in his embrace.

As Claire looked at him, his eyes found hers. Just for a second, their eyes locked before she looked away with embarrassment. She felt caught.

But Claire wasn’t the only one eyeing James and she wasn’t surprised that every woman in this room seemed to pay attention to him. He was beautiful, not for the obvious reasons- his body - but everything about him was radiating beauty.

*What is he doing to me?*

But that was attraction, not love, she reminded herself.

The song ended.

The whole night, Claire had wanted to dance with James but looking around, the chance of that happening was minimal given the pack of women surrounding him.

*Who am I kidding?*

Maybe it was her low self esteem - that little, annoying voice in her head that was putting her down - that made her give up before it even began. Claire walked over to the last man she had on her list - Leo Olsen. The Australian.

“Mr Olsen, may I have this dance?”

“Sure thing, doc.” Leo replied and took her hand.

They walked to the dancefloor and the song started. It was faster and more upbeat.

It was fun, Leo was a jokester - he couldn’t dance to save his life - but he really made Claire laugh with his silly John Travolta impressions.

**23PM**

Claire never got to dance with James and that was okey. When she thought of it, he clearly wasn’t into her anyway, if he had been, she would have noticed it. He seemed to be very pleased with the beautiful blondes he was dancing with anyway, she clearly wasn’t his type.

It was only a bet.

When the event was over and the vacation was back on track. Claire, Geillis and Carlos walked to the front of the boat - the nightclub.

The music was louder there and the DJ was playing more “modern songs” and here - Everyone was allowed to dance to whoever and whenever.

Claire felt warm and relaxed when she danced next to Geillis and Carlos, she didn’t care that she was technically dancing all alone, she was free from thoughts and troubles.

The two shots they had taken earlier was started to loosen her up.

Claire reached her hand up and released her hair from the ribbon. Her brown, long curls fell down and they bounced back and forth as she shook her head.

*“And it's hard to dance with a devil on your back. So shake him off, oh whoa...”* Blasted out
from the speakers. “So shake him off, oh whoa.”

And Claire did. She shook her head and body. She continued to dance like there was no tomorrow.

You don’t need company to have fun. Claire reminded herself.

“It's always darkest before the dawn..”

When the song ended, Claire was breathlessly laughing to herself when she noticed him - James. Standing alone, leaning against the wall, looking at her.

Or was he?

Claire was enjoying herself, too much to even care to be embarrassed if he had, she was on vacation, single and carefree. Who cared if she couldn’t dance, or if he had been looking? The next song started and she continued to dance.

Geillis and Carlos was in their own world.

“Yeah yeah yeah” Rihanna’s voice started singing and Claire tried to sing along. “Cheers to the freakin' weekend. I drink to that, yeah yeah. Oh let the Jameson sink in.”

Suddenly, James started walking towards her. Claire didn’t dare to stop moving, she couldn’t let him know how much he affected her.

James mouth opened but the music was, too loud for her to hear what he was saying. She nervously smiled at him and he started laughing.

He was clearly not a dancer either but he slowly started dancing next to her.

Each song seemed to become louder and faster.

Together they danced next to each other - moving closer and closer.

Claire had no idea how it happened, maybe it was her or him, but finally, they stood flushed, dancing close together.

She was hot and sweaty.

James’s smile was contagious.

Their bodies moved together.
Day 3.

Chapter Notes

My wonderful friend @e_storm and @abbydebeaubreposts beta this chapter.

Day 3.

Claire smiled when she woke up. The day before was still in her head and she had probably dreamt about it too. That’s how bloody amazing yesterday was.

Unfortunately, there was no kissing involved, but there was dancing. Oh how perfectly they fit together when they danced.

James.

That man was something else.

He must have felt it, the electricity sparking between them. It was raw, hot, and passionate.

Bloody hell, it felt like freaking Dirty Dancing between them.

Maybe it was her nerves or the fact that he didn’t initiated a kiss, but oh how she wanted him to. They were so close, his body against hers.

Claire closed her eyes again.

She felt alive.

———

The Black Stallion.

The wind was warm and the sun was burning his face, but Robert didn’t care as he rode the Black Stallion through the Sahara Desert.

The race was almost over, and there was just one contestant before him - the mysterious horse rider that had appeared out of nowhere. He was wearing a black mask covering his face leaving only his eyes visible, but Robert never really saw him. The man rode like he was chased by the devil on his beautiful white mare.

When the finish line was in sights, Robert ushered his horse to go faster. He couldn’t lose - his life depended on it.

Come on.

Robert started panicking, he was so close. He was riding side by side with the other horseman- just minutes away from finally finishing the race.
A whistle caught his attention and Robert looked to his left. It was the rider next to him, he— wait, no it was a she. The rider had removed the mask - revealing the face of the sultan's daughter, Rosa.

The shock made him lose his concentration altogether. Rose smiled and took advantage of the situation.

It was just a matter of seconds, but Rosa beat him.

She won.

And now he needed to pay the ultimate price.

“Claire.”

Geillis’s voice brought her back to reality. She had been reading for hours, or so it had felt. She was dying to know what was going to happen to the cowboy, Robert White.

“Good morning.”

“IT’s after lunch,” Geillis replied, irritated. “Ye forgot me and I have been looking for ye like crazy.”

“I’m sorry, but you couldn’t have looked that hard.” Claire laughed. “I have been here all along”

“Still. I had to eat alone with Carlos.”

“You like Carlos. Could it have been that terrible?”

“Ah, he is just so clingy. I’m over him.”

“Already?”

“Aye. Claire, we are on a love cruise. I want to enjoy the buffet, ye ken.”

“Sure. You have tried the sangria and now you are ready for, what? Beer?”

“Or champagne, I dinna ken yet. Tonight will definitely be interesting.”

“Why?”

“It’s date night special!”

**Day 3. Surprise date.**

“But you only danced with Carlos!”

“So? I need to get rid of him and find myself someone else.”

Claire only shook her head and looked at her friend. She was already looking for her next prey.

“Speaking of, did ye bang the hot ginger?”

“What? No.”
“Why?”

“We only danced, nothing else happened.”

“How is that possible? Christ, ye both looked so hot and bothered that I almost came just from looking at ye.”

“Shut up.”

“What? It’s true. If ye don’t want him, I’ll happily take him.”

When Geillis left to take swim, Claire continued to read James book. It was exciting and she wondered if the cowboy was going to fall in love with the sultan's daughter.

“There ye are.” A Scottish voice, once more, interrupted her thoughts. But it was a male voice this time.

*Now what?*

“Thomas.” Claire closed her book. “Have you been looking for me?”

*Not the first one today.*

“Aye.” Thomas looked nervous “I dinna want to be too bold. But have ye decided who yer taking to the surprise date tonight?”

“No, or I mean, maybe-- but I thought I had time left to choose?”

“Oh aye, ye do. I just really enjoyed yer company yesterday and all of my boys were bragging about their dates and, I don’t know, I just wanted to...”

“You just wanted to what?”

Claire didn’t find his approach very complimentary, and she was disappointed that he was asking because “all of his boys” were taken.

That meant James was taken.

“I’m not very good at this, am I?”

“No,” Claire admitted. “It feels like you are afraid to be the only one without date.”

“It’s not like that, I promise. I just really wanted a chance to get to know ye. I came here to find ye before someone else came and beat me to it.”

“Nevertheless it’s the ladies choice. It doesn’t matter if anyone beats you to it.”

“Yer right, I’m sorry.”

Joe was taken. James was taken. Leo was definitely not her type, and she had enjoyed Thomas company, so maybe it would be fun?

“No need to apologize, I’m still not taken or whatever. If you want, we can go on the date tonight?”

“Truly?”
“Yes. But next time, please be more gracious.”

“I promise.” Thomas winked at her. “See ye tonight, Claire. I will make up for my mistake.”

Thomas walked away from her. Claire still felt disappointed about James being taken. But she had only herself to blame since she didn’t ask, too caught up in his book. Too busy daydreaming.

Claire put down her book and walked across the deck to the railing- looking out the ocean. The view was magnificent.

By this time tomorrow, they would arrive to their first destination- Tortola in the British Virgin Islands.

“Have ye ever seen something so beautiful?” Another Scottish voice said behind her.

James.

“No, I haven’t,” Claire answered softly. She continued to look at the water and the distant islands as James came to stand next to her.

“Yesterday was fun.”

“It was,” Claire answered without blushing for a change. “Tragic I never got to see your thriller dance.”

“Ye never bought me those drinks.” James chuckled. “But we still have time for that.”

They both looked at each other and smiled.

“Have ye got a date for tonight?”

“Yes, and you?”

His smile faded a little.

“I guess.”

“You guess?” Claire asked, confused. “I thought...”

“Ye thought what?”

“Thomas said that you, I mean that your whole entourage, was already ready and set with dates?”

“He said that? Well, I have been asked but haven’t agreed to anything. I ken we didn’t officially danced at the event, but I still...”

James stopped talking and Claire so desperately wanted him to say whatever he was going to say. They were strangers, they had just met, and somehow Claire could read his face like it was her own. His eyes reflected what was in hers - disappointment.

“Nevermind.” He smiled again, but it didn’t feel honest. “Who are ye taking?”

“Thomas,” Claire answered awkwardly.

“I see.”

“I’m sure you won’t have problem finding a date. I saw the line of women yesterday. You must be
feeling like a rockstar...”

“Groupies are not what I’m after.”

“What are you looking for?”

“Something real.”

Claire felt a sudden change in her. His words felt so deep, so honest.

Claire’s invincible armor, the shield she had been wearing to protect herself from heartbreak and pain, was off and for the first time since she woke up today she wanted to run and hide. She wasn’t supposed to feel anything. She didn’t want to feel anything.

*It’s purely attraction*, she reminded herself. There was no such thing as love at first sight.

“Are you still sure you are going to win the bet?” Claire said, cocky, trying to make their conversation...less.

James observed her, his stare making her uncomfortable, like he saw right through her.

“Who hurt ye?” He asked softly.

“What?”

“Ye heard me.”

Claire got defensive immediately. That’s how she dealt with questions like this.

“Nobody,” She answered dryly.

Her shield was back up. Who did he think he was?

“Ye will never feel love if ye fight against it.”

“I’m not.”

“I ken I’m just a stranger. Ye don’t know me and don’t trust me either...”

“Tha’t right, you are a stranger,” Claire interrupted him. “You don’t know me, or what I have been through.”

Jamie blinked, properly surprised by her shouting and she felt ashamed, but she couldn’t control herself. He was supposed to be fun, but now, he was stepping into deep territory - A forbidden area.

“I’m sorry for overstepping,” James broke the silence. “I hope ye have a wonderful date tonight...”

Claire wanted to apologize for her sudden outburst but by the time she opened her mouth, he had already left.

——-

The event was once more held in the same room.

Claire walked behind Geillis, who had managed to get herself a new date for tonight with a handsome man called Simon, a Swedish fellow she met one hour ago. Claire had always been
envious of her friend’s lovely personality, how easy it was for her.

Nobody knew what “the surprise date” was and Claire felt anxious about seeing James, not only because she had behaved so badly, but because the thought of him with someone else actually made her feel jealous.

It was a ridiculous notion, she had never been a jealous type and especially shouldn’t be now when she didn’t even know the man.

After she had found her date - Thomas, they got a table number and, to her horror, it was next to James table.

*Of course.*

His date was blonde, gorgeous, and her lashes were blinking over exaggeratedly flirty towards James.

The spaces between the small tables for two were far enough for “privacy”, but if Claire wanted to, she could easily touch James, sitting to her left.

To her surprise, James ignored her.

*Two can play that game,* she thought.

“Ladies and gentlemen.” The same hostess as before began to talk. “The surprise for this date is that you will be dining in the dark. Hopefully you won’t be distracted by your neighbors.”

Good. Claire would not be able to see James. That helped.

“How are you supposed to see what you are eating?” someone pointed out.

“That’s the exciting part,” The hostess answered. “The waiters have special goggles, they will be able to see you. And don’t worry, the glasses and plates are made of plastic.”

When everyone was seated, Claire glanced to her left - to James - and just before the lights turned off, they made eye contact.

Then it was pitch black in the room. Low giggles were heard around the room, but Claire wasn’t as amused.

“So, Claire, tell me something about yerself,” Thomas said and all Claire could think of was that they weren’t actually alone, even if that was supposed to be the point.

Claire sighed low and swallowed hard. She was being silly. She was letting James, a man she didn’t know, affect her night. This was supposed to be fun. She carefully searched for her drink and took a big gulp - alcohol was the perfect way to loosen up.

“I’m a Libra. We spend a lot of time figuring out what’s missing from that big picture, and we feel unhappy if we become too focused on one thing, whether it’s work or personal. I guess it means I’m stubborn.”

Someone snorted next to her.

“So ye get bored easily?” Thomas asked.

“Yes, you could say that. I took a year off in medical school, just to travel, but I didn’t get far.”
“Where did ye go?”

“Scotland, actually.”

“Really? To bad I never saw ye.”

\emph{Frank. Frank. Frank.}

“To bad,” Claire replied quickly, she wanted - needed - to change the subject. “And how about you? You are a teacher?”

“Aye, I am. Third graders.”

“Must be fun,” Claire answered, she must have sounded uninterested but she was so distracted - her neighbor, James’ date, was laughing uncontrollably in a high pitched tone.

Thomas continued to talk about his work and his students while Claire shamefully started listening to the conversation next to her instead.

“So, What’s your type?” James date asked him.

“I don’t think I have a type. But I like a woman who knows what she wants and is not afraid to show it...”

Claire rolled her eyes in the dark.

“Honesty is very important,” he continued. “To be in a committed relationship, ye need trust.”

“Oh, you are so right,” his date said. “I agree. I have been with so many different men who just lie and lie and lie.”

Claire searched the table for her drink again and continued to pay attention to her own date.

Thomas was still talking, he hadn’t noticed that she wasn’t listening.

“I’m curious as to why ye are here?” Thomas said. “A pretty lass like yerself.”

“This pretty lass was tricked by her friend,” Claire answered. “I was promised drinks and a vacation.”

“Good thing for me then.”

“Don’t say that yet. People tend to change their minds when they get to know me.”

It was meant as joke, but it just sounded pathetic. Thomas laughed though.

“I will at least provide ye with drinks and a good time.”

Footsteps came from behind her.

“Excuse me,” A male voice said. “It’s just your waiter. I’m putting a plate in front of you now.”

It wasn’t her ideal date, she preferred to order for herself. And seeing what she was eating was preferable.

“A refill?” He asked.
“Yes, please.”

Moments later, Claire had to admit the dinner was actually delicious, even though she didn’t really know what she ate.

She had tried her best to keep the conversation going with Thomas, but he was self-centered and kept on talking about himself. Even if she didn’t want to, she couldn’t help but listen to her neighbors.

“Sarah, please, call me Jamie.”

Jamie.

“Jamie,” Sarah answered softly. “It’s a shame that we live so far away from each other. I would love to experience the Scottish highlands someday.”

“If ye ever decide to visit, I will gladly show ye Scotland. A wee trip up the mountains. The view is remarkable and very beautiful.”

“Sounds dreamy.”

“It is.”

“What would be your ideal date?” Sarah asked.

“Good company, something outdoorsy, and a couple bottles of wine.”

“Claire?” Thomas said her name. Brought her back.

“Yes? I’m sorry what did you say?”

“Ye disappeared there.”

“I’m sorry.”

“I asked if you wanted to come with us after this. We are going to the nightclub again.”

“Sure,” Claire replied, embarrassed that she wasn’t paying attention.

“Maybe we could dance some more.”

Suddenly, something lightly touched her arm—no, not something but someone.

Claire didn’t dare to move, at first she had thought it was Thomas, but he was sitting across the table, there was no way he could reach her. It was James.

“I’m sorry,” James said and Claire understood that it was to her he meant it for.

“For what?” His date answered confused.

“Oh nothing. I thought I kicked ye.”

Claire hesitated, but then she leaned a little to her left and lightly touched his arm. James’s hand was quickly on top of hers and suddenly they were holding hands. Both squeezing, silently apologizing.

They didn’t let go.
“I’m not good at letting people in,” Claire suddenly said, it was meant to James. “But I’m willing to try.”

He squeezed her hand.

“I’m glad to hear it,” Thomas answered, oblivious to what was really happening in the dark.

___

When the event was over and they finally could see. Thomas introduced her to his “boys” and Geillis was very happy about continuing the night at the nightclub. She had ditched her date and said she was in the mood for some Scottish whisky.

Unfortunately, James’ date was also invited to join them. Not that James seemed to pay her any attention, he was only looking at Claire.

They had held hands throughout the rest of the date in the dark and Claire couldn’t think of anything else.

How his warm, big hands had felt intertwined with hers.

At the party, half of them moved to the dance floor immediately but Claire, Thomas, Angus, James, and his date walked over to the bar.

They ordered shots after shots.

The music was loud as it had been yesterday, and her heart started beating in tune with music when James stood next to her by the bar.

“I’m sorry,” he leaned down and whispered in her ear.

Claire turned her head and looked at him. His hand, once again, secretly brushed against hers. Her heart was beating wildly now. It was ridiculous how he made her all feel girly and mushy.

“You were right. I was hurt.”

“I’m not him.”

Damn it.

How was it possible? How could he make her feel like this?

“I don’t want anything complicated.”

James, or Jamie as he wanted to be called, didn’t answer that. But he smiled and that was answer enough.

Someone touched her shoulder and Claire turned around.

“Let’s dance,” Thomas shouted.

They joined the other half on the dance floor.

Everyone danced, laughed, and sang along. Claire stayed close to Jamie, wishing they were alone,
wanting to relive the night before.

---

A few hours later, everyone was tired and called it a night. The group walked together to the elevators.

Thomas asked for her room number, but Claire politely answered that he hadn’t earned it. Thankfully, he didn’t push it and walked away with his friends.

“Claire.”

But apparently not all of them.

“I’ll let ye talk.” Geillis smirked. “See ye tomorrow, Claire.”

Claire waited until her friend had left.

“Hey.”

“I don’t want to play games,” Jamie said low, he seemed nervous. “So here it goes. I really like ye.”

Claire didn’t know what to say, but her feelings towards Jamie were obvious.

“Claire, I’m not a mind reader.”

“I like you, too.”

“I thought so.”

“Oh, confident are we now.”

“Christ, I’m not confident at all. When I touched ye at dinner, my heart was beating like crazy, afraid that ye would slap me or shout at me. Claire, ye break me down, layer by layer, leaving me more confused than ever.”

“I do?”

“Aye.”

“I’m not sure that’s a positive thing? That I’m confusing you.”

“I’m confused because I don’t understand what’s going on between us. I’m confused because I can’t stop thinking about ye. This is, I have never felt like this before. The second I saw ye. I wanted nothing more than to know ye.” Jamie put one of her curls behind her ear.

“What? Why me? I’m not..”

“Ye don’t see what I see. I have never seen anyone more beautiful... ye are so breathtaking.”

This was happening way too fast and Claire felt slightly panicked.

“I meant what I said, Jamie. I was hurt and I’m not sure I can give you what you want.”

Love?
“And I meant what I said, I’m not him.”

“We have known each other what, 70 hours? I’m scared to think what I will be feeling in a few days. I’m not ready.”

“Ye like me that much, huh?” He raised his eyebrow, amused and smiled. “Don’t worry, we can make a new deal.”

“Shut up.” Claire hit him, playfully. “Alright, what’s the deal?”

“Ye can’t fall in love with me.”

“What?”

“Aye, that’s the deal. Ye can’t fall in love with me.”

“And if I do?”

“I win.”

“If I don’t?”

“I guess I’m still paying for yer vacation.”

_Either way I win?_

“Deal.”

“Can I kiss ye now?”

Claire smiled shyly and bit her lower lip. She had waited for him to ask.

“Ye will be the death of me.”

Right there, alone in a long corridor, Claire experienced something she had never felt before.

A sudden bang in her chest - her heart - and it’s force was so hard and powerful that she was afraid she would fall over, because she was falling alright - falling for him.

As Jamie’s hand on her hip drew her closer, Claire closed her eyes. *Don’t break my heart.*

“I want to see those beautiful eyes, please look at me.”

Claire slowly opened them again. Bloody hell, she was doomed, already drowning in his ocean blue eyes.

James leaned down, his breath was warm and intoxicating. His lips softly met hers and she felt him smile.

She already knew she was going to _lose_
Once again Claire woke up with the biggest smile on her face. If possible, it was even wider than yesterday. A ridiculous grin.

She rolled around in her bed and put her head down in the pillow.

Oh god.

Jamie.

“Promise me.” He had said between kisses. “That I’ll be your date the next time.”

Claire was doing it. She was willing to get to know this man, even though he had all the tools to break her.

This was only the fourth day, ten more and Claire was going to enjoy all of them. Hopefully with him.

Vacation romance. A little crush. That was it. She didn’t need to marry the man, she didn’t need to fall in love. That would be overwhelming and frankly, impossible. You don’t fall in love in two weeks.

___

Tortola.

They had finally arrived at their first destination. All the passengers stood ready and waited for the doors to opened. Claire had her bag filled with sunscreen, bikini, Jamie’s book, a purple towel and a few small liquor bottles.
They only had ten hours before the cruise was continuing its voyage.

Standing next to her, Geillis was already in her bikini, only wearing a see through beach dress over it.

Sightseeing was not on the schedule today. For either of them.

When they walked off the boat in the harbor, almost everyone walked to the beach.

Claire had tried to find Jamie in the sea of tourist, even if he was this tall Scottish Viking, he was nowhere to be found. Not even his entourage of loud Scotsmen.

“Do you want to take a little dip in the water?” Claire asked Geillis.

“In a second. I need to work on my tan.”

“I’m sorry to say it, the only thing you will be working on, is to produce more freckles.”

“Can a lass try?” Geillis laughed.

Maybe it was the warm weather or the crystal blue ocean, but Claire felt more relaxed than she had felt in months, even years. No patients, no worries and no Frank.

Just her and this beautiful island.

The sand felt nice under feet, and she walked further out until the water was just over her belly button. She didn’t dare to walk further out than that.

If she had thought the view from the boat was magnificent, this was magical. Claire turned around and looked at the palm trees, the jungle and the huge mountains. Her hands were on the surface, following the small wave movements.
A group of men was playing instruments on the beach, it was the perfect soundtrack to her new life.

A familiar group of men came in sight, they stopped next to Geillis, who was laying on her towel. Thomas started talking to Geillis as James put down his own towel - next to her own.

Claire was far out, she couldn’t hear them, only the music. Geillis pointed at her, Thomas had probably asked where she was.

Jamie put his hand over his eyes - searching - he waved when he saw her. She smiled like a fool and waved back.

In a matter of seconds, Jamie pulled his shirt over his head and began walking into to water, towards her.

Closer and closer.

It was a good thing she was already in the water, because she couldn’t move at the sight of him. All she could think of was that she wanted to rip his blue shorts off.

It felt like a fucking baywatch episode, the way he moved, how his abs and muscles tightened as he slowly walked.

Claire wanted to throw herself into his arms, but held back because of Thomas. Nobody, except Geillis knew about her and Jamie.

“Hey.”

The huge height differences between them was obvious, the water only reached Jamie’s thighs.

“Hi.” Claire replied nervously. His affect on her was worse - again- when he wasn’t fully dressed.
“I regretted that I didn’t take ye up on yer offer last night.”

“What offer?” Claire asked dumbstruck. She couldn’t think.

He moved closer and Claire reflexively took one step back, than another, until she was barely standing. She was too far out and she needed to swim with her arms to stay above the surface.

Jamie didn’t seem to be bothered by her withdrawal or the depth, he was standing firm, his feet steady in the sand and he drew her in.

His hands on her hips was now what kept her floating. He hadn’t noticed the small panicked she first felt when she couldn’t reach the bottom.

“Doctor Beauchamp, have ye already forgotten that ye asked me to yer room yesterday?” He teased her.

Claire had definitely not forget that.

“I recall you wanted to wait?”

“Aye.”

Claire was breathing heavier, her chest was heaving up and down so hard she was afraid she would start a tsunami.

His grip was firmly on her hip, gripping tighter as he pulled her even closer. Claire uncouncensly wrapped her legs around his hips and he carried her further away from the beach.

“What about?” Claire felt dizzy and awkwardly aware of his lower body flushed against hers. But also the people on the beach “What about, Thomas?”

“I hope yer not thinking of him right now.”
“I’m not. I just..”

“Nah, don’t bother. I told him to back off. It’s just ye and me now.”

“And he was okay with that?”

Jamie sighed.

“Do ye care?”

Claire started breathing even heavier and shook her head.

“Good.” Jamie smiled. “Are ye ready?”

“For what?”

“On the count of three, hold yer breath.”

Claire blinked surprised and when Jamie had counted to three and they were under the water.

When they came up again, Claire gasped for air.

“Are ye Okey?” Jamie laughed, his chest almost vibrating violently.

“Yes, I wasn’t expecting you to drown me.”

“Are ye afraid of a little water?”
“No.” Claire admitted. “But I’m not a very good swimmer.”

“Really? But ye know how to?”

“Define How to.”

“If I let go, Will ye swim or sink.”

“Most definitely sink.”

“Don’t worry, Sassenach. I won’t let ye go.”

The simplest thing to say, but Claire believed him. It was an embarrassing thing- that she was a doctor but she couldn’t save her own life in the water. But she trusted him. Trusted in his words and big arms to carry her.

“What does Sassenach mean?”

“I thought ye lived in Scotland a year?”

“I did. How did you know?” She asked even though she knew that answer - he had been listening too.

“Ehm. I overheard yer conversation.”

Claire raised her eyebrows in question.

“Alright, I was eavesdropping. Ye canna blame me for it.”

“I’m not. Just curious.”
“I felt like a jealous bastard, I couldn’t help myself.”

“Would you feel better if I admitted I did the same?”

“Aye. Much better.”

“Well, then, I listen too. Every word. I guess you confuses me as well.”

“Would ye feel less confused if I kissed ye?”

“Not sure.”

Jamie kissed her then, softly.

“Did it help?”

“Nope, still confused.”

Jamie smirked, leaned down and kissed her again. This time hard and long. His lips tasted salty and she wanted nothing more than for him to rip her bikini apart and have her there and then.

“Christ, Claire.”

His arousal, the hard evidence that he felt the same was pressing against her.

“Maybe we should stop.” Claire was panting. “We have an audience..”

Jamie was standing with his back against the beach and Claire could see Thomas watching them.
“Right. But mark my words.” He turned his head and leaned closer to her ear. “When I have ye alone, I will make ye scream.”

His word was making her more horny, a new level of energy rushed through her and she started grinding her lower body against him.

“Ah.” He moaned. “Yer a little devil ye?”

“I’m not like this, with everyone, just so you know.”

“Claire, I wasn’t suggesting.” Jamie sounded nervous, like he was afraid he had offended her. “I’m flattered, truly and I hope ye know that I’m not just fooling around. I feel with my heart first.”

“Then your cock?” Claire teased.

“Aye.”

“I’m looking forward to it.” Claire whispered in seductive tone - or she hoped.

“Christ. Claire.”

Oh how she loved the way he said her name.

“This may be the stupidest thing I will ever say.” Jamie said. “But are we rushing it?”

“What do you mean?” Claire asked disappointed. “If this was in the real word, this fourth day would be like four months. We only have ten more days.”

“The real world?”
“You know what I mean. Why not enjoy this! While we have time.”

“I thought we had more time?”

“Be realistic.”

“I thought I was.”

The awkward tension only got worse when Jamie started backing up, backing towards the beach. He released her from his arms and let go.

“What’s happening?”

The warm water felt cold when she stood on her own.

“Ye are not taking this seriously.” Jamie sounded hurt. “I said I didn’t want to play games..”

“Says the men who has already played a betting game. Twice.”

“I guess the odds are against me.”

“Jamie.” Claire reached out and cupped his face. “I told you, I didn’t want anything complicated. If you can’t, I mean if you don’t want…”

Claire sighed. She was babbling, but she was afraid that this, whatever it was, was ending before it even started.

“Bloody hell, I mean if you need me to promise forever. This is not going to work.”

Her hands fell down.
“I’m not asking that.”

“What then? Do you want to place another bet? We can turn the tables around. You are not aloud to fall in love with me.”

“I don’t take bets I know I’m going to lose.”

_Bloody hell._

The man knew how to make an dramatic effect. His words hit her. Hard.

“Don’t ruin this.” Claire said it to him, but also to herself.

“I’ll try.”

Jamie walked away, leaving her alone in the water. She watched him as he sat down on his towel - next to hers - on the beach.

Minutes later, Claire joined the group on the beach. Geillis, Jamie, Thomas, Angus, Rupert, Willie, Roger, Ben, Martin, Andrew and Alec.

How she had ended up with this many Scottish people in the Caribbean was far-fetched and unexpected.

But she only cared for the two gingers.

Laying on her stomach, reading Jamie’s book in silence next to the owner of this said book. She glanced once or twice to her left. Jamie was laying on his back, his eyes closed.

