With you, I am home

by Quirky_Ginger

Summary

Serena and Bernie have been separated for over three years, avoiding contact and have hardly spoken. An ill family member brings Bernie Wolfe back to Holby City, visiting her ex-lover and family in the process. As they rekindle their friendship, the couple is reminded of their undeniable sexual chemistry, will they address the elephant in the room?

Notes

See the end of the work for notes
Serena Campbell had struggled on the relationship front since the day the love of her life gave her that mock salute, exiting her life on the evening of their nephew’s wedding day. She didn’t just lose the one great love affair of her life but their small, unconventional family and a soft voice down the end of the phone after a rubbish day. She knew, she was at fault - the unprofessionalism, the betrayal, the hurt she caused other - and she was beginning to think she wasn’t deserving of romance or somebody to spend the rest of her life with.

There had been few others - mainly just one night stands (men and women) but nobody quite fit the bill. One or two of her flings managed to haggle an invitation to Albies or have dinner with her, Jason, Greta and Guinevere. There was Carole, she lasted three months and Peter fled after Jason mentioned her sapphic antics. But all of them just weren’t quite right. Had the wrong colour hair, their laugh wasn’t kind as voluptuous as she wanted, their hands wandering or they weren’t quite as comfortable to curl into, and they didn’t fancy sharing a bottle of Shiraz in the evenings.

Of course, she knew she idolised Berenice Wolfe. She was beautiful. Her messy, silky hair, which she couldn't resist running her fingers through. Her ridiculous sense of humour and accompanying ridiculous laugh. The thought of them tight, figure hugging jeans she used to wear, the ones that flustered Serena, made her weak at the knees. They hadn’t kept in contact, it hurt too much - at the thought of letting each other go. Serena had memories: at work, at home, in France, that she cherished and she carried them with her everywhere she went. She’d give anything to see her again.

Berenice Wolfe stood in front of Holby City Hospital, her home at one point of her life. It had been over three years since the last time she stepped foot inside the building, since she gave a mock salute to her partner, returning to Nairobi, the place she had lived ever since. Serena always crept up in her mind - when she was laid in bed, awake at night, whenever she bought a bottle of wine, in surgery, wanting the bald, male vascular surgeon in front her to be a silver-haired, female consultant who wore that leopard print scrub cap.

Bernie’s life hadn’t been adventurous either, impacted by the fear of the authorities in Kenya and after splitting with Serena, had dived head first into her work, devoting all her time to the trauma unit. When she had come back to England to visit her children, she had met a couple of women at bars, done the deed and had left as soon as they had fallen asleep. A French registrar had recently moved to the trauma unit, they had been for a drink and she had hinted towards a relationship, but Bernie wasn’t too sure yet. She knew it had been over three years, but everytime she laughed with another woman or flirted, she felt out of place, like she shouldn’t be doing it.

Sadly, she was back in Holby because her mother was ill. She had been declining for a while but the cold weather had taken its toll and after a battle with a nasty chest infection and a spout of pneumonia, Margaret Wolfe was becoming weaker and weaker every day. After a call from Cameron, she decided she needed to come home. Bernie and her mother had never really had a good relationship, strained by her affair with Alex and sapphic revelations. Maggie Wolfe wanted her daughter to grow up in a peaceful environment, raising the children whilst Marcus went out and worked. Her daughter didn’t want that - she became one of the greatest trauma surgeons in the world, top Army Major, who was there for her kids as best as she could be. Bernie would never regret her career path, she would confidently say she is proud of all of her achievements - she just wished she had gotten on with her mother as she got older, told her the truth about her sexuality and
spoke more - but life got in the way.

Bernie had come straight from her Mother’s care home before heading to Holby City. She wanted to see a certain individual. They hadn’t spoken much over the years, but if she was in Holby, she would never forgive herself, if she didn’t see Serena. But she also wanted to see her friends. Ric, Fletch, Sacha, Henrik, Jason and she would love to see little Guinevere again - her and Jason had kept in touch a little over the years, the odd birthday card or postcard being exchanged, but it had been some months since his last email.

She made her way through the corridors, filled with memories, both good and bad. At Pulses, which had had a huge makeover since she’d last been there. Serena kissed her near them doors, begged her to wait for her. Ha! That didn’t last long, did it? The lift. That morning after she had kissed Serena on the theatre floor - gosh, that was awkward. The corridor leading to AAU. The flirtatious conversations they used to have, arms brushing one another. The locker room. Her and Serena had gotten up to some light necking after changing out of their scrubs, the first time she had come back from Nairobi. None of that this time though. She was going to remain friendly.