The sun was getting stronger and Claire felt how her back was starting to burn.
“Geillis.” Claire waved her sunscreen in front of her. “Can you help me with my back.”

“Sure thing, love.”

Claire laid down again and closed her eyes.

When the cold lotion hit her, she shivered but when the hands started massaging her back, she smiled. It wasn’t her friends small, delicate hands but strong and big.

It felt so good, his hands were rubbing just right.

Claire opened her eyes, and to her surprise and horror - there was Jamie. Starting at her. He looked pissed, his eyes dark. She quickly turned her head - Thomas.

Oh no.

“There ye go, lass.” Thomas smiled at her. “All done, ye are now protected from the wicked sun.”

“Thanks?” She said awkwardly. She shoot a disapproving look at her friend. Geillis just laughed.

Damn it.

Apparently Thomas hadn’t taken Jamie word very seriously.

Claire looked back at Jamie, feeling like she should apologize but he had closed his eyes again. Thomas looked very satisfied on his towel further down.

Children. Both of them.
“Are y’all excited for tonight?” Geillis thankfully broke the awkward silence.


“I am.” Angus replied, cheerful. “I hope I get to pair up with The Spanish lasses I danced with yesterday.”

Gloria and Rita. Two Brazilian ladies they encountered yesterday. Exotic and beautiful, both of them.

“They were trying to dance away from ye, fool.” Rupert said. “Further away from ye and closer to me.”

“Bullshit.” Angus quickly replied.

“How would ye two buttheads know? Ye dinna speak Spanish.” Willie said.

“Maybe I’ll take Jamie with me,” Angus said “he knows Spanish.”

“Take Thomas.” James said stern. “And they spoke Portuguese.”

“Oh no, Jamie is better and frankly, I talked to them and all the talked about was the redhead. Sorry lads.”

Claire tried to ignore it, Jamie didn’t pay them any attention. But the testosterone in the air was annoying. Thomas was saying this to affect her.

“No, this heat is killing me.” Willie remarked. “Who wants to swim?”

“I do.” Everyone seemed to answer simultaneously.
They boys all acted like it was a competition and ran towards the water.

“Maybe you want to join them?” Claire said to Geillis.

“No, I’m still working on my tan.”

Claire gave her a look and Geillis nodded.

“Or perhaps I need to cool down.”

*Thank you.* Claire silently mouthed.

Claire felt how nervous she was but she didn’t want this tension anymore. She collected her nerves and sat upright. She picked up Her sunscreen and got up.

Jamie didn’t flinch, his eyes still closed as he laid there. He didn’t know what was going to happen.

Claire opened the lid and poured the sunscreen lotion on his stomach.

“Ah! what are ye doing?” He screamed.

“Just thought you looked a bit red.” She chuckled.

Claire sat down on top of him, straddling him and started massaging the lotion on his chest. He didn’t protest.

Long and soft strokes. His red chest hair got darker when it got moisturized.

“Is this yer way of apologizing?”
“Nope.”

“Hmm.”

“I’m not going to. That would mean I was wrong.”

“And yer never wrong?”

“Exactly.” Claire smiled and leaned down, her hands in the sand next each side of his head. “And don’t you forget it.”

“I don’t think I’m able to forget anything about ye.”

“How poetic. Say it in Spanish.”

“Eu acho que não sou capaz de esquecer nada sobre você.”

“Oh my god.” Claire said breathlessly.

“Apenas espere. Eu farei você se apaixonar por mim.”

“What did that mean?”

“Figure that out yerself.” Jamie said seductive. “I meant it tho and it wasn’t Spanish.”

——-

The hot weather and the long day at the beach had been hard on her body and mind. Claire had taken a long shower before she collapsed on her bed.
Claire woke up with a sudden shook. Someone was at her door and knocking hard.

“Hold on.” Claire shouted and slowly rolled out of bed. She walked to the door, still wearing a towels around her body and head.

“There ye are.” Jamie stood in front of her, paint in his hair and face.

“What happened to you?”

“Ye missed a very interesting group session.”

“What? What time is it?”

“5.30.”

Claire had overslept.

“Shit.”

“Ye didn’t miss anything, really.”

“I doesn’t look like it?” Claire smiled and touched his hair, all messy and full with paint.

“We were paired up in small groups and had to paint. I ended up with Angus and Rupert, they started arguing, like always and they threw paint on each other. I was in the middle.”

“To bad I missed it.”

“Anyway, I need to shower before dinner. I just wanted to make sure you were okay.”
“You could.” Claire felt her cheeks turn hot and red. “Shower here. If you want?”

“Looks like ye already have showered, lass.”

“Right. I didn’t mean. Um. Maybe I will see you later, then? At dinner?”

“Are ye asking me out?”

His teasing was uplifting, there was no more hard feelings between them.

“Shut up.”

“Doctor, I will gladly join ye for dinner later, thanks for asking.”

“Good. See you later.”

Jamie bowed and smiled as he walked away.

Claire closed the door and leaned her head against it. She was so, so doomed. Her little crush was not that little. She was acting like a giddy teenager.

A hard knock on the door startled her and a scream escape her.

*Now what.*

Claire opened the door again.

“Jamie?”
“I seem to have misplaced my keycard.”

“Oh really?” Claire grinned at him.

“Aye, can I come in?”

Claire stepped aside to let him inside.

“What the hell, Yer room is enormous!” Jamie said, surprised. “Must have cost a fortune.”

“It did.”

“Not sure if I can afford to lose this bet.” He laughed nervously.

“The bathroom is over there.” Claire said and felt like an idiot. Other than the small closet there was just one door.

“Is it the same size of this room?” Jamie joked.

“No,” Claire laughed. “But I’m sure a man of your size will fit in there.”

“I wonder how many people will fit.” Jamie said low. “Shall we find out?”

Her breathing came in short. She was completely naked under her towels, and yet, she felt too nervous about taking it off.

“Claire.” Jamie seemed to noticed what what was happening. “We don’t have to.”

“Maybe we should wait, take things slow.”
“Sounds good.” Jamie said softly and smiled reassuring. “I still need to shower tho, is it okay?”

“Of course, go ahead.”

Jamie walked into her bathroom. She stood absolutely still and listened as he turned the water on. She felt like a sissy, why did she change her mind?

A few minutes, she stood outside, debating with herself.

*You are a strong, beautiful woman. You deserve this. Just go.*

Behind the glass frame, Jamie was standing with his back against her, he hadn’t heard her open the door. He was busy shampooing his hair and she glanced down and appreciated his naked form - His muscles, his thighs and his firm ass.

Claire found herself wondering if he was a gym guy, there was no way he could have a body like that without spending hours and hours working out.

She stepped out of her towel and took a deep breath.

*This is it.*

When Claire closed the shower door behind her, Jamie turned around. He didn’t say anything. He bit his lower lip as he took her in - all of her - from head to toe.

Claire was already aching for him to touch her.

Never in her life had she been this aroused, the way he looked at her made her knees weak.

“Say something.”
“In what language.” He teased.

“Don’t matter.”

“Claire, there aren’t words even invented yet, to describe yer beauty, in any language.”

“Then don’t say anything and just kiss me.”

Claire took a step forward and both of them under the running water. Jamie places both of his hands on her cheeks and kissed her fiercely, she had never felt so safe in the hands of a man.

Once more the evidence of his arousal was obvious, even more so now, naked. As they kissed, Claire slowly but firmly gripped his hard cock and Jamie moaned into her mouth.

It was the sexiest sound she had ever heard.

She craved to her it again.

Claire’s hand moved up and down, trapped between them, moving faster at the sound of him.

“Claire.” His voice was hoarse.

Suddenly, Claire was pinned to the cold tile wall. Jamie eyes looking darker, filled with wanting and passion.

“Spread yer legs, Sassenach.”

“You never said what that meant.” Claire said nervously but still, she did as he said.
“I really don’t want to explain that, right now!” His hand cupped her breast and squeezed harder than she had expected. “Do ye?”

Claire shook her head.

His weight was on her, pinning her against the wall and she couldn't move. He could do anything to her like this.

Far too long she had been overthinking everything, uptight, always been in charge, but here, she wanted him to do whatever he wanted. He was in control. She loved it.

She started breathing heavily as his other hand trailed down her body.

“Christ, yer so wet.”

Jamie kissed her again. Pressing himself closer, if possible. His cock vigorously twitching between them. If she could, she would have touched him.

“It would be so easily, to just have ye now.”

“Do it, Jamie. I want you.”

“Oh, Claire. I want ye, too, badly.” Jamie leaned down, kissed her breast, then the other one. “But not today.”

“What?”

Jamie chuckled.

“Patient.” He whispered and got down on his knees. “I want to know what ye like, take things slow.”
When he began to move his thumb in little circles over her clit she moaned out his name. “Jamie.”

“I ken ye can’t promise, forever.” He said and kissed her left thigh. “But I have ten more day and I’m going to ruin ye, for every man that will come after.” He whispered and she gasped, her breath caught in her throat.

Jamie licked carefully first, and she started to squirm. He placed his hand on her stomach, to keep her in place.

There and then, she wanted to scream that she didn’t want anyone but him. But she didn’t.

She could feel the heat of the flames on her body, how she was about to break in two.

Like he already knew her, knew her moans - that she was close, he inserted two fingers inside her, slowly as his toung did the absolutely opposite. He sucked on her clit and her legs started shaking.

Her entire body was shaking.

*Release. Sweet, Sweet, release.*

Afterwards, she had her eyes closed, riding out her orgasm. He kissed her lips. It was soft and light and she almost wanted to cry.

*Ten more days. Ten more days.*

“Stay in and order room service?”
“You could stay? Sleep here to tonight.” Claire was sitting on her bed, in her robe, watching Jamie get dressed.

“I want to. I really, really do. But I ken, if I stayed...”

He stopped talking.

“What?”

“Nothing. I think it’s for the best if I sleep in my own room. Remember, we said we’d take it slow.”

“And you said you wanted to ruin me. Double standards.”

“I intend to keep that promise. But I’m exhausted and I snore.”

“Why do those sound like bad excuses?”

“Because they are.”

“Why?”

Jamie sighed.

“If I stay, I’m afraid I’ll never want to leave.”

“You don’t have to. There is more than enough room for both of us.”
“Claire, I promise I will sleep here, someday.”

“Alright.”

“Are ye upset?”

“No,” Claire lied. “I’m new to this, and I have never been very good with things like this. I don’t know the rules.”

“Dating?”

“That too.”

She had meant feelings.

“I think yer doing great.”

Jamie had kissed her then, with a new tenderness, and she melted into him.

Damn those butterflies that had been flying around in her stomach. Damn them. All of them.

Day 5.

How many days had she woken up like this? Smiling, feeling dreamy, and craving for more.

Claire couldn’t stop thinking about the day before and smiling. Even though she felt a little embarrassed about how clingy she had behaved right before Jamie left.

Their evening together had been sweet and wonderful. After the shower, they ordered room service and just talked. For hours.
About everything and nothing.

He shared so much of himself, his dreams and hopes.

Lallybroch, his childhood home he had turned into a blossoming, and successful, riding school. The way he spoke of his parents, his brother, his sister, and how they all - in small ways - helped out with his company was just wonderful to listen to.

Claire had not reciprocated. She shared some small details about herself, but she wasn’t as open as Jamie. She didn’t talk much about personal things, not even with Geillis who was her best friend. The only one she talked to was her brother, John Grey Beauchamp.

She noticed that Jamie became disappointed with how often she turned the subject back to him when he asked her personal questions.


Jamie’s family. Names she wouldn’t be able to forget. People she would never meet.


Different types of horses she had learned about. Jamie’s favourites. Magical creatures she could only dream of.

They were just parts of Jamie, fractions of his life, and Claire wanted to know more. She wanted to know everything.

She looked forward to getting to know him.

For someone who didn’t want to fall in love or even believed in love at first sight, Claire spent an awful amount of time obsessing over it.
Claire sighed.

Her story, the tragedy of a long and utterly surreal life, was hers to forget and hers to keep.

_Understand my silence, listen to the words I’m not saying and know that I mean them. I won’t fall in love and have you rescuing me. I won’t set myself on fire to warm you, not because I don’t want to warm you, but because I would only burn you._

Claire sighed again. This time louder.

She didn’t want complicated, and yet, she was the one who was making it so.

But she was not the only one.

Maybe that’s why Jamie didn’t want to spend the night? Because they were stepping into a new territory, a more intimate circumstance. This was clearly not a one night stand, and maybe he (the more emotionally aware one) was afraid that if they slept together, she would move on?

**Day 5. Selfie Scavenger hunt.**

“Ladies and gentlemen. Today’s scavenger hunt is the first of three,” The hostess said cheerfully. “Pair up with a partner, one you haven’t dated yet. When you have picked one, register your name and your partner’s, then you will get a list of items you need to take selfies with. The first ten couples to complete the list will win some magical prizes. Happy hunting, lovebirds!”

Claire had seen Jamie immediately - standing on the other side of the room - and by the time the pretty hostess had stopped talking, Jamie was already standing by her side.

“Is it my turn today?” Jamie whispered in her ear.

“Hmm...I’m very competitive. But based on your height, muscle mass, and your extremely big hands, you are the perfect partner for the occasion.”
“How romantic.” Jamie chuckled. His hand on her lower back gently ushered her towards the registration table.

Claire looked up at him.

“I thought it was.”

The long list of things to photograph felt easy and fun, and Claire was very happy that she was doing it with Jamie.

- **Share a big milkshake.**

They ordered her favorite flavor - strawberry- and took a selfie while sipping on two straws. They used Jamie’s iPhone and he took numerous pictures after which they kissed.

Sweet, sweet kisses.

“The perfect caption would be brain freeze,” Jamie said as he put his phone down.

“Or cheezy hallmark movie,” Claire hummed, amused.

“How I adore yer cynical mind.”

“Oh, babe.” Claire took his hand as the walked out of the restaurant together. “A little secret about me: cheezy movies are my guilty pleasure.”

Jamie laughed and squeezed her hand.
“Good to know. What’s next?”

2. **Three different kinds of hearts.**

It was a single’s cruise, a love themed voyage. They weren’t that hard to find. They took a picture of a heart shaped sign, a T-shirt with hearts on it, and the last one - of course it was Jamie’s idea - their hands in the air, two halves making one heart.

3. **Titanic related photo.**

“I haven’t seen that movie,” Jamie said as he read their list.

“What? You haven’t?”

“Nay, what’s it about?”

“Jesus H. Roosevelt Christ, where to even begin. Rose travels with her mother and fiancé, Cal Hockley, on the luxurious and unsinkable ship called the Titanic. After a dramatic incident, Rose meets Jack Dawson, played by Leonardo DiCaprio, a poor and handsome artist who won his ticket in a poker game...”

“Let me guess, they fall in love and the boat sinks.”

“You have seen it!”

“No, but I’m an educated man and I ken about the boat, with the iceberg and all.”

“Well, Rose and Jack have a few iconic moments.”

“Alright, you have seen the movie. Pick yer favorite and we will do it.”
“Hmm. We have the classic ‘I am the king of the world’ where they stand in the front of the boat and pretend they are flying.”

“Is it yer favorite?”

“No, it’s a scene where they are hiding in a car - a handprint on a dim and steamy window. Two naked strangers finding comfort in each other. But, I guess soft porn would be inappropriate for this contest though.”

Jamie observed her, his eyes glowing brighter in the sunlight and his smile growing bigger.

“I don’t think they have cars on this ship.”

He was teasing her. His hand was suddenly on her back, pressing her closer. He leaned down and whispered in her ear.

“I have read a few pages of yer book. Erotica seems to be yer kink?”

“Desperate and lonely.” Claire felt ashamed.

“Nay, Claire. Imaginative, spontaneous, and hot as hell. That’s ye.”

He kissed her neck, nibbling and biting. Claire suddenly forgot where she was, what her name was, and could only focus on how her body was responding. Goosebumps pricked all over her arms, her knees weakened, and her brain was quickly turning into mush.

“I would do anything ye ask,” he continued whispering. “I dreamt of yer wee sounds last night. How yer lips opened slightly, trembling as ye came...if anyone is desperate, it’s me, desperate to hear ye again.”

When she was sure her legs were going to cave in and collapse all together, he released her.

Feeling flushed, breathless and dizzy, she looked at him.
“Damn you.”

“We can continue this conversation, after the contest.” He grinned at her. “I really don’t want to lose to Thomas. He doesn’t deserve to win this.”

The magical moment was over.

“What’s the deal with you two?”

“We go way back.” He shrugged his shoulders. “We don’t always see eye to eye...”

“I see.”

“Nothing to talk about.” Jamie shook his head. “What do ye say, shall we go to the front?”

The picture of them in the front was blurry, the wind was stronger there and Claire had felt scared, but Jamie held onto her tightly with one hand as he took the photo with the other one.

He was obviously lying about not having seen the movie, because he was far more informed on how they should be standing to have it “just right.”

Claire imagined Celine Dion singing in the background.

4. **Flags**

It was the easiest task, the boat was overly decorated with multiples of different flags throughout the entire ship.

They chose Norwegian and Germany.
Two countries neither had been to. Unspoken wishes to visit them together.

Neither said it. Both felt it.

5. **Caribbean Rum.**

They weren’t sure if they were supposed to take a photograph of the bottle or if they should drink it. They did both, just in case.

They scavenger hunt had been going on for approximately two hours and they had three more to go.

They found themselves stuck in the bar, forgetting to continue with the game, lost in tasting different brands of rum.

“Alright. Truth or dare?” Jamie asked. He sounded sober, but his chest and the tips of his ears were reddish, a usual reaction to alcohol, which she should know as a doctor.

“Truth.”

“Why don’t ye want to see me after this trip?”

*Bloody hell.*

“I never said that.”

“Ye did, ye said we should enjoy ourselves before this all ends.”

“I don’t have time for romances. My life is so busy my brother has to take care of my cat even when I’m home.”
“So ye drown yerself in work and ye are just satisfied with that?”

“You have already asked me a question, it’s my turn,” Claire said and took another sip from her glass. “Truth or dare?”

“Dare.”

“Interesting, a man with so many questions doesn’t want to answer any himself.”

“Alright, truth then.”

“Tell me why you and Thomas don’t get along...”

Jamie sighed.

“The rules are, if ye don’t want to answer, ye need to take three punishment gulps. I’ll take my punishment.”

“That’s not fair.”

“Choose another question, then...”

“Fine. How many women have you slept with?”

Jamie shook his head and started counting on his hand.

“Twelve. Yer turn. Truth or dare?”

“Dare.”
“Coward.”

Jamie looked thoughtful, like he was trying to solve a hard mathematical problem.

“I dare ye to say something nice about me.”

“I find your passion for horses adorable.”

“And?”

“I like how terrible you are at hiding your emotions. Even if your words and actions says one thing, your eyes don’t lie.”

“What do they say?”

“Just the truth.”

“Ye can read me that easily, huh?”

“Probably not.” Claire laughed nervously, feeling like it was a stupid thing to say.

“I can read you as well,” Jamie said confidently. “Ye really like me.”

“Do, I’m not hiding that.”

“Aye, ye do. Yer holding back. There are things ye want to say...”

“Maybe I am, maybe I’m not. I guess you will never know.”
“Maybe.”

“Next question, my turn. Truth or dare?”

“Dare.”

“I dare you to kiss me,” Claire said.

“What’s the catch? Sounds too easy.”

“No catch, no hidden agenda. I just really want you to kiss me.”

Jamie leaned his head sideways, smiling at her with that irresistible smile that made her heart beat a little faster. She wasn’t exaggerating when she said she could read his face, he looked at her with such admiration she felt breathless. She felt beautiful.

Her body felt warmer, the rum had done its job. She was intoxicated just enough for her skin to feel warm since her nerves had disappeared.

But to her surprise, Jamie took her hand and kissed her there, lingering with his lips against her knuckles.

“Shall we continue?”

6. **Stairs**

The fourth floor, behind the elevator was the emergency exit. Jamie sat down on top of the stairs as she took the shot with her phone.

She sat down next to him and held up the camera in front of them. Jamie snuggled into her neck as she pressed the button and when she looked at the photo, she could see him smiling against her, his eyes closed. They looked cute, like a couple in love. Smitten.
“I’m not sure if I’m ever going to step foot in Scotland again,” she said low. “But if you ever came to London, *maybe* we can get a coffee.”

“I’m not going to ask why, but I’ll take it.”

7. Fruits and vegetables  
8. Pool  
9. A deck of cards  
10. Sunglasses  
11. Flowers  
12. Surfboard  
13. The band  
14. Fried ice cream  
15. Dinner

They did as many as they could, but they lost. Too many hours wasted, but not really wasted, on spending time together and getting to know each other. Mostly kissing, mostly taking pictures of each other. Saving memories on their phone for rainy days.

They didn’t even walk back to the event to hear who had won. They stayed on deck, Claire laying in Jamie’s arms on a small sunbed, watching the sun go down. The sky was painted in different beautiful shades of red, orange, and yellow.

“How old is your brother?”

“Eleven months younger than me,” Claire answered and felt a pang of longing. She usually talked to John twice a day but they had barely talked since she left, the time difference making it hard.

“Are ye close?”

“Aye.” Claire did a awful impression of his accent and Jamie chuckled low. His head pressed against hers.

“And yer parents?”
Claire hesitated, trying to fight against the voice in her head that said she shouldn’t get too personal. But no matter how much she tried to resist it, she had already decided to let him in. She wanted him to know.

“They died nine years ago. When I was nineteen.”

He didn’t say anything and he didn’t have to. He just wrapped his arms around her harder. She felt safe.

*Near, far, wherever you are*
*I believe that the heart does, go on*
*Once more you open the door*
*And you're here in my heart*
*And my heart will go on, and on*
*Love can touch us one time*
*And last for a life time*
*And never let go till we're gone.*

They laid in silence for a long time and Claire couldn’t stop singing in her head.

“Truth or dare.” Jamie suddenly said.

“What?” Claire responded, confused.

“Ask me.”

Jamie sounded strange.

“Okay? Truth or dare?”

“Truth.”
“What am I supposed to ask?”

“Ask me if I made a bet with Thomas about ye.”

Claire sat upright and looked at him. She didn’t know what to say or think.

“Please forgive me for it.”

Jamie looked so sad and Claire couldn’t wrap her head around it. His words didn’t make any sense. His behavior didn’t make any sense. She thought she could read him but clearly it was all a game.

“What was the bet?” Claire finally asked.

“It was stupid.” She heard how remorseful he sounded, but she was blinded by tears slowly running down her cheeks.

“Tell me!” she shouted.

“The first one to sleep with ye.”

Claire’s mouth fell open in shock.

“But that was the first day, before I even talked to ye.”

“Does it matter?”

“Aye, it does. The second I met ye, I changed my mind.”

“Why me?”
“Don’t take this the wrong way, but when everyone was gathering up for the speed dating the first day, ye looked, um, uptight and…”

“Like a cold frigid bitch?”

“No, Claire.”

“How could you?”

“I told Thomas the bet was off, the very first second I woke up the next day, the day after we danced together the first time.”

“How sweet of you.”

“Claire, It was a idiotic thing to do and I regret it so much. I am so sorry.”

Claire got up from the chair, but Jamie did not move. His eyes were pleading for her to forgive him.

“Why did you even tell me?”

“Cause I meant what I said, I really like ye. Even more so after today. I couldn’t bear the thought of having secrets. I didn’t want to, I never meant to hurt ye.”

“Too late.”

Claire turned to leave, but stopped and looked over her shoulder. He was still sitting on the sunbed, the sunset behind him - the perfect view - and all she felt was pain.

“I can’t believe I trusted you.”

“Please, don’t go.”
“You broke your promise, you said you wouldn’t hurt me, that you weren’t like him. But you are worse. Playing around with other people’s feelings, like they don’t matter.”

“Ye matter.” Jamie raised his voice, life that made a difference. “That’s why I told ye.”

“I guess I’m the loser in all of this. I almost hoped I would fall in love with you.”

Claire felt like an idiot. Ironic how she had been scared that she was going to hurt him in the end. She walked away from Jamie and, somewhere deep inside, she wanted him to follow.

He didn’t.

——-

**Day 6.**

Pathetic. That’s how she felt this morning.

But Claire was determined. She was not going to let this affect her. Jamie had more than once called her cynical and it was easy going back to that person.

She was on vacation and damn it if she wasn’t going to enjoy it to the fullest.

Today’s schedule - a new destination to explore. **St Thomas - Barbados.**

Five hours sightseeing, an Island Safari tour, and later that stupid singles event.

**Day 6 - B-b-bonfire**
It was only supposed to be for the passengers who payed for the love experience. AKA, her. AKA Jamie.

But no hard feelings. She didn’t want to argue or avoid him. She was just going to walk over to him, say her piece and be done with it. Easy peasy.

“Claire?”

Jamie found her first.

They had just left the ship and she stood next to Geillis and Carlos in line for the cars to take them on this magical tour. She hadn’t had the time to tell Geillis yet.

“Yes?” Claire plastered on a fake and heartwarming smile.

“Can we talk?”

“Of course, maybe after the tour?”

“Ye don’t have to be like this. It’s okay to be angry. I behaved like a pig and I deserve every horrible thing ye can think of saying.”

“I don’t have anything horrible to say. Let’s just leave it.”

Claire smiled again. The more she smiled, the easier it was to fake it.

“Please,” Jamie said low. “I hate myself.”

“Don’t. We don’t have to pretend. We had fun. It’s nothing.”

“It wasn’t pretend, not for me. Maybe the first second but after that, it was real. All of it. Please
give me a second chance.”

“James. Just drop it.”

“Claire,” Geillis interrupted them - Thank God. “Our car is here.”

“Coming.” Claire turned back to Jamie. “Don’t bother in apologizing, just enjoy your vacation.”

Jamie didn’t answer and Claire turned around to step into the Jeep.

“Jamie,” Geillis shouted. “Are ye coming? We have one more seat.”

No.

No.

Damn it.

“Aye, why not,” Jamie answered. “Five hours, maybe I can redeem my soul in that time.”

“What did ye say?” Geillis asked.

She didn’t hear him but Claire did.
Day 6.

St Thomas, Barbados.

Five hours sightseeing, an Island Safari tour and that stupid man had hijacked her tour.

Claire and Jamie was, unfortunately, seated next to each other in the jeep. He was a huge man, his stupid, muscular legs kept on touching hers accidentally. She tried to sit as close to her edge of the seat but the road was rocky and each time they hit a bump, they crashed into each other.

Had it been yesterday, she would have laughed and enjoyed it - not so much right now.

He was clearly giving her space - metaphorically speaking. He didn’t talk to her even, though she could see that he wanted to.

“My plan was to ignore you.” Claire finally spoke. “I won’t go back till how it was but I can’t force away how I feel...”

“Claire, I’ll take whatever ye can give me.” Jamie quickly opened his blathering mouth.

“I’m not finished.”

“Sorry, go on.”
“I can’t force away those tiny, tiny, tiny feelings” Claire exaggerated. “BUT, you ruined whatever could have happened and I don’t trust you enough or even know you enough but I can offer you a small, small, act of friendship. That’s it.”

“Friends.” Jamie said it like he was trying it out. It didn’t fit. He knew it and she knew it.

“Yup.”

“Have I lost my visiting privileges too? When we come back to England?”

“I don’t even see the point.”

“Does it matter if it does for me?”

“I just don’t...why are you doing this? The boat is filled with hundreds of women, why not just move on.”

Claire looked away from his intense stares. Her mind was set but her heart wasn’t cooperating. It was beating like crazy in her chest and she was afraid he could see that.

“Ye probably don’t believe me and I canna blame ye for it. What I did was unforgivable, Claire. I never expected…” Jamie paused. “When Thomas suggested the bet, I wasn’t thinking. I didn’t really see you, I just wanted to win. But then, I talked to ye and later on we danced the first time. I felt like someone punched me in my gut. That unexpected feeling I felt when I was close to ye was, I have never felt that.”

Claire looked at him through hooded eyes. He was looking at his hands.

“I can offer you friendship. Not even a close one, just enough for us to be on this bloody ship together.”

“Aye, I’ll take it. It’s probably for the best.”
“Mmhm.”

The open car, the off-road bumps, the driver and his fun, informative stories, and, of course, the beauty of the Barbados uncovered was a extremely exciting experience but Claire had had difficulties with ignoring Jamie.

The first stop was 1,000 feet above sea level. The view had been amazing.

_Bathsheba Park, Foster Hall, Andromeda Gardens. Cove Bay, St. Lucy's Parish Church. Malvern Great House. Cattlewash, Belle Plaine._

But she survived all five bloody hours with him - two and half hours of not wanting to speak to him and then another two and half hours trying to stop wanting to speak to him.

When they parted, she gave him a fake warm smile and reassured him that they were _fine_.

Back at the ship, Geillis had been hysterical when Claire her about Thomas and Jamie’s bet. But, as she had also said to Jamie, she told Geillis that everything was fine, that she was fine.

_“The only way to get over someone is to get under someone else.” That had been Geillis advice._

**Day 6 - B-b-bonfire**

Barbecue, partnered with exotic and colorful drinks, was the perfect distraction. The night was upon them.

Jamie and his friends were standing on one side and she stood with Geillis on the other side. A perfect distance and it felt like the most appropriate way to end it with the burning bonfire between them.

Over obsessing over a man she clearly didn’t know was a waste of time. It’s just a matter of will power - the second you decide it’s over, it’s over.
The dark sky, filled with brightly shining stars.

The fire and heat.

The reggaeton music.

The band playing those drums hard were drowning her innermost thoughts and she felt relieved for the distraction.

Maybe it was the colorful rum drinks but she danced, carefree and barefoot around the fire with other happy dancing people. Her curls flew from side to side.

She wasn’t planning on taking upon Geillis advise but a little dancing didn’t hurt. Maybe for Jamie, who was still standing with his friends, but not for her. She avoided to dance anywhere near him.

Claire was twirling, spinning, and shaking her body in tune with the music. Small bead pearls of sweat was forming in her forehead but she didn’t care.

Suddenly, someone came behind her. It was unexpected, especially, the hands on her hips and when she turned around and saw Thomas, she actually felt like the bonfire next to them. Burning, flaming into this raging unstoppable fire.

She raised her hand, curled it into a tight fist, and went for his face.

Thomas, of course, did not expect it.

Ouch.

The first blow in his face, hurt her hand and she was afraid she broke it or severely sprained it. But nevertheless, she hit again. Thomas stood shocked before her, his hand touching his jaw, where she had hit him and he looked impressed. Idiot.

“I guess he told ye.” Thomas said, amused.
“I did.” Jamie answered for her.

How he got to her so fast was unbelievable.

“I guess it’s a tie, Fraser.” Claire sarcastically said.

The men became silent.

Claire just shook her head and walked away from them. She grabbed a bottle of rum and disappeared into the shadows.

“Claire?”

She saw Jamie as he desperately looked for her but he clearly didn’t see her in the shadows.

“Claire!” He shouted again.

She would have stayed in hiding if she hadn’t felt sorry for him. He looked scared and she feared he would go searching for her in the jungle.

“I’m here.”

“Ye okay?”

Claire took a big swig from the bottle in response.

“How’s yer hand?”

“Whole.”
“I’m sorry.”

“I’m impressed how many times you have apologized in the last hours. Don’t you ever get tired?”

“Not yet.”

“You can stop,” Claire slurred. “I’m done hearing it.”

“Yer drunk.”

“Not enough.” Claire laughed, a liberating laugh.

“What’s so funny?”

“This, all of it. I was tricked into this ship. I punched a guy in the face, I’m drunk in the Caribbean and there you are.”

“Aye, here I am.”

“No chance I’m getting rid of you?”

“I’m here as a friend.”

Claire rolled her eyes - hard. So hard she was afraid they would get stuck.

Another sip followed by a big gulp that made her cough.

“You know I knew you were only trouble. The second I met you, all you have done is mess with my head.”
“Likewise.”

“Ah, just stop it.”

“I dinna care how stupid it sounds but I came here to find something, to feel anything. I have been lost, not sure what dream to follow…”

“And?”

The anticipation was unbearable. Why she cared was clearly just pure insanity.

“I think my dream was ye.”

Shit.

“Christ. Been dreaming about ye since day one, Claire.”

“Can be an extreme case of seasickness.” Claire answered sarcastically, she was too drunk to keep her mouth shut. “Or just a bad reaction to the shrimps.”

“Maybe, yer the doctor.”

“That I am.”

“As yer friend, I really suggest ye to have someone looking at that hand of yers. It looks swollen.”

“Can you stop with this friend thingy.” Claire raised her voice. “I take it back, I don’t want to be your friend anymore. We can just stay clear for each other from now on.”

“Christ, yer so damn stubborn. I have apologized, I have been supportive, and yet ye can’t even...”
“What? Forgive you?”

“Aye.”

“You toyed with me. Played me. That fucking bet - the one with me nothing getting to fall in love with you.”

“What about it?”

“Nothing...”

“Alright, don’t tell me. Don’t talk to me but please, can I at least help ye onboard. I’m not leaving ye out here.”

“Ye scared?” Her Scottish impression somehow got better when she was drunk. Interesting.

“Absolutely terrified.”

“Whimp.”

“Drunk.”

“Idiot.”

Claire felt like she won the battle.

“Ha.”

“Laugh all ye want.” Jamie said, determined. “If ye don’t walk, I’ll carry ye on my shoulder.”
“Bloody hell ye are.”

Claire shook her head, why the accent? The stupid Scott was rubbing off on her. Damn it.

“I can walk on my own.”

“By all means.”

Claire rose from the sand, she was determined that she was going to walk by herself. But the earth was moving and she lost her foothold.

She was expecting to hit her head but suddenly she was hanging upside down instead.

“Jamie!”

Her legs kicked and kicked, trying to get off Jamie’s shoulder. But he held her tightly around her legs.

“Please, I’m going to throw up if I hang like this.”

Seconds later, all the blood rushed back to her head as Jamie magically flipped her over and carried her in his arms instead.

Stupid muscles.

“Better?”

Claire didn’t answer. This was just great. Being carried like a child by the man she wanted to stay as far away as possible from.
This was too close and he smelled so good.

Her body responded like it always had.

*Aching.*

*Longing.*

*Desperate for this man.*

It took every all ounce of willpower to NOT lean in to his chest, to just forgive and forget.

“I’m not going to force ye the visit the ship doctor, so choose. Yer room or the doctor?”

“My room.”

“Stubborn lass.” He said low under his breath, but she heard him alright.

Jamie had just carried her onto the boat again when she remembered that her bag was still on the beach.

“Oh no! My bag.”

“Where is it?”

“The beach.”

Jamie sighed hard.
“Can ye wait here? I can go get it.”

He carefully put her down on a sunbed, just like the one they had been laying on yesterday.

“Promise.” He said when she didn’t answer.

“Not sure I can walk even if I tried.”

She suddenly got hiccups.

Jamie hesitated, but left her alone with her drunken thoughts.

She looked up at the sky, at the constellations, and started counting them out loud.

“Andromeda.”

“Aries.”

“Aquarius”

“Caelum.”

“Cassiopeia.”

“Gemini.”

Gemini - two of the constellation’s brightest stars carry the twins’ names and suddenly, Claire missed her brother. John was born eleven months after her, they were practically twins, the bestest of friends. Now separated by hundreds of miles.
Claire started crying uncontrollably, trying to silence her sobbing with her hand.

“Claire, are ye okay?” Jamie asked calmly.

“Can you just give me a minute.” She suddenly felt sober, like her body was sobering by the salt from her tears.

“I’m sorry for this mess.”

“I’m not crying because of you.”

“Still, I’m sorry.”

“Where is my bag?”

Jamie silently handed her a black bag and Claire started crying even more.

“This is not my bag.”

“Christ, I’m sorry. I should have asked how it looked like.”

“Never mind. It was a cheap bag anyway.”

“But didn’t ye have something important in it?”

“No, just my room key.” Claire answered. “And a bottle of vodka. If you could be so kind, can you help me to Geillis room. I can sleep there tonight.”

“Sure.”
They walked in silence. First stopping by the reception to leave the stolen bag. Claire half wobbling, with Jamie’s hand around her waist for support.

382.

“Here it is.” Claire announced. “Thank you for the help. I have been a painfully drunk and you have only been kind and respectful.”

“It’s nay worries. I was happy to help.”

“As a friend.” Claire added, without sarcasm.

“Aye.”

Claire knocked on the door.

“I guess I’ll see ye tomorrow.”

“Yes. Um, see you tomorrow, Jamie.”

Jamie started walking away as Claire waited. He turned around a few times, then, he rounded the corner and he was gone.

Claire knocked again, harder.

No answer.

Hopeless, she finally gave up. Claire’s phone was still in her room, recharging after their safari adventure. She could at least go to the bar and charge her drinks to her room.

If she was lucky, Geillis would come find her there.
The nightclub was filled with dancing people as all the other days. Claire searched the crowded dance floor for her friend but Geillis wasn’t there.

She sat down by the bar and ordered a pina colada. Her buzz was wearing off but she still felt intoxicated.

Jake - the married guy - stopped by and shouted in her ear that she was pretty and that he wanted to order her a drink. She had smiled politely and pointed on her glass - still filled with orange liquid and he had moved on.

Somehow nothing felt the same, probably due to her current homelessness.

Two familiar faces appeared from the dark. Ian and Jamie stood next to the entrance, seemingly talking calmly to each other. Ian was exaggerating his hand gestures as he talked and Jamie nodded once or twice.

She watched them, somewhat hidden on the side of the left side of the bar.

Jamie and Ian walked over to the bar, but on the other side. They still hadn’t seen her. Claire wasn’t sure if she wanted them to notice her.

Another man - someone she had never seen before - stopped by and shouted in her ear that she was pretty and that he wanted to order her a drink. She had smiled politely and pointed again to her glass that was still filled with orange liquid. He continued to shout in her ear and Jamie finally noticed her, he looked directly at her, then at the man. He didn’t look jealous or angry. She could still read him as easily and she knew that his eyes only reflected sadness and regret.

But without knowing him fully, she somehow knew he was a champ, as Jamie tried to smile, a somewhat happy smile that didn’t reach his eyes.

“What’s your name.” The man shouted in her ear and she stopped looking at Jamie and gave the man her attention.

“Clara.” She lied.
“How about we take this to my room, Clara. My name is Trevor.”

She noticed his Australian accent, now, when she finally listening and payed attention, but she was still not interested.

“You know what, give me your room number and maybe, just maybe, I will show up.”

It was a poor attempt and Claire hoped he would leave her alone. In these days, people (men) had a hard time in being rejected, the words - no, thank you - was never really understood.

Trevor wrote his room number on a napkin and handed it to her. He winked and then he was gone.

Claire looked at the napkin - Room 1032 - and then she threw it away. Jamie was still standing with Ian across the bar but he wasn’t paying her any attention anymore.

This felt pathetic. Claire finished her drink and started heading towards the entrance.

She had two options: knock on Geillis door again or head of the boat to search for her lost bag.

The second option felt smartest.

The bonfire was still lit, the huge crowd had minimized to approximately half. The people still hanging around was having intimate conversations around the fire, sipping drinks, sharing cigarettes and humming along to the lower volume from the music.

Claire found her bag where she had left it. Both her vodka bottle and keycard was there.

She had no idea what time it was, no holding to reality at all. This was vacation after all. Carefree and endless.

“Been dreaming about ye since day one, Claire.”
Jamie’s voice echoed in her head.

“I think my dream was ye."

If he had said this under other circumstances, she would have answered iyt - *I wanted you to be my dream too.*

Even though she was cynical and strongly fighting against having feelings towards a man she had just met, his word rang beautifully in her head. That man effectively brought down her walls - so many times, it was exhausting building them back up again.

She found a sense of comfort that she didn’t have to spend the night in one of the empty corridors.

Claire walked through the entrance door and headed towards the elevator. She pressed the button and patiently waited. She hummed along to the native music she had heard on the beach.

The elevator doors opened.

The first thing she saw was his back, then, the familiar, fierce red hair she had ran her fingers through yesterday. Then she noticed the woman in his arms.

Maybe she let out a sound or Jamie just conveniently turned around in the right moment but they locked eyes and saw each other.

Jamie stared at her, then down to her refound bag. Just when he opened his mouth and said “Claire”, the doors closed shut.

**Jamie.**

If you look up the words *idiot, regret, and indescribable stupidity*, his picture would certainly be under them.
He had been sure, so fucking sure, that Claire had left with the man at the bar.

Nothing could really explain his behavior except self destruction.

The woman, he thought was named Caroline, was standing next to him, completely confused as to why he suddenly stopped trying to kiss her.

Claire had gone to get her bag. Not to shag the man.

He had been a hair’s length away from kissing her when he felt this sudden urge to turn around.

Thank God, he didn’t kiss her. But the look on Claire face was imprinted, branded, to his brain. He saw the hurt and disbelief.

How did he manage to break her again?

Jamie said a quick and apologetic goodbye to Caroline or Carolina, whatever her name had been. He ran towards the exit and down the stairs. He took two flights of stairs at the time, hoping it would take him faster back to the entrance.

When he stepped out the doors, he was breathless and frantically searching the grounds like a mad man.

Of course, she wasn’t there.

What had he expected? That she would stay?

"Fuck. Fuck. Fuck."

Day 7.
Jamie woke up in his room the next morning, fully dressed and with a wicked headache. He had pathetically tried to drown his sorrows in whiskey yesterday. Something he so regretted today and it was not the only thing.

He looked at his phone - 12:14AM

The ship was moving, sailing towards the next destination they wouldn’t reach until tomorrow. The only thing scheduled was today’s singles event.

Day 7. Game day.

Not the most appropriate theme as he had already gambled away something precious to him - Claire.

The small information on the event was it would be a black tie, formal event - tuxedos for the men and ball gowns for the women.

Even if, maybe the stakes was something valuable?

Nevertheless, it was useless now.

Jamie had stayed in his room the until it was time to leave. Shame and his hangover prevented him to leave like a coward. Or what did Claire call him? A wimp? That’s it. He was wimp.

3:00PM

Just in time for the event to start, Jamie walked nervously with his head tall into the room. The tuxedos was custom made just for him but it still felt too tight, especially today.

Just as he had thought, it was poker night.

The room was decorated with big round tables. Some guest had already seated and waitresses were
walking around in glittery dresses holding plates with champagne.

He searched the room for Claire but she wasn’t here. There were two options: One, she wasn’t coming or the second one, she was late.

This is what love does, Jamie thought. Makes you question your entire existence. Make you question your sanity. It comes sudden, out of nowhere, leaving your fuller and lesser at the same time. Because you are neither whole nor empty but incomplete without her. And even though you try, so desperately to change whatever outcome, it is endlessly impossible to forget. Branded and Marked. Forever.

It was so strange, this *euphoria*.

But Jamie was pretty damn sure he had ruined it.

He checked his clock for the tenth time, desperately wondering if she was going to come at all.

*And then she was there.*

Claire walked into the room and he lost the ability to speak or think coherently. She was wearing a long, velvet green dress. The small strings hanging on her shoulder was the only thing carrying the dress. Jamie thought he could easily rip them apart with his hands without even using any real force and the dress would just fall off.

From memory, he could still remember every each tiny freckles on her cheeks. She was like the perfect summer ache - warm but almost so hot it would burn you.

He felt his cock stirring just at the thought of her. Dressed or undressed, it didn’t matter. Her magic pull on him was insane. Never in his life had he been this attracted to anyone before.

Maybe that's why he so foolishly taken the bet in the first place. Before he knew her, he found her beautiful but the very second he saw her up close, he thought he died. His heart *literally* skipped a fucking beat.
Now what? He wondered. She wanted to be friends, maybe not anymore. Would he honor her request and just give up? His left eye did this strange twitching at the bare thought of “just friends.”

No.

He still had time. The clock started ticking now - seven days left. He would win her back.

“Ladies and gentlemen.” The hostess announced. “Welcome to our poker tournament. Today, the dates are random, just mingle with your table companions. The prizes are very luxurious and there can only be one winner per table. Please be seated accordingly to the listing.”

Jamie walked over to the wall where everyone else was gathering. He searched for his name on the list and smiled when he saw his table.

Table 21
James Fraser
Olivia Palm
Rupert Mackenzie
Frida Stramos
Joe Abernathy
Claire Beauchamp
Leo Olsen
Rita Almada

James had expected her to be competitive but he hadn’t expected her to be this good at poker. With her glass face, he was sure he could read her but her poker face was steel. Texas Hold’em was the game.
One by one, their tablemates all lost the tournament until it was just the two of them in the final run.

“Jamie.” Claire sat across the table. “You are a gambling man but you play so safe?”

“Aye, lass. I’m not going to lose this time.”

Claire blinked like she understood exactly what he had meant.

Royal flush, his hand was solid and he was sure he would win - but he didn’t want to.

“All in.” Claire looked smug, so sure. And then proceeded with showing her hand.

*Four of a kind.*

Jamie, prolonging the tension for their small audience that had gathered around them, looked at Claire and the happy glint that was in her eyes. He couldn’t kill that smile, he simply couldn’t. Carefully, placed his card on the table, facing down.

“Congratulations! Ye win.” Jamie said and Claire looked surprised at him.

“What? I thought you weren’t going to lose?”

“I didn’t mean this. And I ken ye know it..”

Claire left the table, very satisfied with her victory, and received the congratulations from other friends from the cruise for her win. Jamie stayed behind, at the table, when suddenly a hand stretched out and turned over his cards.

Geillis.
“Ye let her win?” She said.

“Aye.”

“Why?”

“Just look at her” Jamie smiled. “And look how happy she is.”

After a few moments, the winners had been announced and given their luxurious spa certificates.

Then, the hostess surprised them.

“We are not done for today. In celebrating love, we have a charity event later today at 9PM. All donations will go to the British Heart Foundation. The men will bid on anonymous dates and will not know until after auction who their dates are. The event is still black tie and we look forward to seeing you all this evening. Thank you.”

The crowd applauded and dispersed to prepare for the evenings activities.

Chapter End Notes

I hoped you liked it. The next chapter will definitely be fluffy again. Xoxo
Day 7

Chapter Notes

It still Wednesday (2 minutes left) in Sweden so I’m keeping up with this challenge. @thebrochtuarachs was a champion and beta this chapter in an airplane! To @e_storm for always letting me bug her and a special shoutout to @abbydebeaupreposts for cleaning up the story (I’m updating every chapter with errors and such, all thanks to abbs) ❤️ I can’t believe we are already halfway through and that so many of you like this story. Thank you so much for the lovely, supportive and wonderful comments. I have to admit that I am very nervous about posting this chapter, so I would appreciate reactions and feedback when you have read it. Let’s go. Enjoy

Day 7.

Claire won a luxurious spa treatment for two.

Geillis and Claire walked back to their separate rooms after the event to changed out their fancy dresses to swimwear and robes.

As she changed, Claire looked at the piece of paper she had received from the hostess. The women were supposed to write down their ideal dates for the auction. It would be anonymous and their identities will not be revealed until the end of the event.

They had a few hours to spare and getting pampered is the perfect distraction.

The massage for two was supposedly for couples. That was made very obvious with the room being completely covered in red roses, romantic lit candles, and two massage tables placed next to each other.

“Are ye planning on forgiving the ginger soon?” Geillis suddenly said half an hour into their session.

“What?” Claire lifted her head from the hole and looked to her left at Geillis. “We have solved that and we are fine.”
“Right, friends... now.”

“Yes, something like that.”

“But this is not a friendship cruise where we’re supposed to hold hands and sing kumbaya, Claire.”

“I know. I’m supposed to fall in love and get married at the last port.” She answered sarcastically.

“Nobody has mentioned marriage but I think it’s time for ye to stop lying to yerself.”

“I’m not.”

“Aye, ye are! Claire, ye really like him and ye guys stare at each other like lovesick puppies.”

“So? It’s done. It’s over.”

“So what he did that bet? He told ye. He told ye because he clearly didn’t want to hide anything from ye. It takes guts to admit a crappy thing like that.”

“What are you saying? I should forgive and forget? Just pretend it didn’t happen and just...”

“Ye don’t have to forget.” Geillis interrupted her. ”But forgiveness is a braver thing to do compared to running away.”

Claire didn’t know what she was supposed to say.

“I brought ye here. It’s my responsibility that yer having a good time. And since ye met him, I haven’t seen ye this carefree and happy in ages.”
“I don’t want to be defined by a man.”

*Like with Frank.*

“Then claim yer independence and do this for yerself. Follow yer heart or whatever.”

“But he was clearly moving on yesterday? I saw him when I was in the elevator - he was with another woman.”

Geillis sighed. “Are ye twelve?” She suddenly raised her voice and wrapped the towel around her as she sat up. “This is a singles cruise, not a *be-monogamous-with-the-first-person-ye-meet*. So, decide - either ye try or move on?”

“Why are you angry at me? I haven’t done anything wrong!”

“Because he is *not* Frank. And ye are being stubborn. If it hadn’t been the bet, you would have found something else to pick at. He could have said or done something and you would have used it as an excuse to not see him anymore.”

A long silence, a long awkward silence followed. The women massaging them even stopped when Geillis started shouting.

“Why are you so persistent about this?” Claire asked, a little shocked at her friend’s outburst.

“Cause I love ye.”

“Hmm.”

“And ye need to get laid.”

Claire laughed softly. Now Geillis was sounding more like herself.
“So what should I do?”

“Ye said he is into romantic crap. Do something romantic.”

“Like what?”

“How would I know?”

Claire rested her head down again and thought of what Geillis just had said. Some was pure nonsense but she did had a point.

_Damn it._

“And ye can thank him for the massage.”

___

_**Jamie.**_

The few hours between events had been uneventful. It was just him and his friends playing volleyball in the pool.

He on one side and Thomas on the other.

Since they were kids, they had been competing and today was, nevertheless, the same.

They hadn’t spoken about yesterday - about his obnoxious behavior towards Claire or the fact that she hit him. _Good lass._

Thomas wasn’t always a bastard but he had reached a new level since the cruise. This wasn’t like him and it was time to confront him about it.
The volleyball game was over. Jamie’s team won and they were heading towards their room to change and shower before the auction.

“Tom, can we talk?”

“What?”

“What’s going on?”

“Dinna ken what ye mean?”

“Claire.”

“What? I like her. She is feisty.”

“The bet is off. I told ye that and still.”

“Fraser, just because ye were an idiot for telling her doesn’t mean I have to stop flirting with her. The bet is off, I agreed to that. But I still like her, alright?”

“Do ye really? Or is it because I like her?”

“She is smart, beautiful and a talented dancer. What’s not to like?”

“Out of respect for our friendship, I have to say, it’s obvious she dinna like ye back. Her right hook told ye so yesterday.”

“Of course she was upset? Ye told her about the bet. That was just stupid. And everyone deserves a second chance, aye? Maybe if I explain myself, she will change her mind.”
“She won’t. Trust me. Just back off.”

—

Back in the tuxedo and back in the main room again, the auction started out slowly. The hostess was on stage as everyone else was seated in chairs in front of her.

Jamie glanced over to Claire a few times. She was wearing a different dress now - a long, elegant, silky white dress that just made her look more angelic as she’s ever been. She was sitting a few rows away as he looked at her with astonishment and longing. She was beautiful.

It felt like punishment and one he deserved.

The hostess presented the anonymous women one by one. She began by presenting them by reading out loud their own written presentations followed by the date they were auctioning out.

Jamie hadn’t decided if he would bid on anything but when the hostess started reading out one particular presentation - anonymous date 10 - he reacted.

“I’m cynical. I don’t trust easily especially not after what I have been through. I’m competitive but don’t enjoy being played.” The hostess read. “But I, too, have placed bets with high stakes, emotional as greedy...”

*Claire* . *It had to be?*

“I cry when I watch cheesy hallmark movies. I’m lactose intolerant but I still drink strawberry milkshakes...”

*Definitely Claire.*

“My ideal date is not outdoorsy. I have never climbed the Mount Everest but I do enjoy a bottle of wine or two.”
Jamie looked at Claire just to see if she was giving away anything - that it was, in fact, her letter being read out loud. But she sat still, looking at the hostess like it wasn’t but he knew.

“My date is a dinner for two at the top floor restaurant. Followed by a romantic moonlight walk on deck and a lesson in the constellations. If you want a horse in the race, bid on me. The winner takes it all.”

Jamie had his sign up in the air the seconds the hostess asked who was interested. He was prepared to empty his bank account for this.

“100.” Jamie said with confidence.

“Number 90 has placed the first bid.” The hostess said cheerfully. “Anyone else?”

“120.”

Jamie looked at Thomas as he waved his sign.

“200.” Jamie quickly said.

“This is getting interesting.” The hostess laughed. “Will number 25 give up or raise the bar?”

“250.” Thomas said.

“250, this is soon a new record. Number 90?”

“260.” Someone else came into the bidding.

Jamie hesitated, scared that the constant and annoying competitions between him and Thomas would just ruin it all because he wasn’t playing anymore. It wasn’t about winning or losing but just for a second chance to get to know her. But still, he feared that Claire would only feel like she was in the middle of a immature battle again.
However, she had wrote this and left breadcrumbs only he would know. She wanted him to know it was her.

“If there aren’t any more bids.” The hostess said. “The date will go till number 25, in three…”

Too lost in his thoughts of Claire, Jamie hadn’t realized Thomas had bid again.

“2000.” Jamie was as shocked as the audience but he had said it.

“Oh lord! Ladies and gentlemen, this is a new record.” the hostess announced enthusiastically.

He glanced over at Thomas who was looking irritated but didn’t dare move. His hand, however, was clenched hard around the sign.

“Well then, for 2000 dollars, the moonlight date, going on three, two, one. Sold! To the generous number 90 in the middle. A round of applause.”

His hand was slightly trembling and he shyly looked to his left. Claire was applauding like the rest but she still didn’t turn around.

The speech about gambling with emotions, cheesy hallmark movies, strawberry milkshakes and horses - It was her date. Now, he only hoped he hadn’t read into this wrong and made a fool out of himself.

The rest of the auctions flew by pretty quickly.

When it was time to collect the envelope containing his mysterious date, Jamie’s heart pounded loudly in his ear. He held it in his hand and searched the room for Claire but she had left the premises, she wasn’t there anymore.

Jamie opened the red envelope and sighed with relief.
Claire Beauchamp.

——

Claire

Claire had left specific instructions on the back of her card.

The time of the date.

Where they would meet

and the most important -

We need to start over. Let's be strangers again.

It would have been so awkward if Thomas had won the bid or even someone else. It was nerve wracking as the hostess had read her letter but - Thank God - Jamie had figured it out.

She was taking Geillis advice. She had decided a few minutes before the event that she would rather spend the rest of her days not pretending. She wanted him - Jamie. It would only have been hard to ignore the obvious. She hasn’t forgiven him entirely for the bet but just simply letting it be a tie.

For once, she was unpredictable in her predictable life.

9:59PM

Just seconds left before the clock on the wall struck ten sharp and Jamie walked through the restaurant doors. Right on time.
His blue tuxedo made him look dashingy handsome, slightly older even, and Claire felt how nervous she was already.

“Claire Beauchamp?” Jamie asked, not a hint of humor in his voice. He was taking it seriously.

“Yes?”

“Number 90, James Fraser. The lucky winner.”

“Pleasure to met you, James Fraser.” She said, smiling widely. She couldn’t help it.

“Please, call me Jamie.” He said as he sat down in the chair across her.

“Jamie.” It came out breathlessly. She really needed to chill. “That was quite an impressive bid.”

“Aye, but it was for a great cause.”

“The British Heart Foundation surely will appreciate it.”

As promised, their table was filled with champagne and lit candles, setting the romantic mood. Add to that, the view of the the ocean from the huge panorama windows was breathtaking.

“Tell me about yourself. Something that wasn’t in yer letter.”

“I’m a general surgeon working at a hospital in London. I recently was offered a fellowship in Scotland but turned it down.”

The same information but with new additions.

“My ex, well, he lives there with his new family. That’s why I turned it down.”

Even more new information she hadn’t told Jamie before but she wanted to say it. Or in a manner of speaking, needed to say it out loud.

“I see. Unfortunate for Scotland then.”

“Yes.” Claire answered. “And how about you? Tell me something I don’t know about you.”

“I own a private riding school and I’m thinking about expanding - buy more horses, a few more employees. My big sister, Jenny is one of the instructors and soon to be my co-partner.”

“Do you teach yourself?”

“I do.”

“Is there an age limit or is anyone allowed to buy lessons?”

“Everyone is welcome but I have to warn ye, I’m fully booked. Business is blooming.”

“That’s really nice to hear.”

“If ye ever would want lessons, I would happily clear my schedule, just so ye know.”

Claire just smiled as an answer.

This was going fine - great even - and better than she thought. She was happy to be in his company again - even if it was all only meant to last for a short amount of days.
The waitress came by and they ordered some appetizers and a bottle of red wine.

Jamie continued to talk about his horses. Just like he had before but switched up by telling her next things. How he was ten years old when he got his very own horse - Donas - and how that horse was still alive and well back home in Scotland - in Lallybroch.

“My father was concerned, ye ken. Donas, he was ill-tempered and vicious at first, not the most appropriate horse for a kid. He tried to bite and kick anyone who got near him.”

“And what did you do?”

“I talked to him, for hours, for weeks. I told him about myself, then about my family. After awhile, I lost subjects to talk about so I started reading books to him. Each day I moved a little closer to him, just to make him familiar with me. My father always sat in the stables with me for protection and then, one day, I just felt it.”

“Felt what?”

“A connection. I walked into the stables and he didn’t grunt or made even a sound. He just looked at me, directly into my eyes, and I knew I had earned his trust.”

“Wow.”

“Aye, it was a magical moment. But still, he has never, even today, let anyone ride him except myself. My brother, William, tried but he ended up with seven stitches.”

“Oh god.”