Bernie finally came to the doors of the Acute Admissions Unit. The place she called home for a while. The place she met some of her closest friends. A family of some sort. A young nurse she didn't recognise buzzed her in. It was almost surreal to be back - she didn’t even know if Serena was in! She really hoped she was. She moved towards the nurses station, peering around the corner to the office but nobody was there.

‘Hello. I’m looking for Ms. Campbell. Does she, erm… does she still work on this ward?’

‘Berenice Wolfe! As I live and breathe…’ A voice bellowed from behind her. The voice belonging to Ric Griffin made her smile. She spun around to see her old friend, the man whom she had been her closest confidant during her last few months at Holby. He looked well.

‘... when I came in this morning, your face was the last I thought I would see!’ He exclaimed before walking over to her and pulling her into a quick embrace.

‘Hello, Ric. Long time, no see!’

‘What are you doing here then, Ms. Wolfe?’ Ric questioned, raising his eyebrow.,

‘I’m back in Holby for a while… My mother is ill, so I’m back until further notice.’ She sighed.

‘Oh, Bernie, I’m sorry...And I’m guessing you’re here to catch up with a certain someone?’ Ric spoke carefully. He knew the two of them hadn’t had the smoothest end to their relationship and that Serena was definitely damaged after they broke up. He would spend evening’s with her in Albies letting her drunkenly talk to him about Berenice Wolfe

‘Is she here?’ Bernie said hopefully.

‘She’s in theatre. Should be out anytime soon…’ Ric spoke reluctantly.

‘Great…’ Bernie replied, unsure where to look.

‘Look. I know, it’s none of my business… but after you two ended things, she wasn’t herself for quite some time and I know she regrets all the mistakes she made… what I’m trying to say, is be careful with her…. She’s not been too lucky on the relationship front, since you.’

‘I’ll tread carefully and trust me, I know how she feels’ Bernie spoke sadly.
The operation hadn’t been anything too complicated. A trauma case in need of an emergency laparotomy, nothing Serena couldn’t do in her sleep. She scrubbed out, methodically washing her hands and took off her scrub cap. She made her way out of theatre with the F2 who was assisting her.

‘Right. I want her on 15 minute obs, make sure you change her fluids and top up her pain relief… oh, and make sure the family are informed.’ Serena spoke, looking down at the medical documents in front of her, before handing them over.

She looked around her ward, before her eyes ascended upon the nurses station - where an unexpected guest stood leaning against it, laughing with Rocky Griffin himself. She could tell who it was even from the way they stood. That hair - it had gotten longer, but still that beautiful dusty blonde. How does a woman at their age wear a pair of jeans that tight?

‘Bernie?’ Serena almost whispered.
The familiar face spun around to look at her. God, she was still gorgeous.

‘Hello, stranger!’

Serena let out what seemed to be a laugh. She couldn’t believe who was in front of her. What she absolutely adored about Bernie was that before their romantic relationship, they were close friends, and despite the awkwardness, they were still able to keep that friendship, no matter what had happened to them. Serena walked over to her and decided to do the ‘friend’ thing. She pulled Bernie into an embrace. The familiarity! She had missed being in these arms. They held on longer than most people would, too encapsulated in the moment. Eventually they broke away.

‘What are you doing here?’ Serena exclaimed.

‘I’m in Holby for a bit… My mum… she’s not doing too well…. and, you know, I can’t come to Holby and not see you… and Ric and Fletch and Jason and everyone… how is Jason?’ Bernie spoke, unsure about her word choice.

‘Oh, God… Bernie. I’m so sorry. Erm, Jason… yes, he’s great. Everyone’s doing great.’ Serena smiled. Bernie had missed that smile, that little dimple in her chin - the dimple that Bernie pointed out one night when they were in bed before Serena got self-conscious, Bernie then told her for the first time how beautiful she thought she was.

‘I’m sure he’d love to see you.’

‘I’d love to see him too… and Greta and Guinevere.’

‘I couldn’t persuade you to come for a drink, Jason’ll be there… I clock off in ten?’

‘I’d really love that.’
Chapter Two

Bernie wasn’t sure how everyone would receive her coming back to Holby - didn’t know if people knew the full story of her and Serena’s break up. She didn’t like to think back to it - the betrayal, the infidelity, the sadness - she was over it, understood why Serena did what she did because she felt the same. She had caught the eye of a French surgeon but nothing more happened than a flirty look and an attempted snog in a cupboard one night - it didn’t go anywhere and no more than a month later she got on a plane and came back to Holby for Jason’s wedding.

Most shocking of all was how everything seemed so normal - as if Bernie had been working alongside Serena for the past three years, not the other side of the world. She had missed her and of course had longed for her in the first few months of their separation, but what was more special for Bernie was the friendship on offer.

Serena stood by the bar, whilst Bernie lounged in a corner, saving a sofa for the two of them. They were waiting for Jason, he was due to come of shift soon and they said they would meet him at Albie’s. Serena walked back over, a bottle of Shiraz meticulously balanced under her arm whilst two wine glasses were precariously placed in one hand and a shandy in the other for Jason. Bernie smiled when she approached the sofa, she is still so beautiful, Bernie thought, No! She was here for friendship, they attempted romance and look where they ended up - opposite ends of the world and miserable.

‘Hope you don’t mind the Shiraz?’ Serena questioned, suddenly extremely anxious she had chosen the wrong choice of drink.

‘I’m with Serena Wendy Campbell… I expect nothing less!’ Bernie blushed.

Serena remembered that time Bernie told her she love her, using her full name, telling her they were for eternity. Serena just chuckled in response whilst pouring the drink. She offered Bernie her glass and they sat awkwardly in companionable silence.

‘How’s Jason?--’

‘How’re you?--’

They both interrupted each other, both internally cringing at their awkwardness.

‘He’s good. Happy. Greta and Guinevere too - she’s growing to be a right little madam’ Serena replied, taking a large swig of wine.

‘Good!’ Bernie chuckled, ‘I bet she’s gotten so big.’

‘Oh yes, definitely and I think she’s taking after Jason with her height!’ Serena spoke, pulling her phone out of her bag, showing Bernie the screensaver of her great niece - used to be our great niece, Serena thought.

‘Oh wow, I can see what you mean’ Bernie spoke, passing the phone back to Serena, their fingers brushing each other in the process.

‘I’m sure he’ll be here any minute, he’s usually on time…’
Bernie nodded in response, looking around Albie’s, wanting time to go quicker.

“How’re you Bernie?” Serena said, quietly.

“Okay, given the circumstances - Mum’s not great and I want to be here when she… you know” Bernie replied.

“I know what you mean…” Serena agreed sincerely.

Before their conversation could turn any sinister, the delight that was Jason waltzed through the doors.

“Bernie!” he bellowed.

“Jason!” Bernie stood up and embraced the charming, young man, ‘it’s so good to see you!’

“And you - I didn’t know you were here, Auntie Serena didn’t say anything!” He spoke, taking a seat next to his Aunt, who gave him a squeeze of the shoulder.

“Well she didn’t know - I’m here because my mother's ill and well, I thought I may as well come and see everybody at the hospital.’

“That’s nice of you! It’s good you are here now because soon I won’t be at this hospital’ Jason casually dropped into the conversation.

“Oh, why’s that?” Bernie questioned, a puzzled look on her face. She looked in between Jason and his Auntie Serena who was looking deep down into her glass of red.

“I have a new job - another portering job about 50 miles away at a new hospital. Greta was offered a better job and Guinevere starts school soon, so we decided to move for a fresh start. We think Guin will like it more, there’s a large park near our new house and---’Jason carried on.

‘Wow! Sounds… nice!’ Bernie replied.

They spoke for another hour or so, before Jason had to leave, to say goodnight to Guinevere. He said goodbye to his Aunt and Bernie before heading home.

‘More wine?’ Serena asked.

‘Serena…?’ Bernie spoke, almost whispering. She was worried about her friend. Were they still friends?

‘Hmmmm…’ Not taking her eyes off the wine.

‘Why didn’t you tell me?’

‘Tell you what?’

‘About Jason leaving Holby, moving away?’

‘I don’t know… I didn’t want you to feel sorry for me, I suppose. He’s moving on and… well, that’s okay - I can’t pretend I’m over the moon about it, but at least it’s not Australia!’ Serena spoke, attempting to make light of the situation.

‘You know… I know we haven’t been brilliant, keeping in touch, but that doesn't mean you can’t talk to me’ Bernie said whilst putting her hand on top of Serena’s - a purely platonic action, Bernie
justified in her head.

‘Thanks…’ Serena smiled ‘you know, you can talk to me about anything too, your mother or the kids…’

‘I know.’ Bernie quipped, reaching for her drink once again ‘you know, no matter what we have been through, I’ll always have you back.’