Jamie chuckled at her reaction.

“He was fine. It was the proudest moment in my life.”

“That your horse bit your brother?”
“Aye, strangest thing, but yes. I’m the youngest of us and everyone saw me as this little kid and somehow, me of all people, had managed to tame this beast of an animal.”

“Then that kid grow up and became the tallest man in Scotland?”

“No, Sassenach. I’m not the tallest, but I am taller than William.”

He winked at her.

“Maybe that should be your proudest moment?” Claire said.

Everything felt so easy going and liberating. This date had been a successful and they hadn’t even had dinner yet.

“Are you finally going to tell me what Sassenach means?” She asked and he smiled, a huge grin on his face.

“I don’t think I have ever called you that before. We just met, remember?” He teased.

“Bloody hell, just tell me.”

“Alright, it’s nothing really. It means foreigner, a Gaelic word for an English person. When you told Thomas that ye lived in Scotland for a year, I just pictured ye, wandering around the highlands, in the wilderness, with yer hair loosely flying around in the wind and then that word, one of many, suddenly popped up in my head.”

“So technically, right now, here in the Caribbean - we are both sassenachs.”

“Weel, I suppose.”

“You said one of many words.” Claire asked, curiously. “How many words, or should I say,
nicknames did you think of?"

"Mo nighean donn.. ."

“What does that mean?” Claire asked, breathlessly. Her kink was obviously Jamie speaking different languages.

“My brown haired lass.”

Claire reflexively touched her hair, wanting to question how dull and boring it was. But the way he had said it, she somehow knew he would say something poetic about it.

“Have I told ye how beautiful ye look tonight?”

Claire shook her head shyly.

“Yer bewitching, Claire. It’s a miracle I can speak at all...Yer breathtakingly beautiful.”

“Thank you, Jamie. You look dashing yourself.”

They both fell silent, a sudden unexplainable pull almost made her get up, march over and kiss him.

“Excuse me.” The waitress interrupted their intense, strange moment. “Are you ready to order?”

“Yes, uhm, let me see.”

They ordered so much food. All for both of them to share.

*Black Cod Brûlée. Grilled Quail with Mango and Arugula. Crown Roast of Lamb with Fresh Herbs. Mini burgers and of course, a side plate of chips.*
A culinary discovery.

They ate all of it. Savoring every taste and every laughter. Ordering another bottle of wine. Telling more stories - new ones - with Claire even sharing a few memorable and precious memories from her childhood.

They bonded in a unexpected way, talked about the future and things they liked.

*Jamie’s expansion. Claire’s secret dream about joining the military. Favorite authors. Hiking. Travel.*

“Claire, why did you suddenly change yer mind? About me?”

They were strangers, still, but not the pretending version anymore. It was unsaid, unplanned, but not unsettling. She welcomed it.

“I wasn’t sure if I were able to stay seven more days on this boat with you and do the absolute opposite to what every damn cell in my body was saying.”

“What does that mean?”

“I summarized everything you have said to me from the moment we met. When I took away one sentence, just *one*, I realized that I had spent the entire trip, so far, just being utterly and ridiculously happy around you. Confused but happy, that alone felt like a royal flush.”

*Stop it with the gambling references.*

“Ye know?”

“Yes, Geillis told me.”
“Are ye upset?”

“I am here, aren’t I?”

“Aye.” Jamie said softly. “And I’m grateful for it.”

“Just promise to never let me win like that again.”

“I promise.” Jamie answered softly. “Oh and Claire, I was being honest when I said that ye break me down, layer by layer. Meeting ye, is the most earth shaking moment of my life.”

Still not accustomed to his romantic words, Claire raised her glass in a toast, blushing as she smiled.

“Cheers to new beginnings.”

“Slaintè.”

——

After dinner, they walked close next to each other on deck. Close but not touching except for the occasional brush of their elbows in their stride. As she had promised, they were taking a moonlight promenade, continuing their conversation about everything and nothing.

“Claire?”

“Yes?”

“If yer ex, hadn’t been in Scotland, do ye think faith would have brought us together in another mysterious way?”
“If I had moved, perhaps.”

“I’m a very clumsy man, I would most likely have run into ye once or twice at the hospital.”

“Have you ever seriously injured yourself?”

“A few broken ribs, one broken arm and three concussions. Does that count as serious?”

“It does. Don’t you wear helmet?”

“Aye, I do.”

“What happened?”

“I’m just the clumsiest, tripping on my own feet.”

It sounded like a lie but he clearly didn’t want to share whatever had happened and she respected that.

The stars were shining even brighter tonight, the full moon hanging upon them.

“I have to ask,” Claire probably would regret it. “What was the wager? What would you win if you had slept with me?”

Jamie stopped walking and ran his hand through his hair.

“This will probably just make it worse, but I’ll tell ye. I meant what I said, honesty is very important for me and I will never lie to ye again.” He looked hesitant and nervous. “Right before the event started, we were talking, all of us, manly nonsense, when I started talking about my car. It’s a 1966 Ford Mustang GT. It’s actually Thomas’ old car. I won it from him ten years ago in a football tournament. He has never gotten over it. So, Thomas suggested the bet, and I fell for it...I have never been this man and I will never forgive myself for it.”
“What color is the car?”

“Ehm, Black.”

“Isn’t it tiring to always compete?”

“It’s is.”

“Why didn’t you just let him win?”

“I kind of did.”

“How?”

“I gave him the car.”

“What?”

“Aye, after the auction. We started arguing and I said that he could get the damn car back and I just wanted him to stop. He claimed that he was into ye but I ken it wasn’t the truth. So, I gave him the car against him letting ye be...”

“How? I mean, why would you give him your car?”

“Technically, it was his and even though I have loved that car, it’s just sentimental and materialistic. I wasn’t sure if I had misinterpreted yer letter but I felt better knowing that nobody would try to hurt ye.”

“Jesus H. Christ.”
“After everything, do ye still want to be with me?”

“I wasn’t interested in anything complicated - still isn’t - but it seems more complicated to stay away.”

“We don’t need to label it. Let’s just be free and happy.” Jamie said softly. “And together...”

“I like that.”

Jamie turned towards her and moved forward until their lips were almost touching. After a brief hesitation, Jamie brushed his lips softly against hers - questioning.

They were barely making contact but Claire could feel the blood rushing through her vein were on fire. She wanted to put her arms around his neck and feel him closer, but held back, for a second, for fear of giving away too much away.

Claire wanted to see the stars shoot out of the pitch black sky and wish for this moment never to end.

Claire eyes fluttered shut at his touch and when she looked into his blue eyes, she saw the stars - the constellations - reflected in them and she took it as a sign - to embrace this, whatever it was, and she closed the distance.

They kissed.

His lips felt softer than before. The taste of red wine on his tongue was intoxicating as his hand slowly entangled in her hair, pushing her closer, deepening their kiss.

Both of them knowing this was going to be more complicated than they intended but neither willing to stop it.
New day, new chapter. Nsfw. Thank you for the amazing response yesterday (everyday) I wasn’t nervous about my writing really but how you would respond on the car part and how it all solved. It was foolish because you guys just drowned me with love and encouragement! ❤ Today’s chapter was beta by @Happytoobservefromadistance, she was amazing and so kind to help me. THANK U!

Day 8.

Real life. The one where you have to wake up to that irritating alarm, go to work, be there for hours, finally leave, do the grocery shopping, then home to pay your bills, feed the cat and hope for sleep. This current lifestyle was the absolute opposite of what Claire wanted, and she was going to enjoy it to the fullest.

Back in London, she was living the life she had chosen to live.

Almost.

It had been months since Frank Randall moved out of their apartment - to move to Scotland and live with his mistress and love child. Home is people, not a place. Frank had been hers. Four years and eight months she had given him everything, just to be cheated on, lied to and left broken with the information of his secret life. It was a dark time in her life, and she was still hiding in the shadows.

But since she met him - Jamie.

The sun was suddenly shining, calling her out to feel the warmth and Claire was savoring every drop of sunlight.

She was taking back her independence and he was going to be her big adventure.
Day 8. Bonding

It was casual dress code. Preferring something loosely and comfortable, Claire went for a thin, yellow cotton dress that stopped under her knees. It was actually her own and she felt good about herself - confident - as she walked to the event.

10AM

As always, Jamie’s tall figure was the first thing she saw. He turned around when Ian, cheerfully started elbowing him and pointed directly at her. Both of them smiled, Ian as he looked at his friend and Jamie as he looked at her.

Their evening yesterday had been a step in a new direction and it had sadly ended with him being chivalrous and kissed her goodbye as he left her room.

She had dreamt of different shades of red and brown, mixing together in a sensual way until it was painting of themselves.

“Good morning.” Jamie said and kissed her cheek. “Hope ye slept well.”

“Good morning to you too. I slept very well, thank you.” Claire chuckled at his nervousness. “How did you sleep?”

“Likewise, verra well.”

“Hello love birds.” The hostess walked upon stage and everyone started walking towards her. “Are you ready for today’s event? This one is different from what we have done this far. Some of you have found a special one already, while some still haven’t found your perfect match. Don’t worry, after today, you will feel more confident and hopefully you have done some bonding.”

Claire listened to the hostess and began to feel more curious.
“Today we are doing trust exercises. Pair up with a partner you have dated, just to get that little bond stronger. Or spice it up! Be brave and pick someone you have never talked to. Small talks are hard for some. This can boost your confidence. You have two hours to complete all exercises, you can be wherever you want on the ship. The bag containing instructions and tools will be found at the table over there, please do them in order and good luck.”

The hostess walked off the stage and the crowd started walking over to the partners they wanted to be with. Claire turned around to look at Jamie, he was her obvious choice.

“Shall we dip our toes in the deep water?”

A relief in his eyes was very noticeable, as he had been apprehensive she would choose someone else. Jamie smiled and offered her his arm.

“Where to, Sassenach?”

Claire looped her arm with his and they started walking out out of the room.

“How about breakfast?”

The ship had approximately nine different restaurants, two nightclubs and one cafeteria. They decidedly walked to the restaurant on the east side, on the second floor - Their pancakes were the greatest.

“What is the first thing on the list?” Jamie asked before he stuffed his mouth full with eggs and bacon.

“It’s a list of questions, do you want to start answering them?”

“Sure.”

—-
The game of truth.

1. What is your biggest fear?

2. If you could be anywhere in the world right now, where would you be, and why?

3. What is a fond childhood memory that is close to your heart?

4. Which song truly speaks to you?

5. Who is someone who inspires you?

“It feels like we went through these questions yesterday.” Jamie said softly before he got this look on his face. “Hmm, my biggest fear ... I think it’s about my mother. She has been feeling badly lately and I fear she’s hiding what’s really going on with her.”

Claire immediately wanted to go full Doctor mood and ask what symptoms Jamie’s mother had but stopped herself as Jamie moved on to the second question.

“I don’t want to be anywhere else but right here, with you.”

“Me neither.” Claire smiled and reached over the table to caress his hand. “I’m exactly where I want to be.”

“We covered most joyful childhood memories yesterday, should we skip that one?” Jamie asked and she nodded.

“I rarely listen to music these days but I like old classics - Led Zeppelin, Jimi Hendrix, and Queen.”

“Oh really, so if you have to pick one song, what is your jam?”
“My jam.” Jamie laughed, the sweet sound rang beautifully in her ears. “It should be - *Under Pressure* .”

“Please, sing it for me.”

“Nae, Sassenach. We will be kicked out if I sing.”

“Fine.” Claire squeezed his hand before she retreated and continued eating her pancakes. “Last one, who inspires you?”

“My sister - Jenny.”

“That’s lovely. Are you close?”

“Aye, really close. She is my best friend.”

*Aww.*

“It’s your turn.” Jamie pointed out. “What is your biggest fear?”

“Where do I even start?” It came out like a joke, but that was exactly how she was when it came to difficult things.

*Abandonment. Fear of losing more people I love.*

Her list was long, she feared too many things and all of them were too much to say to a stranger.

“Being under water.”

“Right, yer a bad swimmer. Is there a particular reason why? And, I have to say, it’s an interesting thing that ye fear water but decided to go on a cruise ship.”
“I just don’t like losing control. I can swim, but the second I’m below water I just panic.”

Jamie didn’t question her, but she could see the wheels turning. Claire wanted to change the subject and read the following questions.

“We covered number two and three already, so a song that really speaks to me. I’m a huge Celine Dion fan...” Claire admitted and tried to think what specific song had affected her in the past. “I mean, all of them are amazing. But her latest - *Ashes*. It really spoke to me.”

“Never heard it, maybe we can listen to it later?”

“Yeah, sure. Be prepared to be blown away. When she hits that high note and sings - *Let beauty come out of ashes* - it gives me goosebumps!”

Both burst into laughter and Claire enjoyed being able to be her inner-Celine-nerd.

“Last question. Who inspires ye?”

“My brother, John.” Claire answered. “I was raised in a military family, I don’t know if I said that part. My Mum and Dad joined at the same time and they fell in love under training. My brother joined when he was 18. It was hard for him at first, he was bullied because of his sexuality. But John continued and he grew so much and I’m just the proudest sister every day.”

“Ye never said that ye were a military family but that explains why ye wanted to join the army and become a combat Doctor.” Jamie said. “Where is your brother now?”

“Home in London. He leaves in a few weeks again, somewhere classified.”

“It must be hard, when he leaves. Ye seem close.”

“We are used to it now, I work hard hours and so does he. We talk on the phone a lot and that helps. We share my cat, Adso, and spend our off days together.”
Claire was surprised she had opened up this much, but it felt nice. Jamie was an easy person to talk with. John was one of her favorite topics. It pained her to talk about her parents and she was thankful he didn’t ask about them.

The next thing on the list was - Blindfold Walk.

1.

2. One of you are going to wear the blindfold as your partner guides you. Don’t say where you are going and just trust in each other.

“Who is wearing the blindfold?” Jamie asked as he took the black fabric from the plastic bag.

“You.”

“Alright.” Jamie quickly covered his eyes with the blindfold. “Lead the way, Sassenach.”

They started outside the restaurant and Claire held onto Jamie by his arm. They walked slowly, to an unknown destination.

“Yer not going to push me over the railing are you?” Jamie jokes as they walk out on deck. It was the hottest day yet and the sun was shining.

“Don’t you trust me?”

Claire stopped abruptly, as did Jamie.

“Aye, I trust ye.”
He couldn’t see her. Claire took her time in watching him closely, admiring his face. The few freckles on his nose and chin...his jaw, and lastly, his lips.

Claire cupped his cheeks, and Jamie continued remained still, letting her do whatever she wanted. She traced his lips with her thumb. Out of reflex, he licked his lips, as he knew what was coming.

His breathing became heavier and Claire stepped on her toes and sighed out loud. He responded with placing his hands on her hips and drew her closer. They collided in a frenzy, hasty and desperate to kiss.

This time, they were both sober, but when they kissed, she had never felt more intoxicated.

“Shall we continue?” Claire asked

“I’ll follow ye wherever ye go.”

Claire still felt dizzy from their kiss as they continued their blind walk. She lead him inside, through the reception and then to the elevator.

Neither said a word as they traveled to the fifth floor and down the corridor.

402.

Claire’s heart was beating rapidly, as she opened up the door to her room.

“We have reached our destination, you can take the blindfold off now.”

Jamie took off the blindfold, his eyes slowly adjusting to the light again. His eyes widened in surprise when he discovered where he was.

“I thought we could do the next task in here.”
Claire couldn’t help but blush.

“What’s the next thing?” Jamie asked and she saw his Adam's apple bobbing as he swallowing hard.

He was nervous too.

——

**Soul gazing.**

*This is an intense exercise that will help you and your partner connect on a deeper level. It can have a huge impact on your sense of connectedness, but it’s not for the faint of heart!*

*To try this exercise, face your partner in a seated position. Move so close to one another that your knees are nearly touching, and look into each other’s eyes.*

Hold eye contact for three to five minutes. Don’t worry, it’s not a competition – you can blink! However, refrain from talking. Simply look into one another’s eyes, even if it’s awkward at first.

——

“Where should we sit, then?” He asked.

“Maybe on the bed?”

Claire walked over to her bed, took off her shoes and sat down in the middle of the mattress. Jamie quickly followed and did the same.

Jamie had difficulties with sitting in Indian position, so they had to compromise. He stretched out his long legs and she placed hers over his. She was practically almost sitting in his lap.

“You ready?” Claire set her alarm on her phone.
“No talking for three minutes?”

“Exactly. From, three, two, one.”

Claire put her phone away and looked into his eyes.

It wasn’t uncomfortable but intense. They held each other’s gaze and the longer he looked at her, the faster her heart was beating.

Jamie licked his lips, maybe unconsciously, but Claire did the same.

It felt like foreplay.

The silence, the only thing that was heard was their breathing. It was arousing and a suddenly energy started rushing through her body, she was turned on, unwilling and unable to hide it. She bit her lower lip and Jamie lost his concentration and looked down on her lips.

How many seconds had past?

The rules were to be quiet. But they had already broken the rules about sitting too close. Jamie, having the same thoughts, easily lifted her up closer, so she sat fully on his lap, their faces just inches away.

Jamie was hard under her and she wanted nothing more than for him to take her.

She started grinding against him and his hands quickly were on her ass, squeezing hard and pressing her closer.

He let out a small sound and Claire lost it.

“Fuck this.” Claire whispered and kissed him hard.
His hands were everywhere.

The alarm started ringing and Claire sighed and quickly turned it off.

She looked back at Jamie, his eyes were darker, filled with desire for her and she felt empowered and more confident than ever.

She drew her dress over her head, and threw away her bra. Jamie pretended to faint when she sat in her panties in his lap.

“Christ.”

“Your turn.”

She undressed him. First, his white shirt, even though they already had seen each other naked, she felt expectant and curious. How he would feel when he wasn’t wet from the shower and most of all, how he tasted.

A bit clumsy, she climbed off his lap and smiled as she unbuckled his shorts. He did nothing to stop her, and helped her finish undressing him until he was sitting naked with his back leaning against the headboard.

Teasingly, she ran her index finger from his chest down to his thighs, just as he had done to her in the shower.

It had been so long since she had done this, but there was no regret or hesitation in her.

Claire slowly licked the tip on his cock. Finally tasting him for the first time, teasing him with her tongue. Jamie started breathing heavier and she wrapped her lips around his cock. Slowly, she took him in, inch by inch, deeper into her mouth and he let out a groan.

It was euphoric and arousing. She took more of him into her mouth.
“Ahh.” He couldn’t control himself. “Claire.”

Deeper and deeper she sucked, her head moving up and down. When his hands entangled into her hair, she felt even more turned on.

To give him pleasure made her wetter. Hotter.

“Ye need to stop Claire, please, I can’t...”

But she didn’t want to stop.

She continued and he didn’t stop her.

She felt powerful and sexy. She craved to find out how Jamie sounded when he came. Claire was using her tongue and fingers now, making him flex his hips upwards in desire.

“Claire!” He choked out and she increased her speed, taking him further down her throat. That got him.

Release. Warmth flooded into her mouth and she swallowed every drop and then looked up with a satisfying grin.

Their eyes met. The way Jamie was looking down at her, burning for her, made her feel even more turned on.

“On yer back, Claire.”

“Are you sure you can...”

“Aye.” He interrupted her. “Even if it kills me.”
Claire laid there waiting, wanting for him to run those beautiful hands all over her.

*Can beauty come out of ashes?*

Jamie climbed on top of her. His cock, to her delight, hard again, pushing into her stomach. They were both panting loudly.

“Jamie.” She pleaded.

He pushed her hair aside and placed a kiss on her neck, then moved closely to her ear.

“Feel how hard I am against ye,” he whispered. “It feels like I will never stop wanting ye, every inch of my body is burning for ye, Claire.”

“I want you.”

“I feel that, yer as slick and wet as the ocean.” He teased and he began to move his thumb in little circles over her clit. She felt captivated and she tried to resist her urge to squirm.

“I want to hear ye,” he encouraged her and increased his speed.

“Oh, god.” She moaned loud and louder. “Yes, Yes. Right there, Jamie.”

“Claire, yer so beautiful.”

Claire was almost there, she began bucking her hips up and down to increase the friction. Jamie suddenly stopped and his hand was replaced by his cock.

His eyes meet hers, silently asking for permission. Claire reached down and guided him inside.
Slowly, he filled her, inch by inch until he was at her innermost core.

They moaned in unison as the overwhelming pleasure ran through them as he moved back and forth working harder and further inside.

His hips were flexing victorious. It was mix of pleasure and even pain as he pounded into her.

“Harder.”

“Don’t hold back, mo ghràidh. I want to hear ye scream.”

That was the last straw. Maybe it was the word he called her, or that he wanted to hear her scream with pleasure.

Her body began shivering. Then trembling, she screamed words of nonsense, quickly followed by his name. It was a moment of pure bliss.

Jamie carefully, for a man of his size, climbed off of her and laid down next to her. As her orgasm slowly decreased, her mind briefly drifted off to the trust exercises revealing she did in fact, trust him.

She trusted him with her body and her heart. It was a second of fear, how easily it was, but she embraced it and leaned her head on his chest. His heart beating hard.

They laid in silence for awhile. Jamie was playing with her hair, twirling it around his fingers as she laid with her eyes closed.

“Claire,” he said softly. “If ye think ye dare. Do ye trust me enough to let me help ye overcome yer fear of being under water.”

“Yes.”

She answered without hesitation.
“The Royal MS was called ‘The ship of dreams’ and it really was.”

Jamie had quoted a line from *Titanic* and she just smiled.

“I knew you had seen the movie.”

_____

This wasn’t part of the trust exercises, it was just Jamie being caring and wonderful. They were in the pool, on the shallow side, where she could stand on her own and Jamie stood next to her.

“Do ye want to tell me the real answer of why ye are afraid of water.”

“Not really.”

“Ye dinna have to. I just thought it would help some.”

Claire touched the surface and splashed water in Jamie’s face. Both started laughing and it took away some of the edge.

“How about we start slowly?” Jamie said. “One small step at the time.”

“Okay.”

They walked separately and slowly until the water was above her belly button - so far so good.

“By this time tomorrow, we will have reached Bahamas. Are ye excited?”
He was making small talks, to make her relax and she appreciated it.

“Oh, yes. I can’t wait.”

“The guys were talking about renting jet skis and snorkeling all day.”

“Is everything all right with Thomas now? After he got his car back?”

“Not sure, we haven’t really talk about it. But I think we are good.”

“Who is your closest friend?”

“Ian. We have been friends as long as I remember.” Jamie smiled widely when he talked about his friend.

“Has he met anyone here? I don’t think I have seen him actively try to hook up with anyone.”

“He hasn’t, and probably won’t either. Ian hasn’t told me, but I’m pretty sure he is into my sister.”

“What? Your sister?”

“Aye, he looks at her the same way I look at ye.” Jamie said shyly. It was adorable. “I haven’t felt like this before, that’s probably why I didn’t get it.”

“How do you feel?”

Jamie lifted her up and she wrapped her arms and legs around him. She hadn’t realized how deep they had come and she let him carry her further to the other side of the pool.

“I think, me meeting ye was fate. But this, falling in love with ye, was out of my control.”
“What?” She said dumbly. “Are...you in love with me?”

“Aye, Claire. I have fallen hard.”

“But..”

“Relax, ye don’t have to say anything. I just wanted ye to know.”

Once again, they both knew how complicated this was becoming and still neither wanted to talk about the future and how their feelings would affect it.

“My parents were in an accident. It was icy and snowing and they drove over a bridge and drowned.” It was the most un-romantically thing she could have said. But she couldn’t say how she felt. “That’s why I don’t want be under water, because I fear I will hear them screaming.”

“Then, we don’t go under. We can just stay right here.”

His arms wrapped around her tighter and she somehow felt braver. She suddenly wanted to try to face her fears in the arms of this man.

“Go under the water..”

“Ye sure?”

“Yes.”

Claire closed her eyes and took a deep breath.
Day 9

Chapter Notes

I’m not sure how this challenge is still going. 9/14 done. I have the ending already done in my head, I just need to move this story towards that destination❤️ Thank you for the amazing support, I’m so happy and grateful that you are reading this. And a massive thank you to @wunderlichkind (check her stories out, she is a blessing to this fandom) for being beta on this little chapter. ILU. Let’s go.

She didn’t hear screams, just the muffled sounds of the world through the water. She didn’t fear in the hands of the man who had said he was in love with her.

Day 9.

Claire woke up like the majority of her days; smiling. But this time, she was not alone.

She rolled over and looked at Jamie as he was peacefully sleeping next to her. She reached out her hand to caress his cheek, and he smiled at the touch.

Jesus. H. Christ.

Could he be more adorable?

They had barely slept last night, just enjoying and worshipping each other’s bodies.

It felt like she had been working out at the gym for hours, muscles she never even knew she had aching so sore. The memory of the erotic positions he had taken her in was enough to make her blush.

His strong and big hands. The way his fingers had made her entire body shake with just the lightest touch in the right places.
He had been everywhere and nowhere at the same time.

But the most satisfying part had been when she had reciprocated, and made him shout incoherent words. How he’d said her name over and over again.

They fit together like two puzzle pieces that had been carved out of hopes and dreams. Claire wanted to smack herself in her face for making up such a silly and ridiculous comparison. But it was the truth, he made her feel… so much.

This was madness.

“Hey,” Jamie said in a sleepy voice. “Have ye been awake long?”

“No,” Claire lied. “Just woke up.”

“What time is it?”

“Ehm, around 8.”

“That’s too early. Come here.”

Jamie wrapped his arms around her, snuggling closer, and she fell asleep again.

——

Claire had gotten used to the heat, the humidity and warm breeze, and as she read Jamie’s book, she felt she was there, in the Sahara Desert.

She was interrupted by deep and rumbling laughter.

“Hey, Sassenach.”
“Mmm.”

“Yer book, it’s verra interesting.”

“Where are you now?”

“Alexandra is pining over Leroy in the field.”

___

Forbidden fruit.

Chapter 7

The midsummer sun shone warm on Alexandra’s skin where she was sitting at the edge of the field, watching Leroy work the soil.

She could see the muscles in his back and arms ripple under his tan skin and sighed, leaning back on the woolen blanket.

For a moment, she closed her eyes, cherishing the warm kiss of the sun on her cheeks, the slight scratch of the wool under her bare arms, the soft caress of her shift on her thighs and the tingle between her legs at her appreciation of the image still printed onto her mind’s eye - Leroy’s strong arms and smooth skin, the small beads of sweat running between his shoulder blades.

She startled when she felt the soft touch of a callused palm on her clavicle, just gracing the top of her breasts, already heaving with the shallow breath of anticipation. He did that to her - excite her with the barest of touches. She opened her eyes to meet his burning gaze, alight with desire, for the barest of moments before closing them again at the onslaught of his hot kiss and the scorching trail of his wandering hands.

___
Claire almost fell over with her chair as Jamie read the section out loud. The intensity in his voice, the way he glanced up at her between sentences had her burning again. Badly.

Her chest was heaving up and down, her excitement heightened from knowing that Leroy was going to take Alexandra in the next chapter, and she wanted nothing more than to hear that specific part being read by Jamie.

“Are they going to do it soon?” Jamie asked. “I’m starting to feel as frustrated as Alexandra.”

“The next chapter,” she answered. “And the one after that.”

“And what about Ronald?”

“What about him?”

“She’s clearly attracted to both of them, is she going to fuck them both, too?”

“Yes.”

“What? When?”

“Impatient, are we?”

Jamie closed the book and rose from the chair he was lying in, coming to kneel down next to hers.

“I’ve never read a book quite like yers, it makes me blush and gets me hard at the same time.”

“Oh, really?” she answered breathlessly, as his fingers slowly moved from her calves upwards.

“Oh, aye. That scene, when Alexandra was in her bed, picturing Leroy going down on her as she touched herself... I pictured you, home in yer own bed, doing the same, and I...” He started
blushing. “I needed to...”

“You needed what?” Her heart was pounding in her chest.

“Let’s just say it was a good thing I was reading *alone* in my room.”

“Oh God.”

“Aye.”

Jamie’s hand continued its journey over her body, and Claire nervously looked around. This was too public.

“What are you doing?”

“Shh...”

“No, Jamie. People will see.”

Jamie looked around, quickly grabbing his towel and laying it over her. Their spot on the deck was exposed, but with a wall to their left and the five empty seats on their right, they had a slight semblance of privacy at least, especially now, with his towel and Jamie’s broad figure covering most of her.

She knew exactly what was going to happen and she

“Spread yer legs, Claire.”

Claire should have said no, but it was like the word had magically been erased from her vocabulary. Cause she wanted it, wanted him. Desperately
“Tell me,” Jamie said in a low voice as he slowly moved her bikini aside. “Have ye touched yerself when ye read this.”

“No,” she lied.

“Liar,” he teased, and she smiled.

He ran his finger between her folds and her breathing came faster.

“Did ye get this wet just from listening to me reading from the book?”

“Yes.”