‘And I’ll always have yours in return. Cheers?’ Serena raised her glass to Bernie’s.

‘Cheers!’
Serena continued her weekly routine - at work, at home, back to work, then going home again. It was all very drall and sometimes she even considered giving it up - but she had a duty, that she was going to fulfil. Her mind still was on one blonde surgeon though. Her ex-partner who waltzed back into her life after three years of hardly any communication - she was glad she did though, they had spent a few nights in Albie’s with their colleagues, allowing them both to reminisce about what could have been.

Serena was in her office, finishing the backlog of paperwork when she saw the ex-army medic walk across the ward to her. This had been a frequent occurrence over the past few weeks, Bernie would check in with Serena and the team, or Cameron and often they’d all head over to Albie’s - discussing their day and the condition of Bernie’s mother. She was getting worse and Bernie, as a Doctor, knew the time would come soon. Bernie slyly waltzed over to the office from the nurses desk, checking the rest of the team were coming along for their end of week frivolities, before heading toward Serena in the office. Their eyes fixed on each other. Bernie was down and upset - but there was nothing she could do about her mother, she had been with her practically all day, everyday and this was the only free time she had, to lock away the reality of the darkness looming within her life.

‘You ready to head over?’ Bernie spoke, tapping quietly on the door and leaning against the doorframe.

‘Give me five minutes and I’ll be there - you go with everyone, I’ll meet you down there’

‘I’ll wait with you.’

‘You don’t have to do that!’ Serena replied, attempting to wave off the army-medic.

‘Serena, it’s fine.’ Bernie spoke, slipping into the old habit of sitting on Serena’s desk, smiling directly at her. For a moment Bernie lost herself, remembering the years she and Serena had shared this office. She soon became aware of where she was - her and Serena weren’t an item, just friends and they didn’t run the ward together so she moved to sit on the sofa beside Serena. Were they really anything anymore?

‘Well… if you’re sure?’

Bernie nodded in reply before quickly letting the AAU team to go on without them and then returning to the office. She settled on the sofa, once again, subtly glancing at Serena as she worked. She peered around the office - it had changed, so had they, she supposed - there were a few changes like a couple of plants here and there, an posh swivel chair for Ric and it was definitely a lot more tidier than when she occupied the desk. Bernie reminisced, thinking that this office was strange place to fall in love. Not that romantic, surrounded by the smell of antiseptic and blood with crazed doctors and nurses attempting to stitch people and lives back together but they had managed to do it somehow and in the most unconventional place possible. That fact made Bernie smile. She saw all the memories happen at once, all the kisses; arguments over patient care; flirting; the fights - not all of it was good but for the time they were together, Bernie couldn’t have been happier.

‘Right - That’s it!’ Serena announced after a further ten minutes of typing on her laptop. She gave out a huge sigh whilst looking at Bernie. She gathered up her things and they swiftly left the ward - just like they used to together. Unknown to the other, the sense of familiarity gave them both
butterflies.

They moved across the carpark to Albies, making general conversation as if it were years ago when they had just started being an item. How easy it could be to join their fingers together or wrap their arms around one another. They arrived at Albie’s where the team were gathered beside the bar.

‘Serena! Bernie! Wine.’ Fletch bellowed, raising two glasses of wine in their direction, both of them thanking him after settling down. They sat beside one another, joining in the conversation. The smiling, the easy-flowing conversation, Serena’s hand occasionally coming to lay on Bernie’s knee. Serena, at this point, realised she needed to behave, they weren’t a couple and she couldn’t do this, she couldn’t take advantage of Bernie when she was in such a vulnerable state. Donna was becoming worse for wear, slightly more giggly and swaying - Xavier led her to the small table to where the rest of the group were.

‘You have a good one there, Donna,’ Bernie smiled at her.

‘Yeah, he’s a good egg and after two years, the girls enjoy his company more than mine… I feel very lucky!’ Donna spoke, smiling at Xav, who was back at the bar beside Fletch.

‘Two years, gosh, you must be going strong!’ Bernie replied.

‘Yes and for some time, we thought that we’d be giving you two a run for AAU couple goals,’ Donna innocently mentioned before realising her mistake. Serena and Bernie couldn’t look at one another and the atmosphere became awkward - Bernie attempted to smile past the comment.

‘Oh, no, sorry, I shouldn’t have said that. Please forgive me, I think I’m tipsy!’ Donna spoke with sincere regret whilst ironically taking another sip of her drink.

‘Don’t worry about it,’ Serena said, putting her hand atop Donna’s before smiling in Bernie’s direction.