Jamie continued his ministrations relentlessly, and Claire let her head fall back and closed her eyes. She forgot the people around her, just focusing on his hand - his thumb pressing down on her clit, and his two, no three fingers working miracles inside her.

“Oh, Oh. Aah.”

She was so close already, but he suddenly stopped moving, his fingers still inside her, his other hand coming up to her face, brushing over her lips to make her look at him.

“Have ye ever touched yerself here, on this boat, and thought of me?” his intense gaze made her shudder in anticipation.

She was dizzy, and at the same time desperately trying to concentrate on how to breathe. She couldn’t have lied in this condition to save her life.

“I have.”

It probably was the right answer, the only thing he’d wanted to hear, because his fingers picked up their movement again. He slowly increased his pace, and Claire locked eyes with him, her mouth slightly open, panting.
“Kiss me,” she ordered, her voice low and desperate. “I need your lips, now!”

Jamie gave a deep chuckle and leaned down, his lips pressing hard against hers and she wrapped her arms around his neck.

Her hips were moving, grinding against his hands, wanting him deeper yet. She had started shaking, the pleasure taking control over her body.

Then, at once, explosion and release, fireworks, stars falling, and she couldn’t move, she couldn’t breathe. The only thing she was conscious of was Jamie’s sweet, rumbling laughter in her ear.

“I think, I need to sit here for a moment,” Jamie said, and she opened her eyes. “I’m so hard, I willna be able to hide it.”

“You are insane.”

“Ye make me do crazy things,” he simply answered, and kissed her again.


Claire had expected to walk into the room where today’s event was held and see cardboard figures of the Von Trapp family and Julie Andrews. Or tumble into some crazy German theme party.

But thankfully she wasn’t met with either.

The room was dimmed, the thermostat turned up high, and multiple round tables and chairs were placed around the big stage.
The hostess was already standing on stage, next to a big screen and everyone started gathering around her.

“We only have a few hours until we reach Nassau, Bahamas,” the hostess said. “And we wanted to take this opportunity to just let you relax and have fun. So today is **karaoke night**. It’s voluntary, so if you don’t want to sing, you can sit down, have a drink and listen to those who do. I hope you have an amazing night.”

*Oh God.*

A hand patted her shoulder, and she smiled as she turned around, expecting Jamie.

“How, Claire.” Thomas both looked and sounded nervous. “I’m here to apologize.”

“It’s fine.”

“No! It’s *not* fine,” Thomas replied. “What we did, what I did... It was horrible and I just need to apologize for my behavior. I don’t know what happened, since we boarded the ship I haven’t been myself. I promise ye, I’m not normally like this.”

“You got your car back, at least...”

“Aye, and it even wasn’t about the damn car...”

“What was it, then?” Claire asked and smiled softly encouraging him to tell her. He looked so conflicted.

“Something I should have realized a long time ago,” he answered cryptically. “Never mind, I just wanted to apologize. After hearing Jamie talk about ye at dinner, it felt extremely important for me to speak to ye now. We have so many more days here, and I would love for us to make peace and be able to be around each other. Jamie is my friend, and I love him, I don’t want to stand in yer way.”
Thomas turned his head and Claire followed his gaze as he looked at Jamie.

There was something in that look, something she hadn’t noticed before, almost as if her own reaction to the sight of Jamie were painted on Thomas’ face, for her to observe - admiration, longing. Love?

*Can it be?* Claire thought. Was this behavior, the games Thomas played all a front to be near Jamie? Hoping something would transpire in their heated arguments and competitions? Was Thomas in love with Jamie?

“Can ye please forgive me?” Thomas asked, bringing her back from her thoughts. “I would understand if ye didn’t.”

“I forgive you, Thomas.”

Thomas smiled at her and Claire smiled back.

“Please, join us.” Thomas motioned towards the table where his Scottish companions sat. “First round is on me.”

“It’s an open bar,” Claire grinned.

“Right, uhm, maybe we can pretend?” He gave her a sheepish look.

“Sure. Let’s pretend.”

*I’m sure you do that a lot*, Claire thought to herself, and felt sorry for him. If her suspicions were true, he was living a lie.

The first person just started singing as Claire sat down next to Jamie. Her hand searched for his under the table, and he leaned closer.

“What was that all about?”
“Oh, nothing. Thomas just apologized.”

“Well that’s great, I’m glad his true self is returning.”

_Not really._

“Yes, it was nice of him. He wanted to make peace, so we all can hang out together again.”

Jamie squeezed her hand under the table.

“What’s wrong? You look... preoccupied.” He sounded worried.

“Oh no, I was just thinking.” Claire smiled at him. “What are you drinking?”

“A sugar nightmare. Ye want it?”

“I prefer my drinks strong and pure. I’m thinking about getting some whiskey, you want some?”

“Oh God.” Jamie smiled even wider. “Ye’re my dream lass, ye ken that?”

“I noticed.”

Claire kissed his cheek and went to the corner, where a little bar had been set up, and she ordered whiskey for her and Jamie.

“I have registered us to sing a duet,” Geillis said cheerfully, coming to stand next to her.

“You didn’t.”
“Aye, I did. We’re up next.”

“I hate you.”

“Ye love me, and ye have the voice of an angel. Maybe some of these men will think it’s me, and be enchanted enough to ask me out. Please, do it for me.” Geillis made puppy eyes at her, and Claire had to laugh despite herself.

“Voice of an angel...” Claire rolled her eyes. “Fine, one song.”

“I love ye, I love ye so much!”

Claire walked back to the table, and handed Jamie his glass, immediately drowning her own, then setting the empty glass down on the table hard.

“What’s going on?” Jamie asked amused.

“Apparently we’re putting on a show. I’m about to make a complete fool of myself.”

“What? Are ye going to sing?”

“Yes.”

Claire ignored the cheers and whistles as she walked up the stage and took her place next to Geillis.

The truth was that she loved to sing and knew she had a “decent” singing voice, but she had never performed in front of a crowd before, and she did her best to calm her raging nerves.

The music started and the lyrics appeared on the screen: Thinking out loud - Ed Sheeran
When your legs don't work like they used to before
And I can't sweep you off of your feet
Will your mouth still remember the taste of my love
Will your eyes still smile from your cheeks

“ And darling I will be loving you 'til we're 70
And baby my heart could still fall as hard at 23
And I'm thinking 'bout how people fall in love in mysterious ways. Maybe just the touch of a hand” Claire sang together with Geillis. “ Oh me I fall in love with you every single day. And I just wanna tell you I am...”

Claire tried to avoid eye contact with anyone, but she still couldn’t help looking at Jamie.

“So baby now. Take me into your loving arms
Kiss me under the light of a thousand stars...”

It felt ridiculous, like she was serenading him. Singing her heart out - to Jamie - and he looked at her with such admiration and love that she had to fight hard to keep her knees steady enough to not fall off the stage.

“Oh darling, place your head on my beating heart. I'm thinking out loud. That maybe we found love right where we are...”

Damn it. She was totally doing it, singing words she wouldn’t dare to say.

“And we found love right where we are.”

The song ended and people started applauding, Jamie and all of his friends stood up, making the loudest, highest noises of the crowd.

Claire was sure her knees were going to cave as she slowly walked off stage.

“Claire, that was… wild. I had no idea ye could sing,” Jamie said. “I couldn’t take my eyes off of ye.”
“Thanks,” she answered shyly. “I think I need another drink now.”

“I’m on it, superstar.”

Claire’s heart was still beating fast with adrenaline. She wanted to go and hide in her room, she felt exposed. Her heart was in the right place when she sang and the words were true.

Maybe it was happening in that exact moment, or maybe she had known all along, but she was falling in love.

The karaoke night continued, strangers and familiar faces taking the stage one by one, as the rest of the crowd drank its weight in alcohol and ate small appetizers.

Geillis’ plan had been successful, as she found a handsome man to snuggle with. Angus and Rupert did a horrible duet that left Claire and everyone else crying with laughter, emitting cheerful whistles.

Claire, too, was enjoying the evening and drinking more than she should have. It was a successful night, and it wasn’t long until they would reach their third destination. The ship was going to stay in Bahamas for two days. The longest stay on shore yet.

Suddenly Jamie rose from the table and walked silently towards the stage.

*What is he doing?*

He grabbed the microphone and looked at her.

“James, don’t do it,” Rupert shouted and laughed.

The music started playing and Claire just stared at him. He, too, had apparently picked a song by Ed Sheeran.

*“She played the fiddle in an Irish band”*
But she fell in love with an English man  
Kissed her on the neck and then I took her by the hand. Said, "Baby, I just wanna dance"

It wasn’t as bad as she had expected, and she continued to smile as he stiffly bobbed his head and moved to the beat.

“She took Jamie as a chaser, Jack for the fun  
She got Arthur on the table with Johnny riding as a shotgun.”

Ian, who was sitting to her right, suddenly leaned closer to her.

“I think love has room for forgiveness… and I hope you will give him that.”

“Why do you all speak of love this easily and freely?” Claire asked in answer, but still looked at James as he continued to sing.

“Because we have grown up with same tales about magic, wonders and fairies,” Ian said. “We all seek it.”

“Have you found it?”

“Aye.”

“Here?”

“No, my heart is back in Scotland with the woman I’m going to marry.”

“Then why are you here?”

“I thought the Caribbean was the perfect place to ask for permission. And maybe I hoped that he would meet someone like ye, and feel something remotely close to what I feel for his sister.” Ian chuckled softly. “Maybe he won’t be as upset if he kens what love is.”
“Does she feel the same? Jenny.”

“Aye, and it was her idea for me to go.”

Claire couldn’t help but hug Ian.

“Just don’t break his heart, lass,” he whispered, and Claire felt her throat tightening.

“I’ll try...”

“My pretty little Galway girl. My, my, my, my, my, my, my Galway girl”

Claire continued to listen to Jamie, and she felt scared. Would she break his heart? Or would she break her own, by continuing this?

When the song ended, Claire rose from her chair and applauded.

“I’m not Céline Dion,” Jamie said. “But I will gladly make a complete fool of myself for ye anytime.”

“You were amazing,” she told him and meant it.

Jamie kissed her, and she knew, was convinced deep in her aching core, that this was going to end with one of them heartbroken.
New day, new chapter. Most of you know that fluff isn’t my area but I’m trying to keep it fluffy and warm. I’m fighting against my instincts haha. But I do enjoy writing this story, I really do. Probably because I love how invested, glad and supportive you all are. I honestly think this fic is my most “read” and it’s only been 10 days and I’m BLOWN AWAY. I’m not going to post a chapter tomorrow (this gal need to watch the episode) ❤ Many thanks to all of you and a special thank you (again) to the lovely @wunderlichkind for taking the time to beta for me again (read her stories, they are gold) She did magic to this chapter ❤.

I’m truly blessed to have her and you guys. Enjoy

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The karaoke night had ended in Claire’s room. She had been very drunk and clingy. Jamie had carried her the last few feet and she had taken her “chance” and tried to seduce Jamie. It had not worked.

Day 10.

When she opened her eyes, her head was still buzzing, Am I still drunk? she wondered.

“Good morning.”

“It’s not a good morning,” Claire grunted back.

“Aye, it is.” Jamie sounded too cheerful and too loud. “I had a blast yesterday”

“I have blanks concerning yesterday and I think that’s a good thing.”

“Do ye remember when ye sang ‘Under Pressure with Ian?’”

“No,” she groaned.
“I must say, when ye sang the Titanic song ye almost made me cry.”

“Oh my God. How many songs did I sing?”

“I stopped counting after yer fifth song. Sassenach, ye held on to that microphone like yer life depended on it, nobody dared to fight ye for it.” The amusement was obvious in Jamie’s voice, although he tried to hide it.

“ Bloody hell.”

Claire hid under the covers.

“Do ye remember what ye said last night?” Jamie asked, his voice sounded muffled.

Claire peeked her head out to look at him. Her mind really was blank, and she thought that nothing could have been worse than her drunk singing.

“What did I say?”

“Ye said that ye were in love with me.”

Her heart stopped. It literally stopped for a second.

“Did ye mean it?” Jamie asked shyly when she didn’t say anything.

This was it. The crucial moment.

Her heart was pounding, making her headache worse. The silence was almost painful.
“I regret saying it in that condition...” Claire finally said. “Because I wish I could remember your face at hearing it.”

“Say it again,” he said softly.

“I am in love with you.”

There it was. She had said it.

Jamie’s already wide smile became wider and ended up in a childish grin that made her heart beat even faster.

“I am utterly, foolishly and deeply in love with you, James Fraser.”

He threw himself over her, pinning her down to the mattress and just looked at her, his gaze even more intense than usual. He was making heart eyes at her, and she had never seen such a beautiful expression.

“I am in love with ye, Claire…” he paused. “Wait, what’s yer middle name?”

Claire laughed.

“Elizabeth.”

“Claire Elizabeth Beauchamp, I have fallen for ye, hard, and I can’t imagine anyone has ever been happier than I am right now.”

Small goosebumps prickled over her arms, and she leaned up to kiss him. It was not about attraction, this was love. *Damn it.*

“Does this mean I have to say it in front of the entire boat at end of this trip.”
“Ye can sing it, if ye want.”

Claire didn’t have time to say something sarcastic or even roll her eyes. Jamie’s mouth was already on her lips, peppering her with kisses, then kissing her cheeks before he finished with a small one on her nose.

“Claire, I ken, ye’re afraid of this. But I promise, I will spend every second and every mile of this trip to make sure ye ken that I want nothing more than for us to be together.”

It was out in the open and there was no return.

“I believe you, and I want us to be together. Even if my little cynical heart is screaming right now, I do want this.”

“I admit, I’m as surprised as you are, I never thought...” Jamie rolled off her and quickly wrapped her in his arms so they lay face to face. “I never thought I would feel like this, at least not this fast, but I’m sure of how I feel about ye. I have never felt like this, and when we walk off this boat, I’m hoping for more than just a cup of coffee.”

*Outside the boat. Future. Complicated.*

“Should we talk about the hard parts?” Claire asked.

“Aye, it’s probably for the best.”

“We live in different cities, we have separate lives, how do we make this work?”

“Long distance?”

“Phone calls and short visits? Jamie, I’m a doctor who works long shifts, and you’re running a company in Scotland. You are the heart and soul of the riding school, you’re needed there.”

“Okay, I changed my mind, we don’t need to talk about this now.” It was a poor attempt at a joke
and they both knew it.

“Jamie.”

“Alright, alright. Honestly, I dinna ken, but I do know it’s worth it.”

“We’ve known each other for nine and a half days, how can you know I’m worth it?”

“I know, because there is no other way. I can’t spend one more day, one more second without knowing ye’re mine and I’m yours. It won’t be easy, but it will be worth it.”

His words rang beautiful and true, but it was now that Claire realized she had unlocked pandora’s box, unleashed the Kraken, touched Aladdin’s fucking genie or done anything else that was life altering, and promised to be complicated and hard.

“What if...” Claire took a deep breath. “What if I decide to join the army?”

He paused for a second, they had talk about it - her wanting to join her brother. But before this, they had not talk about a life together. Even mentioned it.

“I’ll wait for ye.”

“I wouldn’t want you to put your entire life on hold.”

“Stop! Claire, I never thought that ye would even say that ye were in love with me, I hoped for it, but I honestly didn’t think ye would. Can we just… Please, just give me this moment and don’t ruin it with questions we don’t need to answer yet.”

“We have four days.”

“That’s 96 hours, I can come up with thousands of ways in that time, and I will.”
“Just because I’m asking these hard questions, doesn’t mean I don’t want this, us, you,” Claire told him in a low voice, hoping he would understand.

“I know.” Jamie smiled softly. “Because ye’re in love with me.”

“I am.” She smiled back at him, glad that the tone of their conversation had swung back towards light-hearted teasing.

“Hmm, now I need to know the exact moment that ye realized it. Was it when we danced the first day, or when we went on the scavenger hunt? Oh, wait, I think I know - it was it when I simply held yer hand the other day, right?”

Claire laughed at his childish behavior and then thought about it. She had been in denial about her feelings for so long, had been fighting against them. But she knew the answer to his question, deep inside.

“When you held my hand in the dark.”

“What? That was the third day! How did ye know?”

“It was like what you told me about your horse, how you walked into the stables and just knew. I felt it, the very second you squeezed my hand - the electric current that went straight to my heart.”

“I broke through the ice?”

“Yes, and I will get up on that fucking stage and tell the world that you have captured my heart and compelled my soul. You happy now?”

Claire started blushing. She had never been this “romantic” or open about her feelings before and her treacherous brain chose that exact moment to supply her with multiple titanic reference that would only make this more crazy.

“Oh, aye, Sassenach, I’m verra happy.”
“Good. Me too,” she admitted.

———

“John?” Claire repeated his name when he didn’t answer right away. She looked at her phone, the call hadn’t disconnected.

“I’m sorry,” John laughed. “Who are you and what have you done with my sister?”

“Bloody hell,” she cursed at him weakly, feeling the infectious power of his laughter.

“Who is this man? Who is the man that melted the ice queen.”

“I’m not the ice queen!”

“You are, or wait, let me rephrase that -” John switched to a louder and more dramatic voice. “You were the ice queen, but I’m sure the people of Narnia will not fear you anymore.”

“Seriously?”

“Claire, I’m exaggerating, but you have been… difficult, these past months. But I am so happy about this, so happy I would like to sing with joy.” His tone had changed again, lowered to a soft seriousness.

“Please don’t,” she scoffed, hiding her emotion behind sarcasm.

“I love you. You of all people deserve this.”

“I don’t know how to make it work? We live in different places,” she admitted.
“You could… take that fellowship… in Scotland.”

Claire felt her giddy and warm heart filling with sorrow and heartbreak. Just the thought of Frank made her feel terrible.

“What about our plans? We talked about me joining the army and being with you in Afghanistan…”

“I would rather see you in Scotland with the man you love.”

“I’m in love, I don’t love him. Slight difference, and that would be too soon.”

“You love him.” John knew her too well. “Don’t overthink this, you don’t have to make any decisions yet. You have options; stay in London, move to Scotland, join me in Afghanistan or do something else completely. Calm down, Claire.”

“How am I supposed to calm down when I’m being irrational and singing love songs to a man I just met. Nothing about this is calming.”

“What do you want me to say, then?”

“What would mum have said?”

They rarely talked about their parents because it always ended the same way - them crying for hours and forcing themselves to watch old family videos that only made them cry more. The Beauchamps were dramatic.

“She would have said that you should join the army, try it out, and then do whatever your pretty face desired.”

His impression of their mother was startling. His theater classes had clearly paid off.
“Right, the world comes first.”

“Yeah...” John answered. “But Dad, he would have told you to move to Scotland and punch Frank Randall in his ugly little face and be done with it. The world keeps spinning.”

“Four more days to think.”

“Four more days to enjoy your carribean vacation.”

“I love you, John.”

“I love you, Carebear. I really need to sleep now, it’s the middle of the night.”

“Right, well I’m just going to walk off the ship and enjoy the Bahamas then,” Claire teased. “The sun, the warmth and, oh, the beach.”

“I’m hanging up now.”

Claire giggled.

“Talk tomorrow.”

——

Nassau, Bahamas

Walking off the boat hand in hand with Jamie was wonderful, but she still couldn’t fully relax.

It wasn’t because of him, or John, or even Frank - it was because of herself. She had never felt
stronger and yet so powerless. She had thought that what she’d had with Frank had been real, but compared to that reality, Jamie was the fantasy everyone dreamt about, and that scared her. This was too good to be true.

What if Jamie realized that she was not in fact worth it?

What if he changed his mind?

What if there was someone else at home, waiting for him?

What if. What if. What if. What if. They were endless and all of them were freaking her out.

Claire was cynical and careful for a reason, because the last time she had lowered her guard, she almost hadn’t made it.

“Claire?” Jamie brought her back from the chaotic land she had been in. She hadn’t even noticed that she was gripping his hand tightly, and he looked worried.

“Jamie! Jamie!” Angus’ voice came closer. “They have an awesome group discount on jet skis.”

“Angus,” Jamie raised his voice, in a way she had never heard before. “I’m talking to Claire now.”

Angus quickly shut his mouth, and slowly backed away, his hands up in the air, mouthing an apology.

“What’s wrong, Sassenach?”

“Im overthinking and obsessing,” Claire admitted. “All the ’what ifs’...”

“What if?”
“What if you change your mind? What if you realize that this is just a vacation crush? That we are running into something we can’t handle?”

“That…” Jamie sighed and cupped her face. “I dinna think anything I say will make ye feel more at ease. But I promise, this is not a vacation thing and we’re not running into anything.”

“I’m not asking you to marry me or anything but I just…” she trailed off.

“Would ye marry me?” he asked shyly.

“What?”

“Aye, if I asked, would ye?”

“That’s…” Claire suddenly felt dizzy. “That’s an insane question.”

“Would it make ye feel safer if I said that I would have no problem in getting down on one knee, right here and right now, and ask ye?”

She looked at him, hestating but she only saw truth and love in his eyes.

“Maybe, um, but please don’t.”

“Alright, I won’t.” Jamie smiled. “But someday I will.”

Oh god.
Oh god
Oh god.
Oh god.
“Let’s go, Sassenach. We have two full days on this beautiful island, I don’t want to waste a second. We are here, in love, and life is wonderful. Let’s carpe diem the shit out of this.”

“Never say carpe diem again,” Claire said, bursting into honest and refreshing laughter.

Jamie reached his hand out to her.

“What if we just spend the rest of our days happy? What if this was the turning point for both of us and life starts now? Forget all the heartbreak and take my hand, Claire.”

She looked at his hand and smiled.

She was his.

He was hers.

And right now, the world was theirs.

“Let’s seize the day, and put very little trust in tomorrow.”

“Did ye just…”

“Yes.” Claire took his hand. “I am ‘carpe dieming’ this.”

“I will never let ye forget this.”

“I know.”

They walked hand in hand down to the beach to catch up with Geillis and the rest of the Scots.
After a full on make out session that left them both breathless, Jamie and his friends rented jet skis as Claire stayed on the beach and just watched them from afar. She might have taken a little step in the pool, put this was the freaking ocean, and she couldn’t ride with them and risk accidentally falling off, so she was left with her thoughts.

Without a doubt, she was in love and it was terrifying. But looking at him now - Jamie’s smile was radiant, pure and glowing out there.

——

The capital of the Bahamas - Nassau

They had so many options, tours with jeeps (just as St.Thomas) snorkeling, parasailing, banana boats, different food experiences - but the one thing Claire had been really looking forward to was splashing around with the Bahamas’ swimming pigs at Pig Beach.

Jamie was sceptical and told her about a large, white hog his neighbors owned that still freaked him out. But he still came with her, along with Thomas, Ian and Geillis.

“Are ye supposed to swim piggyback on them?” Geillis asked. She, too, was a bit sceptical about this experience.

Pig Beach.

Claire took a deep breath and filled her lungs with the warm Caribbean breeze. Their boat ride had been thrillingly beautiful, and much easier with Jamie holding her hand. Somehow she had missed that little piece of information; that you couldn’t get there unless you took a boat.

Stepping onto the white sand beach, it almost felt like she had discovered an untouched, magical place. Strangely, there was not one human footprint on the beach, just small tracks - that the tour guide said came from the iguanas’ tails. It was inexplicable, but the guide said it was great for business - having everyone believe that they actually were the first to discover this remarkable corner of the planet.

It didn’t take long until they were greeted by loud, snorting pigs acting like a jolly bunch of golden
“Sassenach!” Jamie, to her delight, hid behind her when one of the big pig came towards them.

“How did they end up here?” Claire asked their guide as she patted the pig.

“There are several local legends being told, from a tale about a shipwreck to one about hungry pirates who dropped them off and never made it back for their meal.”

“Oh, really?” Claire answered joyfully. “Watch out, Jamie, maybe they think you are *their* meal.”

They had fresh water with them to give to the pigs and Claire loved it. Jamie calmed down after a while and carefully, so very carefully, fed them with the few vegetables they had been allowed to give to the pigs.

Geillis never left the boat, but took pictures of them from afar. Ian and Thomas were brave and swam with the pigs as Jamie stood close to her. It was adorable, her tall, beautiful, strong man, showing a trace of weakness.

They had all agreed to sail back again when their tour guide suddenly asked if they wanted to continue to Fowl Cay Resort, a small island just a few minutes away from Big Beach, that was said to be very romantic and even more beautiful. They had wanted to go until he mentioned all the sharks you could swim with and pet - Claire had seen the horror in the others’ eyes as she had said she would still like to go. Maybe it was for the best that they went home, their day had been amazing.

Back on the ship, they all separated to clean up, wash away the smell of salt water and pigs.

Jamie had gone to his room and Claire to her own.

When Claire stepped out of the shower, she saw that Geillis had sent the photos from their pig expedition. She zoomed in on her and Jamie. She looked so happy. It was almost like she was watching someone else.
*The world keeps on spinning.* Her father’s voice echoed in her head.

Claire sat down on the bed and sighed. Her dream had always been to save lives, be a doctor and do good. After being raised by military parents, she had always thought of following in their footsteps. Would she settle for another life? One with Jamie?

*Yes.*

**Carpe diem...**

**9.12PM**

Ian had finally collected his nerves and asked for Jamie’s permission to marry his sister. It had been hilarious. Jamie had told Claire about his suspicions earlier, but he hadn’t expected to hear about their secret relationship that had been going on for months, and he definitely hadn’t expected Ian to ask if he could marry Jenny. Jamie had called Jenny up and put her on speaker as he asked her why she hadn’t told him.

Hearing Jenny’s voice for the first time had been a wonderful experience. She talked with a deeper accent than Jamie, and spent a good 15 minutes on telling Jamie that he was a blind fool for not having noticed.

But the sweetest part had been the end of their phone call.

“Ye’re a strong, fearless and wonderful woman. Ye don’t need my permission. I can’t think of two people deserving to be together more. I’m sorry if I have been in the way of yer love.”

“Jamie, ye big clotheid. Ye haven’t been standing in our way, we just didn’t want ye to feel excluded now that Ian and I want to take the next step.”

Jamie had looked at Claire then.

“Dinna fash, I’m not alone anymore.”
The rest of their night had been a celebration.

Toasting to old and new loves, dancing until the sunset turned into moonlight.

The few minutes that Jamie and Claire had spent together in bed, awake, were all beautiful whispered words of love.

“'I can’t wait until we go home...’” Jamie whispered. “I want to show ye my world, and learn everything about yers.”

Chapter End Notes

I really really really hope you liked it. Please leave a comment, kudos or just whatever. It makes my day.
Day 11

Chapter Notes

@happytoobservefromadistance was amazing and so kind to be beta on this loooong ass chapter and @abbydebeau, thank your for inspiring this whole thing and just for being the brilliant creative woman that you are. ❤

I will probably not post a chapter tomorrow but this one is the longest yet, almost like two and it’s NSFW. Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Day 11.

"It’s not my fault ye let that snake, Frank, stay in yer garden for so long. Don’t take out his mistakes on me."

"I’m not." Claire shouted at him.

“Aye, ye are!” Jamie shouted back.

“You have no idea what he did, what I have been through, or anything about me except my bloody name.” Claire was furious. “You know what, Jamie, get the fuck out of my room..”

“I’m not leaving.” Jamie crossed his arms and his entire face revealed how hurt he was. “Then tell me!”

It had started with an innocent question, leading to opening up Hell and fury. They had been on the Single Events wine tasting and gone back to her room for a quickie.

Jamie may bring out the softness and brightness in Claire, but he made her feel more than she had ever felt ... with anyone. Their unexplainable and amazing chemistry also clashed into something that neither could control. Both stubborn and both impulsive mixed with too much wine.

“I don’t need to tell you anything.”
“Aye, that’s true. But if we are going to work, we need trust and honesty.”

“Trust.” Claire said irritated. “Like when you first tried to get to know me under false pretenses to win a bet.”

“Ye canna use that against me right now, Claire” Jamie lowered his voice. “I told ye for the sake of my soul and heart, because I wanted nothing else than to have truth between us. I gave Thomas the damn car back. I told ye about the bet. Isn’t that trust and honesty?”

“The honest thing would have been to never place the bet in the first place!”

“But I called it off, seconds after I talked to ye.”

“You are all the same. Men.”

“We are not... and frankly, ye are the one who is being the bad guy here.”

“That’s preposterous! How am I the bad guy?”

“I only asked a question. A question that ye didn’t even answer, but immediately jumped to conclusions and insulted my honor.”

“A question that I couldn’t answer.”

“Because yer scared.”

“Of course I’m scared,” Claire quickly replied. “I don’t want to make the same mistakes again and you can’t wait to just be together without thinking further ahead.”

“I have seen my entire future, rapid images of a life I want… with ye. How can ye blame me for wanting to know if ye really want this? Want me? The second I ask if ye could think about
moving to Scotland, ye just scream at me and try to kick me out of the room.”

“Because…” Claire clenched her jaw. “This is all going too fast.”

“No, it’s not that.”

“Stop telling me what I mean or not mean.”

“Ye think I don’t ken ye, just because we have only known each other for eleven days. But I do. I ken when yer sad, when yer lying and when yer desperately trying to push me away for something someone else did.”