‘It’s fine, honestly’ Bernie interrupted.

‘Anyway, Serena, I forgot to ask you how did you date with that board member go the other day?’ Donna mentioned, assuming it was something Bernie was aware of, given it was this past weekend.

‘Oh, I cancelled. I was behind on my reports so told him I couldn’t make it!’ Serena commented, uneasily, feeling the dark eyes from the surgeon next to her gaze upon her.

‘Oh, that’s a shame, I was looking forward to meeting him - a board member, rich, good looking, he wouldn’t definitely get in a couple of rounds!’ Donna joked ‘mind you, I liked Carole, she was nice… I thought we’d see her again and Peter, he was nice… laughed at his own jokes too much, but was generally pleasant!’ Donna continued, unaware of the pink flush creeping on Serena’s cheeks and awkward vibes coming from Bernie.

‘It just didn’t work out.’ Serena replied - unable to look Bernie in the eye. The evening continued, more awkward than before but it didn’t dampen the mood entirely. Rounds of drinks had been bought and the staff reminisced about the old times and the faces which had left the walls of Holby City.

‘Another, Serena?’ Bernie spoke.

‘No, thanks. I’m gonna head off now. I’m in tomorrow and I don’t fancy a sore head, like some’ She said, motioning towards Donna who was slumped against Xavier.
‘Alright then… I’ll see you soon then?’ Bernie asked.

‘Of course. Night.’ Serena replied, giving her friend’s hand a squeeze.

Serena went home, after the revelation of her post-Bernie love life was revealed, feeling uncomfortable remaining at Albie’s. Sure, she had had a few flings over the last few years and she was beyond sure Bernie had been with other women - it just made the atmosphere awkward the way in which her deepest secrets (and regrets) had come spilling out, as if she had completely moved on from Berenice Wolfe, which she definitely had not. She said her goodbyes and gave Bernie one last glance before leaving the pub.

She hadn’t drank that much and the thoughts in her head were wild. She went straight up to bed. The bad aspects of living on your own, was there was nobody to talk to in the evenings. Before, when she and Bernie were together, they would sit in the living room for hours, draped across one another on the sofa, chatting about everything and anything: their upbringing; children; parents; embarrassing moments. But now Serena ascended the stairs of the quiet house, heading towards her bedroom.

After readying herself for bed, she climbed into the left-hand side, the right having been Bernie’s and a side she dared not to think about ever since the early days of their breakup. She missed her, of course she did. Her best friend was back in the city they fell in love and she couldn’t help but want to assist Bernie through everything that was going on. Reflecting on the flirting and affection over the past few weeks made Serena finally realise that she was still head-over-heels in love with Berenice bloody Wolfe.
Chapter Four

A few days had passed since the revelation of Serena’s love life and the atmosphere between Bernie and Serena remained purely platonic. Serena had been on her day off, catching up on housework and relaxing at home, escaping the hurly-burly of Holby City Hospital. Her day of relaxation soon grew to a close and finally led to her lounging on the couch, with a glass of red, flicking through the dismal Thursday night TV. Tranquility was halted by her ringtone echoing from the coffee table, her mobile displaying Bernie. With no hesitation Serena picked up the phone.

‘Hello?’ Serena asked.

‘Serena?’ Bernie sniffled from down the line, Serena immediately sensed there was something wrong.

‘Hey, are you okay?’ Serena spoke, waiting for an answer.

‘Well… not… not really. My mother… she… she’s passed away’ Bernie finally gave in, a sob at the end of her words.


‘I just, I just needed to talk to someone, and I thought you wouldn’t mind.’

‘Hey, of course not? Do you want to come around? I can come and pick you up, if you’d like?’

‘Really?’

‘Of course. You’re welcome here anytime - you know that!’

‘Only if you’re sure’ Bernie sighed.

‘Positive’

‘I’m on my way.’

Serena’s heart broke for Bernie. She knew that Bernie hadn’t had the best relationship with her mother - that they grew further apart over the years, after medical school and particularly with her sapphic revelations. When her own mother died, she had her colleagues around her and Ellie - especially Raf - she sighed at that thought - over the last six years, life had been cruel to her and taken away so many friends, family, colleagues and she didn’t want Bernie to have to go through that on her own. Not long after Bernie had put the phone down, she pulled up in her car in front of the house, she once considered home. A small, blue car, belonging to Cameron, which he had loaned her for the past few weeks. She made her way up the cobbled footpath the the porch of Serena’s house and a familiar face immediately opened the front door.

As soon as Serena heard the car pull up, she made her way towards the front door, opening it and seeing the saddened expression of Berenice Wolfe in front of her. She looked as if she was going to crack at any point - the floodgates opening, tears attempting to roll down her cheeks. Straight away, she enveloped her friend in a strong embrace, her hand coming up to her back, soothing her with gentle words. She forgot the rules she had set out for herself as soon as Bernie brings her arms around her torso - she brought a hand up to her hair, allowing her to run her fingers through the locks
of blonde she had longed to get beneath. Bernie buried her nose in Serena’s neck, attempting to hide from the world and felt Serena place a delicate kiss on her hairline, purely platonically. After being held in her arms for some time, the front door mysteriously having been closed in the process, Bernie eventually lifted her head from where it rested and looked into Serena’s eyes.

‘Thank you.’ She spoke, barely above a whisper.

‘It’s alright, I’m here whenever you need me, okay? How about you go and get settled in the living room and I’ll make us some tea, hmm?’

Bernie nodded and made her way through the familiar corridor to the living area. Serena walked on further into the house, pottering around in the kitchen before returning with two hot mugs of tea in her hands. She sat beside Bernie and gave a friendly smile.

‘You redecorated,’ Bernie smiled, attempting to lighten the mood.

‘Yeah, decided to refresh this room, it was dark and dingy for long enough so I decided to go more lighter,’ Serena replied. Bernie gave a false smile as a reply.

‘Do you wanna talk about it?’ Serena hinted at, not wanting to push Bernie too much.

‘It’s just… I never really connected with mum after the divorce and whole Alex fandango, I just feel like it’s over and she never really got to know the true me and understand my… my life choices’ Bernie said.

‘I know how you feel, me and my mother constantly clashed and in the end… we didn’t have enough time to understand one another and she lost who she was and I struggled to speak to the woman who barely recognised me.’ Serena said, settling her hand upon Bernie which rested on her lap.

‘She was such a lovely woman when I was a child and then when I divorced Marcus and told her about who I loved, that I loved women, she became cold, dismissive, even over the last few days she struggled to even look at me. Is it bad that I’m glad that all that raging homophobia and me attempting to hide who I am, doesn’t have to happen anymore, that all that negativity has gone from her, from the family?…’ Bernie cried, eventually breaking down. Serena took the mug of hot tea from Bernie and put it on the coffee table before taking her in her arms and letting her cry it out. Serena’s heart broke just a little bit more when Bernie buried her nose deeper into her shoulder, just like she used to do in the morning when they were in bed together and she didn’t want Serena to leave.

‘Of course not. You are free from that hatred and can be you, without facing the wrath of prejudice - I know it’s a hard thing and I am certain that there would’ve been moments of discontent if my mother knew I had had relationships with other women, I don’t even want to imagine her reaction! What do you think eh, the revelation that me, Serena Campbell, could do miles better with somebody like you, rather than Edward, an alcoholic scumbag who made my life a misery on a daily basis!’

Bernie sniggered at this, she knew that despite their separation, deep down they did love each other and the time they had spent together were some of the best moments of her life.

‘And, I felt the same… there was a sense of freedom when my mother died and at least they are no longer in pain.’

‘I miss her and I just hope she knew that no matter what we said to each other over the years and distance between us, it doesn’t mean I didn’t love her and thought about her. She was a wonderful
mother and grandmother.’ Bernie whispered.

‘I have no doubt that she knew that, even at the end.’ Serena smiled.

They stayed like that for a while, talking about their childhoods (which they had done before) but reminisced about their mother's and their similarities. Both of them content to be with one another, in the house which they almost made their home.

‘Fancy a takeaway?’ Serena suggested as night grew closer.

‘Alright then,’

‘Pizza or Chinese?’ Serena questioned.

‘Chinese?’

‘The usual… I imagine that hasn’t changed!’ Serena jibbed.

‘You know me so well.’ Bernie retorted.

An hour or so later, both women found themselves on Serena’s sofa, as if it were three years ago, Chinese food finished and sipping at the wine from Serena’s urgent stash of wine. There were still tears but they were eased by an exchange of kind words, jokes and laughs.

‘I should call a taxi,’ Bernie sighed, although her body language and voice displayed the opposite of her suggestion.

‘No, you won’t. You can stay the night,’ Bernie raised her eyebrow at the offer ‘I mean in the spare room, Berenice!’ Serena smiled in her direction, she always knew how to get underneath her skin with her flirting and ridiculous sense of humour.