Jamie was right, and he had been for the entire conversation but she couldn’t admit it. Claire couldn’t stop the words from coming out her mouth even if she tried. Her brain was going on autopilot, doing what it thought best: Total Lockdown.

“If you won’t leave, then I will.”

Claire rushed past Jamie, and opened the door. She practically ran down the hallway, without shoes or her cardigan, wearing only her white cotton dress she had accidentally spilled wine on earlier.

Claire rushed down the stairs and outside. She slowed down her pace as she walked to the left side of the boat where there was nothing but empty seats and privacy. She finally stopped, and burst into tears.

This was so typically her. Purposely ruining her own happiness due to fear and anxiety of being abandoned.

Claire looked out on the open ocean through glossy and teary eyes. In the distance she noticed one small island, the sun was going down slowly behind it. Time was, in fact still moving, even though it felt like it had stopped. Claire heard the sound of footsteps approaching.

“Why can’t ye just let me love ye.”
Claire turned around to face Jamie. She felt a soft pang of relief that he had followed her. He brushed a loose strand of hair behind his ear, that fiercely fire hair that made her burn on the inside.

“You, need to let me take this in my own time. Give me space.” It was a lie, one she said because she didn’t dare to beg him to come closer.

“If I do, ye will get off this boat and never see me again.”

It was heartbreaking to hear and worse to know it was true. The slow buzzing from the wine she had been drinking at the wine tasting was fading away into a sobering realization. What was she doing? She loved this man. Just thinking about the possibility of being with him forever made her body tense with insecurities of what the future held when she was acting like this.

“Ye will run away, head-on sure that what we have isn’t real. Because ye think everyone is out to hurt ye. I made one mistake. One I’ll never forgive myself for, but I can’t believe that my mistake is bigger than what Frank did.”

Reality hit her and she shook her head in bewilderment at her actions so stubborn and mean.

“It’s not.” Claire whispered. “Your mistake is not bigger. It’s not even on the map and I have forgiven you for it.”

Claire stayed immobile as Jamie slowly walked closer to her. She couldn’t escape, not anymore.

“Frank.” Claire took a deep breath. “He is a historian, which caused him to work insane hours. It worked perfectly with my busy schedule at the hospital. We barely saw each other after awhile. We went to Scotland for a so-called weekend getaway. He called it vacation, but I knew it was for work. We had been together for three years. He had promised me that we were going to travel the world and discover it together. So, I took a leave of absence from work. We flew to different beautiful locations in Europe. Shortly after that, we somehow ended up back in Scotland. Suddenly, we had rented an apartment, and he said he wanted us to settle there. I don’t even remember how we got the place. I was handed keys and got a peck on my cheek. I accepted it because I loved him. We talked about children, raising them there...”

Jamie took her hand, silently making her feel braver to continue. The sun had almost disappeared
“He gave me a ring.” Claire pictured the gold ring Frank had given her. “Said it was a promise ring, that one day we could get married and live the life we had dreamt of.”

“What happened?”

“He was married already. His wife, Sandy, knocked on my door, pregnant, with another small child in her hand. Frank had lived a double life. One with me and one with her. I was the girlfriend and she was the wife.” Claire’s hands started shaking and Jamie held on tighter. “We talked, Sandy and I, and she told me that they had met around the same time as we started dating. She was his student at the time. All those expeditions and long business trips were a lie ... he was with his family. I don’t know how he pulled it off. Moving me to Scotland made it easier, so he could run back and forth between us.”

“And when ye confronted him?”

“He said that he loved me and I foolishly believed him.”

“It didn’t end there?”

“No, we stayed in Scotland. He said he wanted me more than her and I just didn’t question it. I applied to a hospital nearby and he transferred to the University in Glasgow. I hadn’t even heard back from the hospital before I came home one day and found the apartment empty, with a note laying on the table.”

“What did it say?”

——

Dear Claire,

I have spent a few days thinking and have come to the conclusion that I have been wrong. I thought you were the better option, due to your profession, good morals and status. We have had a good run, but I’m afraid our journey ends here. I have chosen to live my life with Sandy, Oscar, and Robert. I’m sorry.
Please leave the keys and I’ll take care of the apartment.

Frank.

—-

“That he was leaving me for Sandy.”

“I understand that this is not what ye want to hear, but wasn’t it for the best? That is… not love. Frank clearly only acted on his own behalf. He did what he wanted and needed without caring who he hurt.”

“He left me because … I couldn’t… because I was the less of us two.”

“Do ye love him still?”

“I don’t know.”

“If he hadn’t left ye, would ye have stayed?”

“Maybe.”

Would I?

“Claire, I understand ye better after hearing this.” Jamie turned to face her. “The reason ye don’t want to live in Scotland is because ye already have moved because of love. Yer afraid to see Frank and his new family. It was wrong of me to ask ye to move to Scotland again, when yer heart got so broken there. What happened to you and what he did, it’s heartbreaking, and I want to kill him for hurting ye…”

“You didn’t know.” Tears slowly ran down her face.
“No, not all of it. But, I did know he lived there, ye told me as much. I should have respected that ye wanted to take it slow. I’m not justifying myself but I did it because...I love ye.”

“What?”

Did he just say?

“I love ye, Claire. I know I am once again, rushing this but I can’t hide how I feel. I’m not just in love with ye, I am deeply and utterly yours. Forever.”

He loves me? He loves me? Claire looked at him. Her eyes big and wide with shock as she leaned against the railing, still clutching onto his hands with all her strength.

“How can you love me?” It was so low, she wondered if she even said it.

“How can I not? It was inevitable. I didn’t even try to stop it. Claire, all I’m asking is don’t run away because ye fear how ye feel about me. Ye don’t need to say it back or do anything. Just don’t make decisions based on another man's mistakes.”

“Jamie, I…”

Claire was just about to open her mouth and say it back, those three little words that were going to change her life. When something snapped, a metal sound, a little crack and she fell backwards.

It had been quick and almost soundless. Claire didn’t understand what was happening until she felt the wind on her back and saw Jamie’s face that went from shock to horror as he was looking down on her.

Down.

Claire was falling off the boat, before she hit the water… she saw Jamie jump.
It’s easy to have regrets.

It’s easy to wish to have done differently.

Maybe, if she hadn’t tried to force away her feelings, they wouldn’t be in this mess.

The water was surprisingly cold, she thought, as she waved her arms like a little bird, desperately drying to hold herself above the surface.

It was a matter of life and death. She felt how her life was slowly slipping away as the cruise ship sailed through the water - without her.

The once crystal, teal, and beautiful blue water was now black and dark. High and powerful waves were twirling and throwing her around like a puppet.

Claire did know the basic steps to swim. But she was going into shock. Her arms and limbs were starting to feel paralyzed and she gasped for air.

Over and over again, she went under the surface as she heard screams. Her biggest fear of drowning was no longer a nightmare. It was real.

This was it. She was sure it was her imagination - her parents death scream and she was convinced it was the end.

That was when she heard it. **Him**.

“Claire!”

“Jamie?” She tried to shout and started waving her hand in the dark. “Jamie! Jamie?! I am over here.”

Jamie continued to shout out her name from a unknown distance and she did the same.
He had jumped.

A large wave came over her again, and all that she could think of was Jamie. He had jumped into the water to save her. It was no longer about fearing the water - it was to stay alive and make sure she told that idiot that she loved him.

Claire was filled with both pain and relief when she finally found him. Jamie was swimming over to her, floating on a lifebuoy.

Her heart pounded like thunder in her ears as she was hit by another wave. Something touched her foot. White shark? Hammerhead shark? Thousands of scary options filtered through her brain as she started to hyperventilate as she swallowed more water.

Suddenly, all became black and she heard only distant cries from Jamie.

——-

There were birds chirping and she heard the soft sounds of waves hitting the beach. Claire slowly opened her eyes. It was still dark outside.

Flashbacks immediately came to her as Claire was looking out on the ocean before her. She heard light breathing, almost like snoring, as she turned her head.

*Jamie*. Was he sleeping or unconscious? She thought as she crawled out of the lifebuoy she had around her body.

“Jamie?” She touched his face. “Please wake up!”

He was breathing at least. She tried shaking him a bit and his eyes slowly fluttered open.
She had never felt more relieved.

“You crazy, stubborn man.” Claire leaned down, embraced him and started crying against his chest. “Why did you do that? You could have died.”

“You jump,” He said low. “I jump.”

“I bloody hell didn’t jump.”

Jamie chuckled. How the hell could he be laughing now?

“Nay, Sassenach, I ken that. I was quoting yer stupid, Titanic movie.”

Claire kissed him, and continued to cry for the sake of this wonderful man that had saved her. Tears ran down her face and she raised her head a little. They were lying under a palm tree. It was dark. Jamie’s face was filled with sand and had green things in his hair - he had never looked more beautiful and she had never felt more alive.

“I love you.” Claire looked into his eyes. “I love you. I love you and I will move to Scotland, marry your ass and live happily ever after with you and all those bloody horses.”

Another smile crept upon his face.

“Did we almost have to die, for ye to come to yer senses?”

“No, no, Jamie. I was just about to say it when the railing broke and I fell.”

“I love ye, too.” He said softly. “And I’ll take yer word for it.”

“I’m sorry, for what I said and how I acted. You were right, I was scared and..” She got overwhelmed and started crying again.
“Shh ..It’s okay. We are alive.”

“Where are we exactly?” She finally asked and they looked around.

“I dinna ken, but the boat is gone .”

“Oh god, how did we even get here? How are you? Anything broken? Do you think you can walk?”

“I needed to swim with ye under my arm, ye fainted. It took time but I’m whole. I think I can walk. How are ye?”

“My back hurts , but I’ll manage. I’m freezing, we need to find shelter.”

They rose from the ground. Claire's entire body was aching. She glanced over to Jamie, he had a painful expression on his face. Something was wrong but he hid it when he realized she was looking at him.

“Are you sure you are okay? Claire asked worried.

“It’s fine. I’m just tired.”

—

They walked for a long time from the beach into the jungle. It was exhausting, freezing and terrifying. They were shipwrecked on a unknown island, listening to foreign animal sounds and there were mosquitos absolutely everywhere. Claire halted as Jamie had his hand around her waist for support.

Finally, they found a mountain wall and big rocks that would do for shelter, they needed to stop and rest. They still hadn’t found anyone, or anything that suggested it was a inhabited island.

“Do you think anyone has noticed we are gone?” Claire asked as they sat down on two big rocks.
“I’m not sure..” he answered and sighed. “We have been in yer room multiple times this trip. Maybe the others think we are still there and want to be alone.”

“Oh God.”

“Aye, but dinna worry, Claire. We will survive this. We just need to find fresh water, make a fire, and then it will be fine.”

“I can make a fire.”

“Ye can?” He asked surprised.

“Military parents, remember? I was raised to learn how to survive.”

“They should have taught ye how to swim.”

“I can swim… they died when I was nineteen, I just... always have hated water.”

Jamie was clearly more exhausted than she. He tried to hide his hands but she saw how much he was shaking. His eyes half closed as she went into survival/doctor mode.

“Jamie,” She said sternly. “You can’t fall asleep.”

“I’m fine.”

“You are not. Stop lying.”

“I’m not lying. I’m actually feeling alright, but I can’t feel my legs.”
“What?”

Claire rushed off the rock as Jamie collapsed off his, she caught his head before he hit the ground.

Claire quickly did an full body examination. His eyes were slightly dilated, (so far as she could see in the dark). No broken ribs, but he had probably injured his back. Oh God. It wasn’t deadly, but could be serious.

“Jamie, I need you to stay awake and lie still. Okay?”

“Whatever ye say, Doc!”

“I’ll be right back, Jamie.”

“Where are ye going?” He looked worried.

“I need to find branches for the fire. You stay put. I will strangle you if you move a muscle.”

“Fine, Just… hurry back,” he answered. She smiled reassuringly even though she was freaking out on the inside.

Hesitating, Claire started walking away from Jamie, his eyes following her until she was out of sight.

She started collecting small and long sticks and branches. Everything she thought could make a good fire, the dehydration and dizziness was already getting to her. Everything tasted dry and foul in her mouth, she needed water.

People can survive three weeks without food and water. Claire was positive there was something here they could eat and somehow find fresh water. However, that would mean that she may have to leave Jamie to find it.

Jamie was thankfully awake when she came back.
“This is going to be interesting.” Jamie’s sense of humor was the same. “Make it burn, babe.”

Claire just smiled at him as she hit the two rocks together hard. At her fifth attempt, a little spark came to and it didn’t take long until her little pile of grass and sticks were burning.

“I’m impressed, lass.”

“Me too.” Claire answered. “I wasn’t sure it would actually work.”

Claire added more branches until they had quite an impressive fire. Claire sat down next to Jamie and told him to lay his head on her lap as she rested her back against the rock behind her.

“I can’t believe yer actually able to stand,” Jamie said low. “Ye fell 15-20 meters…”

“You did too.”

“No, I jumped - ye fell. There’s a difference.”

“It happened so fast. It did hurt when I landed but I was lucky I didn’t get paralyzed…”

“Aye, I have never seen anything like it. One second we’re talking and the second ye just…”

“I still can’t believe you jumped after me.”

“Without a doubt I would do it again, Claire.”

Claire bent down and kissed his forehead and continued to brush his hair through her fingers and stared out into the jungle.
“I’m not forgetting what ye said.”

“What?”

“That ye wanted to move to Scotland and marry me.”

“We need to get off this island first.”

“Aye, but after that. I’m holding on to yer word.”

“I promise.”

___

Claire was alone when she woke up. She panicked and was just about to scream out Jamie’s name when she saw it - *Them* - Her mouth fell open and she slowly rose from the ground.

It was a black horse standing a few feet away, head bent down and eating grass.

Claire stopped next to Jamie, who was miraculously, standing on his own. The sun was shining. They had a better view of their surroundings, Claire couldn’t take her eyes of the horse.

“What is it doing here?” She asked low, to not scare away the horse.

“I have absolutely no idea.” Jamie answered breathless. “It’s a black Stallion…”

“She is beautiful.”

“*He*, Sassenach. But aye,” Jamie looked enchanted. “I have never seen anything like it.”
Jamie suddenly started walking - *limping* - towards the horse.

“What are you doing?”

“Ssh... I just need to see if he is wild or if he belongs to someone.”

“Be careful.”

Claire stayed behind and watched him. The horses didn’t move or even acknowledge Jamie as he came closer.

Claire held her arms around herself. Even though she was dry now, she shivered feeling goosebumps prickling over her arms. Jamie whispered calmly to the horse. It was as if her body knew the words he was saying.

Their surroundings had been dark and scary, but now it was blossoming and quite magnificent. Claire even could swear she heard a waterfall somewhere nearby.

*Jesus. R. Christ*

Claire could not believe it. Jamie was standing right next to the horse, his hands in the air, still saying something she couldn’t understand.

*Oh wow!*

Her view was breathtaking. Jamie really was a horseman. He spoke their language and Claire’s heart was beating faster as she watched Jamie’s hand slowly, so very slowly, reach out to touch the horse.

*Trust.*

Jamie had a magical way of gaining trust with anyone and anything.
He motioned for her to come closer.

It was the biggest horse she had even seen. He was extraordinary. His black mane glimmered in the sun, and she almost gasped at its beauty.

_Majestic_.

“This is someone’s horse, it’s tame.” Jamie smiled. “That means someone lives here.”

_Thank God._

They left the horse to eat in peace. Once again, began their journey to find help.

Claire had heard correctly before when she thought she heard a waterfall. As they walked through the jungle, they came upon a small waterfall with fresh water. Coincidence or just extremely convenient, there were mangos and coconuts for them to eat.

Claire sat down on the edge of the stream and drank her weight in water as Jamie hit a coconut against a small rock.

“Sassenach.”

“Mmh..”

“Have ye ever watched the _Blue Lagoon_?” Jamie said as he stood up and slowly took off his shirt.

“Yes, why?”

“They survived only on mangos, bananas and fish. We can do the same.” He grinned at her. “This can be our little adventure. And if necessary, we may need to repopulate and have a bairn or two...”
Jamie took off his pants and boxers. Claire stared at his naked body. It was bruised, but so beautiful.

“Why are you taking your clothes off?”

“I’m going to wash them, they are filled with sand and salt.”

“I really think you should take it easy, you were in a lot of pain yesterday.”

“I promise I’m fine, Claire. I was exhausted and just needed a few hours sleep. I have eaten more mangos than I have ever done in my entire life.”

“I’m the Doctor here. I want you to sit down. Give me the clothes, I’ll wash them.”

“Is that an order?” He smirked and handed her his clothes. “How about yer dress, it’s dirty..”

Claire shook her head, amused and she turned around and slowly undressed herself until she was as naked as Jamie.

_They were Adam and Eve._

Claire washed and rinsed his clothes first, glancing over her shoulder once or twice to look at Jamie. He was lying on his back, his head under his arms, eyes closed and his cock half erect. His skin was glowing in the sun.

Maybe they wouldn’t suffer too much.

The sun was burning her skin, but she didn’t mind. The humidity on the other half was making her hair look like a crows nest and she took her newly washed panties and ripped the fabric apart.
“What are ye doing?” Jamie asked, laughing.

“I need to put up my hair..” Claire simply answered and took the elastic band around her curly mess until it was up in a perfect bun.

“Ye look like a magical creation,”

“Medusa maybe.” Claire answered and suddenly felt how her blood rushed up to her face when she looked at Jamie’s now full, hard erection.

“How are you turned on right now?”

“Yer naked and beautiful.”

“I don’t think we should…” Claire suddenly felt nervous of some strange reason.

Her body responded and a tingling feeling rushed over her as Jamie started stroking his cock in front her, his eyes intent, burning into hers.

“Why not?”

“Because you are injured?”

“Well, why don’t ye come here and kiss away the pain?”

Claire laid out the wet clothes to dry on a rock and walked over to Jamie. She sat down on her knees next to him.

“Come lie here with me.”
“I can’t… my back is too sore.”

Jamie sat upright.

“Are ye in a lot of pain?”

“No, I just feel better when I sit.”

“And yer sure yer not hurt?”

“I promise. I’m miraculously unharmed.”

Jamie’s hands slowly came up to cup her breast, her nipple got harder by his touch.

“I’m pretending yer a water nymph,” Jamie released her breast and slowly made his journey downwards. “A beautiful creature who is trying seduce me so ye can lure me down to the deepest depth and keep me forever with ye.”

“Who is seducing who exactly?”

“I can’t help it, ye are compelling me. Yer magical force is so strong I can’t resist it.” He said as he spread her legs apart. “I imagine ye will taste salty like the ocean and being inside ye must make a man feel like Poseidon.”

Claire couldn’t help but burst into laughter.

“Are ye laughing at me?”

“I am, I really am.”

“Well, then. On all four, Nymph.”
Claire just shook her head, laughing even more as she did as he ordered.

“What now, Poseidon?”

Jamie came to stand behind her. As she was facing the waterfall, his hand brushed against her thighs. Like an electric jolt, she felt her body trembling at the lightest touch.

“Yer as wet as the waterfall,” he groaned loudly as his fingers separated her slick folds. “Oh, aye, I’ll have to give ye what ye deserve.”

Claire tensed as he slowly dragged his cock between her crack, suddenly feeling nervous that he would enter a unvisited area.

“Have ye ever ...?” He asked as his finger curiously had been replaced and trailed after where his cock had been teasing, then spreading her cheeks and making her blush.

“No...” she was panting. It was erotic, but...

“Don't ye want to try?”

Claire turned her head as much as she could to see Jamie with mischievous grin on his face.

“No, and there is not enough coconuts on this island that can convince me to.”

Jamie rumbled with mirth as his hands continued to tease and found her clit.

“This is quite a vision,” Jamie stated as he took a firm grip on her hip with his other hand. “The waterfall, yer round ass, and no one in sight to hear ye scream.”

It was arousing. Her body responded at his word and the sight. The tip of his cock graced her entrance. She wiggled her ass against him, desperately wanted him to be inside her.
“Tell me again.”

“What?” She was breathing heavily.

“How ye feel about me.”

Finally, he entered her, all the previous painful ache transpired into nothingness. Claire only felt how he filled her, that tingling feeling in her gut as he came deeper and deeper.

“I love you.” She moaned. “Oh God! I love you.”

“Ahhh.” Jamie made a deep sound in the back of his throat. “I could come with just hearing ye say those words Claire.”

Claire needed to hold on the grass as he slowly increased his speed. His balls were swinging against her and his hands holding harder on her hips. Her mouth slightly opened.

“Touch yerself.”

“Oh God.” She blushed at the request but felt even more turned on.

“Do it!”

Claire quickly found her balance. She really was as wet as the waterfall, she thought as she slowly started touching herself.

“Ohh!”

Jamie suddenly slowed down and released one hand from her hip. Quickly untangling her ribbon made from her panties, her hair fell down. He impressively collected her curls in his fist, pulled her head back, making her look up at the sky as she cried out loud when he pounded harder inside her.
He was breaking her down, layer by layer until she was exposed. Nothing but his.

“Jamie. Oh...Yes!” He was dominant and in control and she was completely in his power (and happy to be so). If possible, her nipples were getting harder. Her knees responded by almost collapsing and she moaned louder and louder.

“Christ! Och Claire!” Jamie moaned. “Yer so tight.”

The sun in her face, the sweat on her back and the squishy sound of their bodies crashing into each other. Out in the open nature. This was freedom.

“Harder?” He asked as he released his grip of her hair and slapped her ass. Taking a new hold on her hips with both hands.

“Yes, Yes, Oh God yes!”

Poseidon was the God of the sea, earthquakes, storms, and horses. Just like Jamie.

“Claire,” Jamie's voice was lower, deeper almost strangled. “I need to slow down.”

“Don’t you dare,” Claire stated as turned her head back. Jamie was sweating, his blue eyes resembled the black ocean from yesterday, dark filled with need and want. His mouth curled up into another grin.

“Do ye think ye can ride me, Sassenach?”

“Are you tired, Poseidon?”

“Never, I just want to see ye.”

Jamie pulled out and laid down on the grass. His chest hair was glowing and he was radiating with
his smile. Claire climbed on top off him and quickly guided him inside, simultaneously moaning as she sank down inch by inch.

She rode him, slowly, never breaking eye contact.

Yer so beautiful...”

“So are you.”

Claire bent forward and kissed him. They hadn’t kissed since they woke up today and it was the Goddamn best kiss she had never had. Maybe it was because she finally had opened up, and told him how she felt.

Embracing love.

The warm breeze, mixed with their sweaty bodies moving close together. Their mouths never leaving the other, surrounded by the sound of the waterfall.

It was slow and tender. She cried silently as she came, her legs and body shaking. Jamie held onto her back and it didn’t take long until his body tensed and two last jolts before he buried his face in the crook of her neck as he whispered her name.

“It doesn’t matter,” Jamie suddenly said. “When or how we leave this place, as long as I have ye. I have no worries, I feel no pain.”

Claire raised her head from his chest, their bodies still joined.

“Ask me if I love anyone else”

It was the strangest thing she could say, but it wasn’t the first time she did something like this. But she needed him to know.

“Do ye?”
“Sometimes, you let go of people without even noticing. I hadn’t noticed but I have. There can only be you, Jamie.”

“Will ye marry me?”

“Yes!”

———

“Do you hear me? Hello? Claire?”

Claire opened her eyes and was met by a bright light and she turned her face away. Her arms felt heavy and her mouth tasted of salt. She coughed and suddenly the light was replaced by a stranger, a man wearing a white coat.

“Miss Beauchamp.” The man said with a French accent. “I’m Dr. Raymond, can you hear me?”

“Yes.” It was hard to talk and her voice didn’t sound like her own. “Where am I?”

“You are back on the Royal MS, you fell off the boat.”

What?

“Where is Jamie?”

Claire panicked and tried to get up.

“Calm down, it’s alright..”
“How did I end up here? I was on the island.. I don’t understand. Where is Jamie?”

“Calm down, Mademoiselle, breathe .”

“No!” Claire shouted. “Where is he??”

“James Fraser is safe and well. He has been watching over you and is now waiting outside..”

Someone opened a door with a bang and a loud voice was heard.

“Claire!”

“Jamie!”

Doctor Raymond moved aside and Claire cried when she saw Jamie.

“Are ye okay?” Jamie started crying and took her hands in his. “I have been worried sick.”

“What happened? We were at the waterfall and suddenly I was here.”

Jamie looked at her strangely.

“Did we get rescued from the island? Why can’t I remember?”

“Claire, ye fell from the boat..”

“I know? And we washed up at the beach..”

“No, I jumped after you and we floated around for awhile until they rescued us. Ye have been
unconscious for 10 hours.”

“Wait, what? No.”

“Yes, someone saw the whole thing and alarmed a crew member. Ye fainted the second I placed ye in the lifebuoy. Christ, I was scared ye died.”

“But that means…”

_I dreamt it??_

“We weren’t on an island, Claire.”

_It didn’t happen?

“So, we didn’t see a black Stallion?”

Jamie smiled softly and shook his head.

“Then I never…”

_I never told you... and you never asked me… it was all in my head._

“Ye never what, Sassenach?” Jamie kissed her hand softly and looked at her. Tears ran down his cheeks.

“That…” Her voice betrayed her. “I love you, Jamie”

His mouth curled into a beautiful smile.
“I love ye, too, Claire.”

Chapter End Notes

What did you think? ❤ I’m begging for comments because I’m sick and love reading your reactions. Thanks for reading xoxo
Day 12.

After many, many, many hours of explaining to Doctor Raymond that she was fine and was steady enough to be transferred back to her room, Claire finally felt like she could breathe when Jamie closed the door behind them.

Everyone called it a miracle. She fell 18 meters down into the water and only ended with some bruises.

But Claire had imagined hours, such beautiful hours with Jamie that somehow hadn’t happened. They were only in her head and it was kind of devastating and disappointing. She wondered what her therapist Lisa would have said if she heard it and how she would have interpreted it.

Everyone had heard of the incident, of course they had, because the entire cruise ship had stopped at the nearest dock and waited for the little rescue boat to find them and bring them back. Geillis, her best friend, but also quite an exceptional lawyer, quickly asked Claire if she wanted to sue them. She was still thinking about it. Jamie didn’t want to, though.

“I still can’t believe you jumped out after me and held on for three hours until they found and rescued us,” Claire said as Jamie helped her sit down on her bed.

“I would do it a thousand times over.”

Claire laid down on her pillow and Jamie quickly laid down carefully next to her. It was an impressive move for a huge man like himself - the mattress didn’t even creak, that’s how careful
he was. She waited. But he didn’t wrap his arms around her like he usually did.

“I’m not going to break,” Claire said softly.

“I know…”

“Then why aren’t you holding me?”

“Honestly?”

“Always,” Claire replied and rolled over to her side, facing him.

Jamie looked troubled, the beautiful little wrinkle between his eyes was scrunched together in a frown, showing the hundreds of thoughts running through his head.

“I’m scared to touch ye…” Jamie finally said, low.

“You have been doing it all day?”

“Holding yer hand. Not wrapping my arms around ye…”

“I’m so confused, Jamie.”

Jamie sighed and rolled over as well.

“Cause the last time I did so — it was in the water. My hands were the only thing holding ye above the surface. I can’t stop thinking about how...I was so tired, my arms were shaking with exhaustion and fear and I prayed to God...begging him to save ye..and when we finally got rescued, ye still didn’t wake up…”

“I’m here.” Claire reached out to take his hand. Jamie let her and she intertwined hers with his. “
Jamie’s breathing caught, like he had forgotten how to breathe or was fighting against the urge to cry out loud. Claire moved closer and cupped his cheek, forcing him to look at her.

His eyes. They almost looked gray. Jamie eyes’ had a magical way of changing color based on his emotions. They were like those mood rings she had bought as a child.

“I don’t want you to be afraid of touching me and, I promise, I’m fine.”

“Claire.” His eyes were red, it was just a matter of seconds before the first tears would well up and fall. “It’s not...I’m just afraid that I’m not going to be able to let go.”

“Then don’t. Never let me go, Jamie.”

Jamie silently wrapped his arms around her waist and buried his face in the crook of her neck. He started shaking and Claire softly patted his back and whispered that everything was going to fine as he cried.

Claire couldn’t stop it. Her own tears began to fall and she tried to hold herself together.

It was his turn.

They had briefly talked about her hallucinations - the island - when she was laying down in the infirmary. Claire told him about the horse, that she had been the heroine and started a fire for them, and somewhat mentioned briefly that they had sex by the waterfall.

But.

Claire never told him about her - repeatedly- saying that she wanted to move to Scotland and marry him. Or the fact that the shipwrecked version of Jamie had asked her either.

Claire debated on telling him. For a very long time.
And when she finally gathered up the courage, Jamie had fallen asleep in her arms.

He looked peaceful, the little wrinkle was now smoothed and relaxed. Claire brushed aside a string of hair from his face and bent down to kiss his forehead. Like the other times she had done so, Jamie smiled in his sleep and Claire knew she would do anything to see that every night and every day - for the rest of her life.

——-

When Claire woke up, she felt disoriented and confused about her whereabouts. But she relaxed instantly when she looked into two big blue eyes. Jaime was wide awake now, and she must have fallen asleep.

“Hi,” Claire whispered. “What time is it?”

“The question should be, what day is it? It feels like I have been sleeping for years.” He chuckled low.

“Do you feel better?”

“Aye.” He smiled softly and wrapped his arms tighter around her waist. “I guess I just needed this.”

“Mmm, they said you never left my side. Must have taken all of your energy to stay awake.”

“Probably. Doctor Raymond, he was kind enough to let me sit beside ye, said he was sure ye would wake up when you had worked out your unresolved problems…”

“That’s a strange thing to say.” Claire frowned and thought about how Raymond couldn’t be a real doctor. “I wasn’t in a coma, I was just unconscious…”
“But ye did dream that we were stranded on a island...What was the last thing ye remember before ye woke up?”

“What does that have to do with anything?” Claire answered with a question and laughed nervously.

“I dinna ken...Yer the doctor, Claire, ye tell me.”

This was it.

“I’m not a therapist.” Claire bit her lower lip and sat upright, then she leaned her back against the headboard. “But, maybe he was right. I was stranded on that island and didn’t wake up until...”

_Oh God, Just tell him. It’s not that hard._

“Until what?”

“You know our conversation, right before I fell off the boat?”

“Aye, I haven’t stopped thinking about it, and blaming myself for pushing ye too much and how if I hadn’t done so, ye wouldn’t have fled out of the room in the first place .”

“No, no. It wasn’t your fault, I ran because I’m me, Jamie.”

He nodded wordless ly and she continued.

“I have been struggling to know what I want and...When we - in my head - were stranded on that island, I repeatedly told you that I was going to move to Scotland to be with you. I was very clear from the start, but I didn’t w a ke up until I told you that I had moved on from Frank.”

Claire left out the proposal part but Jamie looked very pleased with himself anyway, nodding his head up and down while his lips curled into the biggest smile. He didn’t say anything.
“So maybe my unresolved things were that I needed to stop running from him and admit that I had moved on and was ready for something...new.”

Claire wanted to tell him about his ‘proposal’, but she wanted him to ask in his own time, knowing him already like she did, Jamie probably would have got down on his knees right then and there if she told him.

“I’m yer something new?”

“And my something blue.”

In a whoosh, Jamie had pulled her down and laid Claire on top of him.

“I’m tired of running, Jamie.”

“So, that means yer really considering moving?”

“Yes, I can’t promise anything, Jamie. I still need to call the hospital and see if they still have that fellowship for me.” Claire sighed softly. “And, I need to find an apartment, and...well the list is endless. But yes, I’m willing to move...for you.”

Jamie let out a cheerful shout that startled her, then laughed uncontrollably, before quickly turning her over on her back. His weight pressing down on her was purely comforting and his lips on hers were like the sprinkles on her sunday - sweet and different.

“I dinna ken if I’m more excited for ye to meet my family or my horses.”

“I hope they like me...”

“My family or my horses?”
“Both, all of them.”

“Sassenach, they are going to love ye, just like I do.”

“I love you, too.”

“Ahh, say it again.”

“I love you.”

They had missed most of the twelfth day on the cruise, but they still had a few hours left of the day. Jamie hadn’t changed clothes in forever, so he left room to take a shower, change into new clothes, and talk to his friends.

Claire had just stepped out of her shower, with her towel wrapped like a turban on her head and only wearing a bra when her phone started ringing.

_Probably John._

Without hesitation and not looking at the screen, Claire answered.

It was a video call but it wasn’t until she read the name - Jenny - that she realized it wasn’t her phone at all.

A dark haired stranger appeared on the screen, and she looked just as surprised as Claire did.

“Oh, hello,” Jamie’s sister said.
“Um, hi,” Claire answered dumbly. “I think me and Jamie have accidentally swapped phones.”

“I can see that. And who is me, exactly?”

“Oh sorry, my name is Claire Beauchamp.”

“The Sassenach, I presume. My name is Jenny Fraser, the sister.”

Jenny looked remarkably like her brother, they shared the structure of their jaw and shape of their eyes, both slanted but different colors - she had brown eyes. Jenny was as beautiful as her brother. Claire felt her cheeks were go from a light pink to a dark purple and she wished that she had something decent to say.

“I have heard much about ye, Claire,” Jenny continued. “It’s not everyday my brother calls to talk about lasses, especially not like this. Even Ian has mentioned yer name once or twice. It’s nice to match a face to the name.”

“Likewise,” Claire quickly answered. “I hope he hasn’t told you anything terrible.”

“Just that he jumped off a ship to save ye.”

_Oh God._

“Yes, um, that was a heroic thing he did...”

“Our father almost had a heart attack when Ian told us ye were lost at sea. But we are very grateful that both of ye are safe and sound.”

“I’m sorry, that must have been...”

“Dinna apologize, Claire. We wouldn’t have expected anything less from my brother.” Jenny smiled for the first time. “Ian kept us updated the whole time. How are ye feeling now?”
Claire felt more relaxed instantly. The Frasers had a strange way of making her feel comfortable.

“Much better, thank you. We, I mean I, have slept and rested and fortunately the only thing I got was some bruises.”

“Miracle indeed,” Jenny said. “And where is my brother?”

“Jamie is in his room, I can go get him if it’s urgent?”

“Nay, dinna fash. Ye can tell him to call me later. I just wanted to see if ye both were okay.”

“Jamie is fine, a bit shaken still, but he is physically unharmed.”

“Right, yer a doctor?”

“I am,” Claire answered, desperately needing to be approved. “General surgeon.”

“Impressive, yer not a veterinarian? We sure would need one.”

“No,’sorry. Just a plain human doctor, I’m afraid.”

Jenny laughed, her mouth curled up more to the left side, lopsided, just like her brother and Claire smiled at the recognition and secretly wishing that they would become good friends.

Family was important, to her and to Jamie. Claire already knew that her brother John was going to fall in love with Jamie too.

“My brother is quite taken with ye, Claire, and on the behalf on the Fraser family, we are looking forward in meeting ye in person. My mother is already dusting off her wedding dress from the closet.”
Claire started blushing again.

“That’s very kind of you. I really am looking forward meeting all of you, too,” Claire replied with butterflies fluttering around in her stomach.

“Aren’t ye as sugar sweet as a pumpkin pie,” Jenny said, making her blush even more. “Just ken, Lallybroch is wide open for ye.”

Their conversation was about the end, and a thought came to Claire of Jenny and Ian, that he had gone on this trip to ask for Jamie’s permission to marry his sister.

“Jenny...” Claire was hesitating. “I love your brother. It was unexpected and instantaneous, but I really do. I know you haven’t even met me, but I would really like to have your permission...”

“My permission for what?”

“Date him.”

“Christ, I thought ye wanted to marry him.”

“I do.”

“Oh!” Jenny exclaimed, surprised. “By all means, date him or marry him, I dinna care. Just don’t break his heart.”

This was the second time someone close to Jamie said that to her. Don’t break his heart. Claire felt ashamed, she hadn’t even asked about it. Was there someone in his past that had hurt Jamie? Just like she had been hurt by Frank?

“The horses need my attention now, we will talk another day Claire. Take care of my brother and tell him to call.”
Jenny hung up and Claire stared at Jamie’s phone. She touched the screen and it lit up with his background. It was a picture taken on the day of the scavenger hunt - of her, unaware that that Jamie was taking the picture, just sipping on her strawberry milkshake.

Claire sighed softly. How could she have ended up with a man as sweet as Jamie?

It was official, the ice queen (as John had called her) that had boarded this ship, wasn’t the same person that was going off. The people of Narnia had nothing to fear, she had melted into a puddle.

——-

Jamie.

When Jamie saw the name - John-John - on the caller ID, he understood that he had ended up with Claire phone. He hesitated at first, but what if her brother was worried?

“This is James Fraser on Claire’s phone.”

“Well, hello James Fraser, this is John Beauchamp talking on John Beauchamp’s phone.”

“Pleasure talking to ye, sir. I have accidentally ended up with Claire’s phone.”

“I figured as much, and please, no need to be so formal. Call me John.”

“Jamie.”

“How is my sister? We spoke earlier, but I just…”
“Christ, I’m sorry. I should have called ye.” Jamie felt terrible, John only had Claire in the world and must have been devastated. The thought of calling him hadn’t even come to mind. “We have been sleeping for hours. Neither of us have even looked at our phones.”

“Calm down, Jamie. Geillis has been updating me frequently and I know she is alright, I just wanted to hear her voice again.”

Jamie knew that Claire and John had a very special bond and he already felt he had screwed up. But John seemed to be very kind and understanding.

“I owe you everything I have,” John continued. “For saving her... I don’t want to think what I would have done if...”

“I love your sister, I don’t want anything from you except a chance to prove myself worthy of her...”

John small sniffling through the phone transformed into a chuckle.

“I must say, even before your brave act to jump off of a moving ship into the night, Jamie, you already had, somehow proven yourself worthy of her and Claire would probably punch me in my stomach if I even tried to play the brother card.”

“Claire is an extraordinary woman.”

“She is...a handful,” John answered and laughed out loud.

“I have two solid hands, strong enough to carry her if she needs me to. But Claire is so fierce and strong, she doesn’t need me to carry her.”

“No, maybe not, but Claire needs someone to hold her hand if she stumbles,” John said softly. “I hope you are in for the job.”

“Aye, sir, all the way.”
“Good,” John said approvingly and Jamie felt calmer, he had never wanted someone else’s approval more than now. “Now, I need to go file some paperwork, please tell my dear sister to call. And Jamie, no more ‘sir’.”

“I will... John.”

Jamie released a deep breath when they hung up, his palms sweaty from nervousness.

Jamie looked at her screen, where Claire had a picture of the Eiffel Tower as her background and he wondered if she had taken it herself. *Maybe on her Europe trip with Frank?*

Jamie didn’t feel jealous nor anger towards the bastard right now. Jamie hated that Claire had been hurt, but if Frank hadn’t done so, Jamie wouldn’t have gotten the chance to mend her heart together. Or even have found her.

Yes, Jamie would curse the name Frank Randall for the rest of his life. But on *one* particular day - the day Claire becomes his wife - Jamie will raise his glass towards the sky and silently toast to the man who made it all possible.

*Claire Beauchamp.*

Just thinking about her made Jamie’s heartbeat a little faster, his body feel warmer, and he knew he would jump after her every single time. *Love.*

___

*Claire.*

Claire closed her door and sighed. Someone had knocked on her door just now and she had thought it was Jamie. Too sure of it, she ended up opening the door in her underwear and shocked both the man on the other side and herself.
It had been the Captain of the ship, a man called Sigurd Reston, who had wanted to personally apologize for her tragic accident.

Claire had been quick to grab her white robe and then listen to Sigurd’s well prepared speech. On the behalf of Royal MS and the company that owned the ship, they offered her a complimentary gift. The whole trip fully paid for her and Mr. Fraser and an luxurious upgrade to their finest suite and a 10,000 dollar gift certificate to her own choice of destinations.

Sigurd told her that his ship had past every test and evolution before departing and he couldn’t understand how the railing had broken. He had looked devastated and Claire probably could have earn a fortune from suing them, but they were alive.

The time and effort - it just wasn’t worth it.

Claire had shaken his hand and thanked him for coming and Sigurd handed her the key and told her the suite was already ready.

Walking across her room, Claire wondered how she was going to call Jamie, when she started laughing uncontrollably. She had his phone - she could easily just call herself.

Claire grabbed Jamie’s phone from the table and swiped, she shook her head that he didn’t have a pin code but also thankful for his truthful personality.

“James Fraser on Claire Beauchamp’s phone,” Jamie answered cheerfully. “Who am I speaking to?”

“This is Claire Beauchamp calling from James Fraser’s phone.”

“Ah, Miss Beauchamp, how can I help ye?”

“I’m just calling to inform Mr. Fraser that there is a very luxurious suit waiting for him and that he has approximately 10 minutes to pack up his things and meet me on the seventh floor - Room 10.”
“Really? Top floor, ye say?”

“Yes, one second too late and I’m going to drink all the free champagne without you.”

Claire giggled.

“Ha, my bag is already packed. I’ll beat ye to it.”

“Well, I have the key.”

“Cheater...”

“See you soon,” Claire said softly.

“Aye, I can’t wait.”

___

Jamie was already on the seventh floor when the elevator doors opened. Claire had tried to quick about it, but she was the messiest, her clothes had been scattered all over the room and she was pretty sure she had forgotten her green toothbrush.

Claire almost gasped when she saw him, not only had Jamie been quicker, he also had the time to change into that beautiful blue tuxedo-- the one that made his eyes even bluer.

“I feel underdressed,” Claire said, still awe struck at the sight of him.

“Ye look lovely in yer shorts and those bonny slippers.”

Claire looked down on the white, cotton slippers and smacked her heels together like Dorothy.
“Complimentary of the Royal MS.”

Claire waved the key in front of Jamie and then opened the door. It was like stepping into a luxurious, white, and puffy dream.

_Ours for thirty-six hours._

“It feels like my old room was a closet.” Jamie was definitely as impressed as she was and he immediately walked to the glassdoor leading to the balcony. “Christ, even the balcony is bigger.”

The suit was _three_ times larger than hers had been. The Egyptian cotton sheets felt so smooth under Claire fingers as she slowly dragged her hand over the king size bed. She looked to her left, through the open door leading to the bathroom.

“Oh my god!” Claire shouted with excitement

“What?”

Claire rushed into the bathroom and did a silly happy dance when she saw the humongous bathtub, one where three of Jamie would fit in that tub. _Bonus._ Behind the tub were big panoramic windows with a breathtaking view over the ocean.

She turned the knob and water came falling down like a waterfall.

“Wow!”

“I dinna ken anyone could get this excited for water, especially ye, Sassenach.”

“In my apartment in London, I only have a plain tiny shower and have dreamed about having a tub for ages. Oh god - to light scented candles, get a glass of wine and an amazing book, and just disappear into the heavenly bubbles. That is the dream.”
“I’m speechless.” Jamie laughed softly “Shall we fill this dream tub, then?”

“Really?” Claire’s excitement was hard to hide “I mean, we can wait? You dressed up so nicely and...”

“Claire,” Jamie interrupted her. “I only put it on to impress ye and from the look ye had when ye stepped out of the elevator, I would say I was successful...”

“So sure of yourself...” Claire teased and slowly walked towards him. “But yes, I was stunned. I looked at you and wondered...”

Claire came closer, her lips inches away from his.

“Wondered what?” He asked breathlessly.

“If I forgot my toothbrush.”

“Wait, what?”

Claire started laughing uncontrollably until tears ran down her cheeks-- the look on Jamie face was priceless.

When Claire finally stopped, she stepped up on to her toes, grabbed the collar of his shirt, and kissed him hard, leaving them both out of breath.

“You truly are beautiful, Jamie.”

Jamie leaned his forehead against hers and they both smiled.

“Can we fill the tub now?”
"Aye."

Claire turned on the water and started telling Jamie about her first apartment. She had been eighteen and the tiny one-room apartment was across the street from her parents’ house. It didn’t have a stove, so she had to cook at her parents, then run across the street with her food.

They laughed and shared even more cherished memories with each other. Never had Claire felt so comfortable to speak freely about herself or her parents.

Claire leaned against Jamie’s chest in the magical tub, realizing she had exaggerated the size, but the two of them fitted together snuggly.

They looked out the window at the sky - the boat was going at a fast pace, cloud after cloud slowly drifting away as they came closer to their final destination. Miami. The end of this journey.

“Oh god, I completely forgot. Jamie, I talked to your sister.”

“What a coincidence.”

“What is?”

“Ye go first.”

“It was embarrassing, I thought it was my phone. And of course it was a video call and there I was in my underwear and your sister’s surprised face appeared.”

Jamie started laughing so hard that he made small waves in the water.

“Wish I had seen her face.”

“Jenny was very graceful about it and she even invited me to Lallybroch...It was so silly, but I asked for her permission to date you.”
“Oh, and? What was Jenny’s answer?

“Jenny said, and I quote, ‘By all means, date him or marry him, I dinna care. Just don’t break his heart.’”

“First of all, Claire, yer Scottish accent is the worst.”

“Who hurt you?” Claire asked the same question Jamie asked her days ago as she turned her face so she could see him better. His smile had faded.

“It was a long time ago...” Jamie answered. “It was brief and ended just as fast. Her name was Annalise. She was visiting relatives over the summer in Scotland and then she flew back to France.”

Annalise.

“How old were you when you met her?”

Did you love her?

“Twenty-four. I was young and thought what we had was real. Christ! I even chased her to the airport.”

“And?”

“Annalise had already boarded the plane, without hesitation or regrets. She wrote me an email...one month later.”

“That’s harsh...”

“Aye, but the best part was that she attached a picture of an engagement ring. Annalise had
apparently met the love of her life on the plane ride home.”

“I’m sorry Jamie...Did you love her?” Claire finally asked.

“I thought so, but it wasn’t real and I think I realized that shortly after. I learned to let the past be the past. But she was special, in a way, and I’ll keep that memory.”

“You are the sweetest man I have ever met.” Claire found his hand in the water and brought it up to her lips. “I’m not going to break your heart and I’m not going to run.”

He squeezed her hand back.

“That’s verra nice to hear.”

Jamie told Claire about the funny coincidence of talking to her brother as well. They opened up a very expensive bottle of champagne and drank straight from the bottle. It was perfect. Just them, the candles, and the water with bubbles. Claire repeatedly turned the knob on and off to warm up the water and Jamie screamed each time and scolded her for trying to burn him to death. It was hilarious and she may have turned on the waterfall a few times more just to mess with him.

As adorable as Jamie always was, he told her how nervous he had been when he talked to “John-John” - just as Claire had been talking to Jenny.

“Your mother...” Claire felt so stupid and laughed nervously. “Apparently, she is dusting off her wedding dress.”

Jamie didn’t answer so Claire turned her head again to look at him. He had his eyes closed shut.

“Jamie?” Claire felt even more stupid. “Did I say something wrong?”

Claire sat upright and turned her entire body in his direction, she had no idea what was happening or if she had said something wrong. She placed her hands on his cheeks and that’s when he opened them again, his blue eyes were grey again, tears welling up in them.
“Claire, there is no beginning or ending with ye.” Jamie leaned forward and kissed her lips lightly. “And I know, our love will be timeless.”

Claire still had no idea what was happening. She reflexively licked her lips, the taste from champagne they had been drinking and soap from the bubbles on the tip of her tongue.

“I don’t...” Jamie suddenly stuttered and took a deep breath before he continued. “It feels like I have known ye forever. I don’t want to waste another second, even an other breath. Claire, will you marry me?”

_Did he just--?_

Claire just sat there with her mouth open, half of her upper body shivering above the water, the hair on her arms prickling with goosebumps, and her nipples tightening.

Jamie reached out and grabbed the silver colored metal that had been around the champagne cork. The question went unanswered still, though it rung in her head as Jamie twisted the metal back and forth until it broke, then he twirled it until it was shaped like a ring and held it silently in front of her.

The shock slowly faded away and she placed her hand over his heart.

“Not another second,” Claire answered softly. “Not another breath. Yes, Jamie! I will marry you.”

A flood of relief rushed over Claire and she threw herself over Jamie. There was water splashing over the edge and down to the floor and she almost knocked over the champagne bottle.

Claire wrapped her arms around his neck and Jamie quickly closed the distance, smiling against her lips as they kissed. The intensity grew and changed into something raw, honest, and filled with so much love Claire wanted to cry and laugh at the same time.

Jamie grabbed her by the shoulders, carefully stopping her from kissing him again. A sweet and beautiful laugh escaped from him.
“Claire, please give me yer hand.”

Claire felt her cheeks blush. She had practically attacked him. But Jamie only smiled, his eyes glimmering, and took her hand. With a steady and deliberate movement, he slowly slid the ring he fashioned from a champagne muselet on her finger. It was a little small but she had never worn anything so beautiful - *No beginning or ending. It was as timeless as their love.*

Chapter End Notes

We are sailing towards the end, hope you liked this chapter ❤ Thank you for reading and please leave a comment❤
Chapter Notes

@purpleheatherdream you are one of a kind. Thank you for your friendship. ❤

Impulsive decisions and having reckless behavior, there couldn’t be a better explanation of James Fraser’s personality. But this wasn’t impulsive nor reckless. Jamie had carefully thought this through hundreds of times and knew what he wanted, and that was Claire.

Right before Jamie had left his old room to meet up with Claire the day before, he called John once again, asking if he would be a total idiot if he asked Claire to marry him and, if he was not, did John think Claire was emotionally ready.

“It takes one second, just one,” John had answered. “Until all of it could be lost forever. Don’t wait.”

Jamie had at least thought of waiting until he had an actual ring to give her. But it was - as always with Claire - an unexplainable moment where he just couldn’t stop himself. It started with Claire just mentioning his mother and her wedding dress. It was a sign.

His mother Ellen was the most important person in the world to him, she always supported and encouraged Jamie to be himself. Nothing more, nothing less, just him.

But lately, Ellen Fraser had been acting less like herself. His mother’s smile was forced, her laughter was quieter, and the bright glow that always surrounded her had faded. He knew that something was wrong, even though his mother repeatedly said she was fine.

So, when Claire mentioned his mother, he combined it with John’s last words. Time was fluent and inevitably always moving and Jamie wasn’t wasting another second.

And she had said yes.
As the words came out of Claire mouth, he had never felt that kind of happiness before. It had almost felt like religious out of body experience. Freddie Mercury singing. Birds learning to fly. The first snow in the winter.

*He had never loved like this before.*

With Claire by his side, he would never fear anything again. All this time, he had been searching for something bigger than himself. Jamie was, now, exactly who he wanted to be. *Hers.*

---

**Day 13.**

They forgot to shut the blinds before they fell asleep. Their bodies laid entangled with each other, making it impossible to know where he ended and she began.

Jamie woke up with his body tingling. The sore aches in his muscles already had faded and those awful thoughts and worries about losing her yesterday also had thankfully disappeared. He was truly content.

The simple ring he had fashioned on a whim was still on her finger and Jamie couldn’t wait to replace it.

“Good morning.”

Claire had finally woke up.

“Good morning, future Mrs. Fraser.”

“That’s...not really what my name will be.”
“Christ, I’m sorry Claire. I shouldn’t have assumed ye would take my name.”

Claire started giggling and put her hand over his mouth.

“My name will be Doctor Fraser,” Claire said with pride and took away her hand. “I have worked hard for my title and it has a pretty perfect ring to it with your name.”

“Aye, it really does,” Jamie answered softly. “Everything about ye rings beautiful to me, and to have the honor to be yer husband will be the greatest adventure of my life.”

“Have you always been this...How do I phrase it? Good with words.”

“What do ye mean?”

“You are so poetic, Jamie. Your words and how you say them, it makes me...”

Claire suddenly stopped talking, replacing her words with actions. Her index finger slowly trailed down his arm, her nails sharp. It hurt while also giving him goosebumps of pleasure. Jamie felt silly for a second when she said he was poetic, but it was obvious she liked it when he was. She gazed at him with an earnest and loving look on her face.

“How do I make ye feel?”

Claire didn’t answer, and instead continued her silent explanation. She took his hand and placed it on her own chest. The smooth skin under his hand was warm and he felt her heart pounding fast and hard. Then she guided him down her body.

Her breast, then her nipple hardening upon his touch. Jamie closed his eyes, memorizing every step of the way as he continued on his own.

Claire’s long legs, the ones Jamie knew would be white as pearls during the winter but now were
a beautiful glowing tan, slowly started to spread wider and Jamie opened his eyes again. His eyes locked with hers as his hand stopped by her inner thigh.

He teased her and went up again.

Claire usually felt cold compared to his warmth, but now it felt like her skin was burning beneath his hand and her breathing became heavier. As Jamie lingered on her flat stomach, the possibilities of one day having a child with her came to mind. One, two, three even maybe four imaginary children of love that she may bear one day.

“Will you have me for better and for worse?” Claire suddenly asked quietly and Jamie quickly opened his mouth to speak, but she silenced him with her a hand gesture. “Jamie, will you have me for better and for worse even when I get scared and doubt this? Will you always keep me grounded?”

Jamie wasn’t sure if he was allowed to answer yet, but he nodded.

“Will you have me in sickness and in health, when I work excessive and insane hours at the hospital? To love and to cherish, till death do us part, even if I can’t give you children?”

His was silent. It wasn’t a moment of hesitation, just reflection. Jamie still held his hand to her stomach, the dream he just imagined transformed into another.

Jamie had no idea what the future held, where he would be in five years, or even ten, and none of it mattered because he knew he would be with her.

“I pledge myself to ye, Claire Beauchamp. For better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death do us part.”

Claire's body had tensed at the word children, but it slowly relaxed now. She silently rose from the mattress and climbed on top of him, fitting her naked flesh against his.

If there ever came a time for him to be brave, it started now and would continue for the rest of his life. Jumping off a moving ship was easy, this was going to be harder - being the man she deserved.
The open, raw, and emotional state they were in was almost painful. A share of trust between two people who had once been strangers, but were now one as lovers.

Claire carefully guided him inside of her and slowly began to move, back and forth, until they both decreased and then exploded into oblivion.

Their silence, the unspoken words they said by just breathing. Till death do us part.

———

Jamie and Claire had missed hours and days with being hospitalized, then left to heal together in a luxurious suit they never even explored. When they finally left the room for the last day of their trip, they walked hand in hand time into the room where they first met.

They hadn’t seen their friends in a long time and were greeted with congratulations, hugs, and cheers when they announced their engagement. The words came from Claire’s mouth and set his soul to flames. His. Hers. Eternity.

Day 13 - Celebration.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” the hostess said. “We have reached the end of this beautiful voyage and it’s time for our last event. It has been an honor to meet every single one of you. We have filled this room over the days with roses, candlesticks, and music. All the ‘classic’ signs of love. Maybe you have and maybe you haven’t found your soulmate, but love comes in different shapes and sizes, through friendship and self love. Maybe you have grown and learned new things about yourself that will help you in the future. Whatever brought you this, embrace it.”

They were sitting at the table closest to the stage. Claire sat beside Jamie, her hand squeezing his. Surrounded by friends and familiar faces, they were going to have one last feast. A three course dinner with string violins playing in the background.

“Let’s celebrate today. Please raise your glasses.”

Everyone throughout the room raised their glasses in the air and together they toasted to love.
The table settings were elaborate and formal. There were so many forks and knives that Jamie felt too embarrassed to even move when the first dish came out.

“Jamie?” Claire elbowed him lightly. “What’s wrong?”

“All and nothing, Sassenach. I grow up on a farm, I have no idea which fork I should use,” he admitted.

“Do as I do.” Claire giggled. “Take the one you want and just use that one. Easy.”

Jamie laughed and randomly picked one, dismissing the silly notion of being embarrassed in the first place. It was only a salad.

When they had eaten the first and second courses, everyone simply sat at their tables and mingled. The champagne was flowing and laughter was heard throughout the room.

“So, when is the wedding?” Angus asked them.

“We haven’t talked about the details, yet,” Claire answered before him. She wiggled the metal wire ring on her finger. A nervous trait? Jamie wondered.

“Is it going to be a long engagement?” Thomas jumped into the conversation. “I mean ye just met...”

“Like Claire said,” Jamie answered. “We haven’t discussed anything yet.”

Thomas had apologized to Claire and he promised to be nice, so why was he starting up again? Jamie didn’t want to make a scene, but he was already starting to get irritated.

Claire found his hand and smiled reassuringly when Jamie squeezed back.
“I have never been the girl who dreamed of white, puffy weddings.” Claire still looked at Jamie as she spoke. “But I know I want to marry this man as quick as I can. So no long engagement, I’m not wasting a minute.”

“Well, then, short engagement it is.” Jamie felt like the proudest man ever.

Tomorrow, the would reach Miami, then board a plane back to England. Even if they were engaged and had plans, things couldn’t go as fast. Claire still needed to put her apartment up for sale, transfer from her hospital to the one in Scotland. It would take weeks, maybe even months, until they could finally be together.

Jamie was deep in his thoughts about their separation and he already missed Claire even as she sat next him.

Claire suddenly rose from her chair, her eyes a bit glossy—probably from the champagne—and bent down to kiss his cheek.

When she silently walked away from the table, Jamie followed her, confused as she walked towards the stage and whispered something to the hostess.

Claire was handed a microphone and took to the stage. The room fell silent and everyone looked at her. Jamie wasn’t sure what was happening. When Claire looked directly at him, she seemed nervous, maybe she was going to sing again?

“I have held hands with my sadness,” Claire said, her voice coming out of the speakers. “I have walked on the path of grief and was sure I would never reach a crossroad. The never ceasing rain of tears poured down on me...”

Jamie began to cry as Claire talked, tears slowly running down his cheeks. He couldn’t help it and he did nothing to wipe them away.