‘Are you sure?’ Bernie asked.

‘Of course, you’ve been here all night and I’m not letting you be on your own tonight. You’re staying here and that’s final!’

‘Thank you,’ Bernie spoke, ducking her head.

‘Let me change the sheets and get you something to sleep in, then you can go up whenever you want.’ Serena said, getting up off of the sofa.

Bernie caught her wrist before she could leave the room, gripping her hand in a friendly manner. ‘Thank you, Serena. I couldn’t have coped without you.’ Bernie spoke, almost whispering.

‘You’re welcome… every time.’ Serena gave her hand a squeeze one last time in order to potter around upstairs. She changed the cotton sheets to her more expensive set, not knowing the last time somebody slept in her spare room and then she got out a familiar shirt, in which she had let Bernie sleep in before when they first started out as a couple. She placed them on the spare bed with a spare toothbrush and headed back downstairs.

Bernie had cleared away the takeaway boxes and was in the kitchen, rinsing off the dishes to place them in the dishwasher when Serena returned.

‘Hey, you don’t have to do that,’ Serena quipped, walking into the kitchen. Bernie would always wash the dishes when she came home after a long shift together, a habit she had picked up as a child.
‘It’s only the dishes, after everything you have done for me today, it’s the least I can do.’ Bernie replied.

‘Okay, just make sure you don’t smash any of my wine glasses - I swear I went through at least a whole new set when you used to stay over, for a surgeon, you really are clumsy! Remember when you smashed a plate and three glasses on our first Christmas!’

‘Oh my goodness, I don’t think I have ever seen Charlotte so embarrassed!’ They both laughed. The elephant in the room had been talked about. Serena had told Bernie about Carole and Peter, both of who weren’t up to her standard. More like they weren’t Bernie, Serena thought. Whilst Bernie spoke of the difficulty of same-sex relationships in Africa. They just both wanted the other to be happy despite their love-life.

‘I’m gonna head up to bed if you don’t mind, I have to be in at nine tomorrow morning. But you’re welcome to go to bed whenever, I’ve left you some things out - help yourself to anything, you know where everything is.’ Serena spoke.

‘Thank you. I think I’m gonna come up now too,’ Bernie said, drying off her hands ‘it’s been a long day.’

After locking up and turning off of the lights, they both ascended the stairs, halting on the landing.

‘Well, sleep well and if you need me then you know where I am,’

Bernie was suddenly overwhelmed with how much her friend had helped her despite their history. She was kind, beautiful, caring, loving and she was so proud to call her a friend. Unsure what to reply, Bernie lunged forward, wrapping her arms around Serena in an embrace.

‘Thank you for everything, Serena’ she whispered.

‘You’ve got nothing to thank me for,’ They pulled away.

‘Night, then.’ Bernie spoke.

‘Night, Bernie.’

The both went to their designated rooms, getting ready to sleep after the long day which they both experienced. When Bernie walked into the spare room, she immediately noticed the shirt laid folded on top of the pristine sheets. She brought the familiar material to her face, inhaling the smell which was Serena. A tear threatened to fall, not at her mother’s death but the fact she missed her best friend as her partner. She still loved her, she knew that, but the overwhelming sense that they were no longer a couple cut her straight through the heart. She attempted to brush away the pain and longing to curl up beside Serena, and climbed into the second best bed wanting sleep to dull her array of emotions. Little did she know, next door, Serena was overcome with similar emotion - sadness for Bernie and her family for their loss but also her own sadness that she and Bernie were to only remain friends. They both still adored one another and were too ridiculous to admit it.
Chapter Five

Serena’s alarm went off at half seven the next morning. She knew Bernie was an early riser but wasn’t sure if she was already up. Quickly, she grabbed a shower, changed into her usual, flowing blouse and slacks and walked down the stairs. Bernie was sat at the breakfast bar, gazing out of the window with a coffee in her hand. Serena saw that she had showered in the main bathroom and was dressed in yesterday’s clothes. The domesticity flooded back to her.

‘Hey,’ Serena spoke, walking through the doorway ‘sleep well?’

Bernie turned around before replying ‘yeah, I was out like a light but then I woke at 6 and couldn’t get back to sleep… I showered, I hope that’s okay?’

‘Yeah, of course!’ Serena moved to the main kitchen area, pottering around herself, brewing a coffee. There was an atmosphere in the room, of tension, each women unable to address the previous day. Reluctantly, Serena broke the facade.

‘How are you feeling this morning?’

‘Better, still tired, but you know me once I’m awake, I’m awake.’