“If I win, at the end of this trip,” Jamie had said to Claire the first day. “on the very last day, ye need to publicly and very loudly announce yer undying love to the lucky man in front of the entire boat.”
“You asked me how you make me feel, Jamie.” Claire’s hands were shaking slightly before she took a firmer grip around the microphone. “I see you, in my mind and dreams, standing there at the crossroad I never thought I would reach. Under an umbrella, your hand hanging in the air, reaching out for me. The second my skin touched yours, the sun came out.”

_The sun came out._ Claire’s words echoed in his head.

“I stand here today, announcing my undying love for you, James Fraser.”

People started applauding, Geillis was holding her phone filming it and Ian was whistling. Jamie quickly rose from his chair, walked across the short distance, skipped the stairs and jumped directly onto the stage. Two more small strides and he stood inches away from her.


Claire had been crying during her speech. Her mascara was a little smudge, her face was a shade of pink and her lips slightly opened. She had never looked more beautiful.

The fact that Claire had walked up on stage to publicly expose herself in this way was a huge step for her and Jamie was proud of her. But it was due to his words, the bet he made with out expectations that first day. He felt like a winner in his heart, but Claire wasn’t a trophy, a metal piece he could simply wave around in his hand and boast about with manly roars. She was his heart.

But - their love was not on display for others. Claire needed to say those words, her emotions, out loud and Jamie needed to hear them. Maybe even the audience needed to hear them, but the show was now over.

Jamie reached out his hand in the air to her … and Claire took it.

The world disappeared, the applauses faded away and there was only the two of them in the room.

_The sun came out._
Jamie had no idea if minutes or hours had passed since Claire stood on that stage and told everyone how she felt about him. They had walked off the stage, as people were still applauding when Claire dragged him away and out through the doors and back to their luxury suite.

Jamie and Claire were mostly the opposite of each other. He had learned that over these couples of days and now was no exception.

Jamie wanted slow. He wanted to savor this moment - savor her - when they stepped out of the room, and were away from prying eyes. He cupped Claire’s cheeks, looked tenderly into her eyes and kissed her softly, then whispered how much he loved her.

Claire, on the other hand, wanted nothing gentle, and she proved as much in the elevator. They had been alone and the words that came out of her were nothing like anything Jamie had heard before. That was probably due to the champagne, a useful piece of information Jamie had picked up. Claire got frisky and dirty when she drank champagne.

When they arrived at their suite, Jamie continued to be soft and gentle, slowly dragging down her zipper. Claire had worn the same black dress from the first day, the one that ended right below her knees.

When Claire stepped out of her dress, revealing that she hadn’t worn anything under it, Jamie lost it. Claire was getting her way, fast and nothing gentle about it.

Jamie grew harder, his cock twitching between them. Claire sat on top and he was leaning against the headboard. She kissed him - forcing him closer by taking a firm grip of his hair as she vigorously sought friction by grinding her body against his. Jamie’s hands held and squeezed her ass hard, and then pressed her closer, making them both moan.

“I lied before,” she said breathlessly, in-between kissing him. “In my hallucination...I woke up...after I agreed to marry you...”

Jamie stopped kissing her.

“How did I ask ye?”
“We could remake it, I could show you,” Claire whispered, teasing as she bent down to nibble and bite his neck.

“Ah.” He groaned with pleasure and pain. Claire was being rough.

Jamie didn’t understand how they could recreate her island dream proposal, but he was curious and liked her playfulness.

“First you had me on all four s. ..” Claire climbed off his lap, and he quickly followed her example.

Her ass pushed up in to the air, her arms and legs bent down on the maddress. Claire looked back over her shoulder as Jamie came to stand behind her. Just the sight of her like this was making him harder.

But Jamie stayed silent, waiting for her to give him directions and guidelines. It was arousingly thrilling. He knew Claire liked to be dominated, but he had never known he would liked so much himself.

Jamie craved for her to make the calls. To do exactly as Claire wanted.

“You were teasing me-- one hand my hip, the other one between my legs,” Claire said, or rather ordered.

Jamie was absolutely loving this. He took a firm grip of Claire’s hip, while the other one snaked down between her legs, first teasingly brushing her thigh then wandering to his first destination. Claire was wet, as expected, but if the way she sounded when he slipped between her folds. ..

He had no idea himself what he had done in her dream, but he was happy to oblige her in all of it.

“You made a prosperous request…” Claire looked back again, blushing, and sounded out of breath. “Asking if I had ever tried...Oh god...”
Claire couldn’t say the words, but he understood well enough. It made him chuckle low to himself.

“And have ye?” He didn’t dare move his fingers from her clit. She was starting to squirm under his hands. “Tried another entry…?”

“No...” Just by the tone in her voice, Jamie knew that the back area was off limits.

“Maybe, another time then.” He grinned widely. “What happened after that?”

“I can’t think...” Claire sighed from pleasure. Jamie never stopped moving and pressing in small circles.

“Do you want me to stop, Claire?”

“No, no, don’t...Jamie.”

For a second, Jamie debated on just letting her come, but her wetness and moans were driving him mad. He stopped and removed his hand and Claire quickly turned her head, giving him an adorable disappointed pout on her lips.

“What happened after that?” he asked again.

Claire looked thoughtful and he wanted to laugh, she was trying so hard to remember. So desperate for him to continue and his aching cock was feeling her. It was painful to resist.

“Oh, right,” Claire exclaimed with joy. “You wanted to hear my say how I felt about you and the second I told you those three little words...you thrusted yourself into me.”

Jamie smiled wider than before. This island version of him was very similar to himself. He took his hard cock in his hand and waited. Claire licked her lips in a hungry kind of way.

“I love you.”
The second Claire opened her mouth and the words came out, he slowly - finally - entered her.

From here and out, Jamie knew what to do. He wasn’t going to be gentle or soft. With each thrust, Jamie pushed deeper inside her and he reveled in all the feelings he got from giving her pleasure. It was madness, he was sure he could come by just listening to the sound of her. It was tantric, a closed void inside him was filled for the first time.

“Oh, Claire...”

The small tingling feeling. Not yet, he thought and slowed down. Jamie spanked her lightly and she let out a yelp in surprise.

In curiosity of how Claire would feel about it, he did it again but a little harder, and she yelped again. This time she turned over and bit her lower lip in a seductive way.

“Harder,” she moaned softly, looking at him.

Eyes locked, he smacked her ass harder, not to harm her, but enough to leave a pinkish mark on her cheek.

“Christ.”

He didn’t know he could feel so turned on. This woman, she was everything. His.

——-

His heartbeat was pounding in his ears, it felt like Jamie’s heart was going to burst. He turned his head and looked at Claire. Her eyes were closed and she was smiling.

“That was...” Jamie couldn’t even describe it.

“Spazmatic?”
“I would say mind blowing,” Jamie answered proudly. “Ye screamed so loud our neighbors knew I had served ye well.”

“You are so confident.” Claire laughed.

“What? Dinna tell me ye didn’t enjoy it?”

Claire rolled over to her side.

”I heard Freddie Mercury singing from a pink cloud.” She bent forward and kissed him. “That’s how good it was...”

*Oh god.*

For a second, Jamie just stared at Claire, then his raised his fists into the air and started singing.

“We are the champions, my friends”

“And we’ll keep on fighting ’til the end,” Claire joined in with his singing and raised her own fists. He wanted to cry with joy.

“We are the champions,” they both sang, loud and a bit false ly, and they laughed together. “We are the champions. No time for losers. *Cause we are the champions* ”

They stopped singing and Claire suddenly sat up in the bed and did a guitar solo in air. She played those imaginary strings like there was no tomorrow.

“Can ye marry me, here and now? *Christ,* I have never loved ye more.”
We have reached the second last chapter of this story. To all of you have read this story Thank you for the love. Thank you all the kind words. I adore you all. Please leave a comment or two with your thoughts about this chapter ❤️
The end.

Chapter Notes

It is done. It is over. We have reached the final chapter and this story has landed on 50k words, what? It’s a vacation beast. But it has been fun and even though I didn’t complete it in fourteen days, it’s been a good challenge. I have written fluff (in my way) but just a heads up, this final chapter ended a completely different way than it was supposed to (warning angst). It takes place in the real world, you don’t get the last day on the cruise I’m afraid. But I hope you will like it either way and I want to thank every single one of you for reading, supporting and just encouraging me. I can’t wait for our next adventure. @purpleheatherdream where do I even begin? Throughout this story you have been the best. Taken hours of your precious time to NOT ONLY beta but to make beautiful fan art. I’m honored, in all ways! ILY.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

London.

*I carved your name into the benches I have walked past. There are approximately ten benches on my way to work and your name is on every single one. I imagine that your name magically transforms into you and I see your smile every day.*

Claire quickly deleted the words she had thought of sending to Jamie and walked through the door leading to her apartment. It had been seven weeks since the cruise ended and when she last saw Jamie.

Seven weeks.

Claire missed him terribly. She really did.

They had had multiple opportunities to see each other and she had an excuse every time. *Work. Work. Work.*

But today was the day. In one hour, she was taking the train to see Jamie for the first time on British soil.
All she needed to do was board the train.

Just take one step.

One.

Why didn’t I? Claire wondered as she watched the train leave the station without her.

Her phone vibrated in her pocket. A text message from Jamie.

I can’t wait to see you.

Claire stared at the letters until they transformed into a whirlwind of betrayal. She closed her eyes and put her phone back in her jacket.

Another text. But she didn’t dare read it.

Claire started walking, away from what was going to be her happily ever after. Further away from what may have been the best thing that had ever happened to her.

Jamie. Jamie. Jamie.

His name whistled in the wind hitting her face. His name carved in the benches. His name branded in her heart.

The small vibrations turned into longer ones. It wasn’t a text, someone was calling and Claire knew exactly who it was.

When you are driving a car, you have your side mirrors and the back mirror. But even though you turn your head, back and forth multiple times to watch every mirror, there is still one spot that you can’t see. The blind spot. If you are not to careful, something horrible can happen. An unexpected crash...
Claire was her own blind spot. She was the invisible obstacle nobody saw coming, crashing and ruining everything.

*Why? Why? Why?* she asked. Over and over again until the answer was spelled out inside of her. The little seed growing. The size of a blueberry.

Claire had been careless, foolishly running around without thinking. But in her defense, she thought she was barren and unable to get pregnant. Using a condom had irresponsibly never crossed her mind.

Claire had only known for a few days and hadn’t told anyone. Not Jamie, not Geillis not even John.

Her void, that closed space where she never let anyone in… she had opened it and welcomed Jamie without a second thought and now she was pregnant by a man she had known for two weeks. Claire and Jamie had talked almost every day, but the calls became less frequent and every time she was supposed to see him, she freaked out. How many times had she said that she loved him? *Uncountable*. They were even engaged, Claire still wore the silver ring Jamie had made her, but it also reminded her that she was crazy and had been impulsive.

Maybe if Jamie lived in London, close enough for them to see each other every day, maybe it would have been different? The longer they were apart, more doubt filled her mind and soul.

Claire walked back to her empty apartment and looked around. She had even started packing. Big brown paper boxes were in every single room, all half filled with her things. Stuff that was supposed to go to Scotland.

Everything was set. Claire had called the hospital in Scotland the same week she got back to London and they had been so thrilled that she had reconsidered their offer, the job was automatically hers.

Everything was set, except for her.

Then why?
Because Claire was a runner, and fled from things or people that might hurt her.

When she finally looked at her phone, she saw multiple missed calls and texts from Jamie.

_Even you on the train? I'm picking you up._

_Claire?_

_Where are you?_

_I'm at the station._

_Why aren’t you answering?_

_I don’t understand._

“Me neither…” Claire sighed and put away her phone.

At the ship, it all made sense. But Claire was a doctor, she saw everything in black and white. Whatever had happened between them had been… Attraction. Pheromones. Or some other biological explanation.

That was what she was trying to convince herself of at least.

This pregnancy was making her so tired and ill, she threw up between breakfast and lunch every day. That had been Claire's first clue before she took the test and today was no different. Combining that with the shame and guilt of not being able to even face Jamie made it even worse.

Claire fell asleep in her bed and woke up to a loud banging sound. She looked out the window. It was dark, she must have slept all day.
She quickly realized that the loud banging wasn’t one of her neighbors. Someone was at her door.

The hard knocks on her door didn’t stop. The person behind the door was inconsistent and strong enough that Claire was afraid her wooden door was going to crack, like literally break.

When she looked through the keyhole, Claire’s heart almost stopped.

*Jamie.*

As the coward Claire was, she, for a second, thought of going back to her bedroom and sneaking under her covers to hide.

Her hands were shaking as she reached out to open the door.

What appeared when Claire opened the door was tragic sight indeed. It had been weeks since she saw Jamie, long enough for her to forget how tall and broadly built he was. But his face, that beautiful face of his, wasn’t radiant as it had been. He looked broken. His eyes were greyish, the ocean color in them had faded and she saw the evidence that he had been crying.

Neither spoke. Neither smiled.

Claire had feared that the magnitude of this indescribable love would have faded over time when in reality, it somehow only had grown.

But the way Jamie looked at her now, with them standing on opposite sides of her door, Claire had never felt more terrible and terrified - simultaneously - before.

Claire stepped aside, silently inviting Jamie inside. But he didn’t move and she wanted to touch him, comfort him, but nothing came out. She couldn’t explain herself.

“Why?” Jamie finally asked. He was angry, she could tell from his tone of voice, and she felt even more nervous and anxious.
“I don’t know,” Claire admitted.

“We talked on the phone yesterday? Ye sounded excited about coming. I dinna understand this, ye, at all, Claire.”

“I’m sorry.”

“Is this a game to ye? Cause I don’t want to play.”

Jamie clenched his jaw, his face strained, and for the first time Claire had no idea what he was truly thinking.

“Jamie, can you please come inside?” Claire sounded desperate, but she was. “So we can talk.”

“What’s the point?” Jamie had obviously given up on her. “So ye can lie in private?”

“I haven’t lied,” Claire objected. “I haven’t...”

The way she had missed Jamie, it made time slow down. Her days felt longer and the nights were even worse. Her heart felt their separation even as she tried to fight against it, and now down to her bones, the very core of her, was aching from missing him. Even when he stood right in front of her.

“Please.”

Jamie looked up the ceiling, sighed loudly, then shook his head in disbelief. He walked past her and she caught a whiff of the familiar smell of him. It made her stomach turn with regret.

Claire shut the door and trailed behind him. Jamie looked around as he walked towards her living room. This was the first time he was in her apartment, it should have happened differently, not like this.
Jamie stood next to her couch, staring at the half filled boxes.

“I’ll ask again and if ye answer I don’t know...I’m going to leave.” He sounded so cold. “Why, Claire?”

“I’m...I freaked out. I stood at the station and just...I couldn’t.”

“Do ye ken how this feels?” Jamie said. “We have talked every single day, Claire. I have missed ye more than I thought was possible, and for what? For ye to make promises that just turned out to be shite.”

Claire wanted to cry, but nothing came out. Not even any words to defend herself.

“I had convinced myself that yer just really busy at work. That yer excuses were truthful, but I realize now that I have been a fool. Ye don’t want to come. Ye don’t want to be with me.” Jamie’s voice started shaking. “I have told everyone I know about ye. Our love story and how much I love ye. Each time ye promised to come, my family has been anxiously waiting and ye never come? Just end my misery already. Just tell me that this was a vacation fling. Just end this!”

Claire took a step closer and Jamie backed away. Her heart was beating so loud with panic she couldn’t think straight.

“I can’t sleep, I can’t breathe,” Claire finally choked out. “I’m afraid of even moving, I’m so scared that I might break because I miss you so much.”

It clearly wasn’t what Jamie had thought Claire was going to say. He stood completely still, but his shoulders relaxed.

“Why, then?”

“I’m pregnant.”

Jamie’s mouth fell open in shock. Then his face turned into stone. It was unreadable, but he looked angry?
“So… are ye doing this because it’s not...” Jamie couldn’t even finish his sentence, but Claire knew well enough what he meant and it pissed her off.

“Of course it’s yours!” She was suddenly shouting. “I have only been with you.”

“Do ye blame me? Seven weeks, Claire!” Jamie raised his voice to match hers. “This is the first time I see you in seven fucking weeks.”

“Don’t you think I know that?”

“Then why the hell are ye doing this? Have ye stopped…” Jamie swallowed hard. “Or did ye realized that ye never...”

“Never what?”

“Loved me.”

In just two words, her world shattered into a billion pieces. He unraveled layers and layers of her in mere seconds. Claire took a leap of faith and marched across the room just to throw herself into Jamie’s arms. He unhesitatingly caught her and wrapped his arms around her.

“I never stopped.” Claire looked up. “I’m so sorry, Jamie. I’m so sorry. For hurting you like this. I don’t know why I’m acting so foolishly. I never meant…I was scared.”

“Haven’t I told ye every single day that I love ye? That I miss ye so much I can’t breathe?” Jamie wrapped his arms around her tighter. Every word he said was painful. Because he had said all those things and she had said them back.

“I love you.” Claire sniffed, her lower lips started shaking and she burst into tears. “I love you so much, Jamie.”

“Thank God,” he whispered into her hair before he kissed her there. “I bought a train ticket, and sat
on that train fearing the worst.”

Claire couldn’t bear the thought of looking at Jamie, so she buried herself deeper in his chest while her tears ran like she had opened up a never ending flood.

“Claire?” Jamie was trying to make her look at him. “Please.”

Claire stepped out of his embrace, wiping away the snot running from her nose with the sleeve of her shirt.

“What can I do?” Jamie asked. “How can I make ye understand? I’m in for the long haul, Claire. I just need to know if you are too.”

Jamie had been sure it was over. Having feared the absolute worst, he relaxed a bit when Claire said that she loved him. But how many times was she going to run? How many times was he supposed to chase her? He had expected both more and less at the same time. He knew she was broken, but he thought he had mended it enough for her to just try.

“I need...you.”

It was almost the right answer, but hesitation was written all over her face. Jamie loved her, but how much did she love him?

“I love you, Claire. I have said so repeatedly. But ye keep leaving me.”

“I won’t.”

“Ye say as much.” Jamie felt his body trembling. He didn’t want to say it, but she needed to hear him for once. “This news, this miracle, our bairn growing inside ye...I want to cry and laugh at the same time. But it also makes me more scared then I was when I knocked on yer door. That ye will run again and take our child with ye.”

This was supposed to be the best day of his life. Jamie couldn’t believe he was saying it, but each time that Claire promised to come and canceled at the last minute, she broke his heart a little. He
needed her to rescue him this time, be there for him and make sure she was truthful with her words.

“\texttt{I would never take your child away from you.}”

“What would have happened if I hadn’t come? Would ye have called to end it or to say that ye were pregnant?”

“Maybe...both.”

“I appreciate yer candor, I really do. But we need to be two partners in this relationship. I need you to want to be with me. I gave ye that ring as a totem, a promise of my love and that I want to marry ye, but ye are constantly seeking excuses to leave me. I’m scared too, Claire.”

“I came home,” Claire said, “to this apartment, a place where I had lived before you. Each day I came home from work, and it was like it never happened. Even when we talked on the phone, your voice was not convincing enough for me to believe it was. I have packed my boxes and stopped mid way, sure I was packing for nothing. I looked back on our weeks and just thought it was attraction, that we were out of our minds and I thought, I honest to God thought that if I saw you, Jamie, it would confirm my worst nightmare.”

Jamie was listening. It was unbelievable, but nevertheless the truth. It would never stop to amaze him how he fell in love with a stranger in fourteen days.

“I thought, if I avoided you... I would slowly dragged out the obvious.”

“Which is?”

“That you would see me in real life, in your home, and feel that I didn’t belong there. That this,” Claire held up her engagement ring in the air, “was a mistake.”

Jamie closed his eyes, just to opened them with tears.

“The only mistake here is that ye clearly didn’t believe in my love for ye.”
“I would understand if you walked away, I am a horrible person.”

“Can ye stop? Please!”

“What? I can’t say the right words to make this right. I’m giving you an out. We can make some kind of arrangement for us to co-parent this child.”

It felt like Claire had shot him. Jamie literally felt like his body was slowly dying. It was a severe case of heartbreak. And Claire held the smoking shotgun with the tears in her eyes.

Jamie didn’t expect this and wasn’t sure how to answer it either. He waited for her to take it back. He wanted her to scream she didn’t mean it. Nothing.

“Ye once told me that the sun came out when ye met me. Just ken, Claire, ye made it rain again. All by yerself.”

Jamie walked past her, the scent of lavender- her perfume- would haunt him as long as he lived.

The closer to the door he got, the harder it felt to breath. Jamie walked slowly, hoping she was going to stop him. She didn’t.

Jamie even stood lingering by her front door, his hand shaking as he held the handle. Nothing.

Eventually, it was clear that Claire had no intention of stopping him and Jamie couldn’t help but feel that he left his heart in her apartment, not that it was useful anymore, left lying in pieces the way it was on her living room floor. He shut the door.

This was supposed to be the best day of his life. Even with the news of his child, the love child he had never expected, but was so welcomed, was now the only thing he could expect to find some form of happiness in.

Jamie walked away from the person he thought was the one he was going to spend the rest of his
life with. He was furious, but also so damn sad. Why did she give them up? Why did he let her?

Why?

Lallybroch.

It had been three days since Jamie had seen Claire. He expected her around every corner, hoping she had changed her mind. She said that she loved him, that she had missed him terribly every single day, but apparently not enough to see beyond her fears and insecurities.

Jamie had thought about going back millions of times because he had promised her he would, he had promised to bring her back when she doubted. But he couldn’t fight a battle she wasn’t prepared to be in. She was pregnant with his child and that was still not enough to convince her. The child was a sign, she was barren for Christ’s sake, and Claire still couldn’t admit they were destined to be together.

Jamie avoided everyone. His mother had tried to get through to him and he had screamed at her, and it was the first time in his life he had raised his voice against her. But he couldn’t contain this hurt, this anger, and he was pretty sure he would stay angry for a long time.

Over and over again, Jamie went over it all. They had been separated for seven weeks, but Claire had been calm and loving over the phone. Sure she was sometimes stressed and their calls ended abruptly because there was an emergency or operation she had to attend to. But there wasn’t a sign until the last couple of days, probably around the same time Claire discovered that she pregnant.

Nevertheless, she still hadn’t called and he needed to force himself not to call her and beg.

“Brother.”

Jenny walked into the stables with Brimstone as Jamie sat by their little desk they had in there, making a schedule for next week.
“How did it go with Lucy?” Jamie asked. Lucy Mackenzie was their newest student, but also a close family member. She was twelve and was a natural rider.

“She was good,” Jenny replied. “I dinna think she is quite ready to leave the premises yet, she needs to get over her fears about falling off when Brimstone ups her speed.”

“Hmm,” Jamie hummed as answer. Jenny was an excellent rider, but new with teaching. She was impatient. Trust took time.

“I need to tell ye something.” Jenny stood in Brinestones stall with her back against him as she unsaddled her.

“What?”

“I hate what ye did with yer hair...”

Jamie had cut his long hair off, a pity and rebellions act he already regretted. And cold, as his ears were unprotected and it made him look freakishly alike William.

“Was there something else?” Jamie asked coldly. “Or did ye only want to offend me?”

“I thought it was a good attempt...”

“At what?”

“Provoking ye.”

“So ye don’t hate it?”

“I do, I just thought ye would be mad about it.”
Normally Jamie would have laughed, not now.

“I dinna care what ye think.”

“We have noticed.”

“What is that supposed to mean?” Jamie raised his voice and Jenny stepped out of the stall holding a quilt and a saddle in her arms.

“Ever since ye came back from London, ye have been walking around, grunting like a constipated pig, offending people right and left. I am sick of it and ye refuse to talk about it.”

“Janet, dont, just don’t.”

“Fine!”

Jenny left the stables, unbelievably without any more arguments. A rare moment he appreciated. Thank God it was Friday and he could retreat to his own house.

Lallybroch was their childhood home. It was an old stone house that had been passed for generations. The land they owned was huge they had miles of plain fields and forests. But since there was three siblings, Jamie’s father Brian wanted them to stay on the same soil and had build three more houses. One for Jenny, one for William, and one for him.

They weren’t palaces, but cozy houses that were big enough for them to grow in and have families in. Each house was far away from each other, but close enough to see each other from a distance if you stood in one of the windows.

Jamie’s house was farthest away from where his parents lived and closest to the forest.

It had taken years to build them. But his father had finished each home in time of their eighteenth birthdays. His father was the kindest man he knew, and did so much without ever asking for anything in return, except for future grandchildren. Something he was now getting. Minus the fact that he or she wasn’t going to live there full time.
God, how it hurt. Would it ever stop?

Jamie turned off the lights in the stables and wished the horses good night. He was dead tired, which was only a comfort because that meant he could fall asleep tonight. This new chapter in his life was to work and work until he hadn’t any more strength to grieve the life he had missed. The horses and the children he was teaching were a fine distraction, but at the end of the day, he was alone.

He walked on the path leading towards his house, but stopped when he saw that his lights were turned on. He was sure he had turned everything off this morning. He felt even more confused when he saw smoke coming out of his chimney. That was definitely not his doing. He sighed and thought that it was his mother, probably waiting to talk to him - again.

Jamie had already worked up his irritation in the last few meters until he reached his house. This was intrusive and he was going to say so to his mother. He was an adult now, she had no rights.

But when Jamie stepped into his house and saw that it wasn’t in fact his mother, but Claire, he stopped abruptly in his hallway. At first he was sure that he was imagining it and blinked multiple times.

There she was. In Scotland. In his house.

“I apologize for just disrupting your life like this. Your mom gave me your spare key and told me to wait here for you,” Claire said softly. God how he had missed her voice.

“Have ye been here long?” Jamie wondered. He wasn’t sure what he was feeling but he sounded calm at least.

“Uhm, no. I arrived an hour ago, but stayed at the main house for tea for a little while and talked to your parents. They were very kind.”

Jamie had been incapacitated at the sight of her, speechless even. He nodded and hung up his jacket. He walked towards Claire, his palms sweaty.
“What are ye doing here, Claire?”

“I’m here for you.”

Jamie's heart started beating faster. He stopped and stood with a fair share of distance from Claire. He feared that if he stood too close, close enough to smell the lavender scented perfume she always wore, he would lose all rationale sense and fall apart into a pathetic mess. She was here. But for how long?

“I hate that I let you walk out of my life without trying to stop you. I will never forgive myself for it Jamie.”

Claire sounded remorseful and Jamie desperately wanted to run and embrace her. But he couldn’t. She still hadn’t told him why she was here.

“Are ye hear just to apologize?” Jamie asked and held his breath.

“No.” Claire started fidgeting with her ring. “I came here to stay. If you will have me.”

Jamie released the breath he had been holding.

“I sold my apartment. I quit my job by immediately resigning. I would have come sooner, but there was paperwork to fill out. I don’t have anything to give you, except for a child the same size as a blueberry.” Claire suddenly got down on her knees. “And for the sake of my love for you, I will beg for you to forgive me.”

Jamie rushed forward, fell down on his knees, and collected the beautiful and crying woman into his arms.

“I forgive ye,” Jamie whispered and Claire started sobbing loudly. “I never wanted ye to beg, I only wanted ye to be sure.”

“I’m sure,” Claire said and he believed her.
“Nothing to give but a child the size of a blueberry she says.” Jamie released her a little, enough for her to look up from his chest. “For the sake of the love I have for ye, Claire, that blueberry is worth a fortune and I have never loved ye more.”

“We love you, too.” Claire reached out to wipe away a tear from his cheek. Her touch. Her words. It only made it worse, but Jamie smiled softly as he cried even more.

He placed his hand over her flat stomach.

“Welcome home,” he said, for the first of many and they sat still for a long time, just holding each other.

Their perfect silence was interrupted by his rumbling stomach. Jamie hadn’t eaten all day. Claire busted into a beautiful laughter that broke all the ice. They were them. There was peace in the world again.

“Can I ask?”

“If I’m hungry?” Jamie laughed. Oh how good it felt to laugh. He never thought he would ever be happy again.

“No.” Claire giggled, she closed one eye and took a peek upwards. “Your hair...”

“It will grow out again.”

Claire cupped his face, forcing him to come closer. She took one last peek at his short hair and shook her head, smiling.

“I love every shape and form of you, but please never cut it again.”

Claire slowly brushed her lips against his. It had been weeks since they kissed. Just the mere touch between them made his bones ache with the time lost and he didn’t wait to see what else would
ache. Jamie closed the distance, and kissed her hard and long. He breathed her in, the taste of her would forever be imprinted to him.

“I will never leave you again,” Claire said and kissed him again. “Never.”

For the first time in his life, Jamie truly held the world in his hands, his future wife and his unborn child. The sun came out.

Chapter End Notes

The end. A epilogue will be written in the future. Thank you for reading this. Please leave kudos, comments or anything if you have enjoyed this story. I’m sorry it was bit dramatic, but that’s me. I love you. Can’t wait for the next adventure. Xoxo

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