‘Yeah, I remember… can I get you some breakfast, think I have some bacon in… bacon sandwiches?’ Serena suggested.

‘That would be really nice, I’ll help…’

They both worked in companionable silence, Serena grilling the bacon whilst Bernie readied the bread and sauces. They worked totally in sync, immediately knowing the other person’s actions, just like they used to, at home and in theatre. They made their breakfasts together before taking their places side-by-side at the breakfast bar with Serena listening the radio which had been put on in the background and Bernie checking the messages on her phone.

‘My brother and great-aunt have taken charge of the funeral, apparently they understand Mum more, so they know what she’d want the most, in the words of my Aunt Liz.’ Bernie said, in between a mouthful of her sandwich.

‘Sounds like a charming lady,’ Serena mocked ‘do you know when it will be?’

‘A week next Thursday, at St. Margaret’s down the road… I don’t suppose… I… Oh, it doesn’t matter…’

‘What? You can ask me anything, you know..’

‘I don’t suppose you could come to the funeral with me?’

‘Course, I can… if you want… I’ll ask Ric to cover me, it shan’t be a problem.’ Serena smiled, taking her friend’s hand in her own.

‘Thank you’
‘I’m not trying to hurry you, but I have to leave soon… I can leave a key and you can let yourself out whenever you want.’

‘Okay.’

Serena gathered her bags together for her eight-hour shift, leaving Bernie in her house.

‘I’m heading off now!’ Serena exclaimed from the door. Bernie jogged through to the entrance of the house, catching her friend before she left.

‘I’m gonna go round to see my brother, I’ll be leaving soon so at least you don’t have to worry about me messing your house up,’ Bernie joked.

‘Here you go,’ Serena said, giving Bernie the spare key, the one she recognised as it had a key cover on with a small ‘B’ imprinted on it ‘you can give me it back the next time I see you.’

‘Okay. Well have a nice day, don’t work too hard…’

‘Don’t you worry, I won’t!’ Serena said before moving to open the door and leave.

‘Serena!’ Bernie called before she could close the door behind her, ‘thank you for everything… I mean it… It means a lot!’

‘Any day, Bernie.’ Serena whispered before leaving her former partner on the doorstep of the house.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry, this one is a short one, but at least I updated it on my birthday!

Enjoy...
Chapter Six

Serena stood in front of the mirror. She adorned her best fitted dress, accompanied by black heels and a black wrap - she wanted to come across her best. She looked herself up and down in the mirror, agreeing that she looked presentable. She grabbed her bag and high-quality flowers from the Florists and headed to the Wolfe family home, a house which was now lived in by Bernie’s brother and his family as her mother had insisted moving into residential care, to not get under everybody’s feet. Cameron had offered to pick her up on his way round the the home, both sat in silence as they drove to the house, which wasn’t too far from her own. The two of them had got on well throughout the last few years, Cameron like a son she never had, in that she was able to transfer her words of wisdom regarding medicine to help and aid him in climbing the medical career ladder and despite their personal links to Bernie Wolfe, it had never gotten in the way of a professional relationship.

They pulled up to the Wolfe home, a large, detached Elizabethan House which was covered in vines of leaves and flowers, intensifying the grandeur of the Wolfe family. Serena suddenly felt nervous, she didn’t know Margaret Wolfe, she didn’t know the rest of the family and was only there because she used to sleep with her daughter.

‘Come on, Serena,’ Cameron nudged her, ‘it’s not as posh as you think it is. Mum’s inside already, waiting for you.’ Serena gave him a smile in reply.

They both walked up the path to be greeted by Bernie at the door. She was dressed in black slacks and a blouse, a little like the work clothes she used to wear but what was more noticeable were that her eyes were slightly red, obvious that she had been crying. Throughout the week, Serena had gotten a few calls in the night off Bernie, where she just needed to hear another human’s voice and be comforted by her friend - she was getting there and getting stronger everyday. Serena knew that today, in particular was hard for her, she had told her in the phone call the night before, that all the memories came flooding back when she was stood in the family home, a house which she had attempted to avoid.

Cameron walked past her, pecking her on the cheek and walked past to go find his sister. Serena held back, looking Bernie dead in the eye as if to communicate that everything was going to be okay.

‘Alright?’ Serena said, stepping into the doorway, a comforting hand on Bernie’s shoulder. Bernie reached up to cover Serena’s hand and nodded. Closing the door behind them, Bernie guided her friend through the house to join the family.

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The funeral had been nice - a nice way to remember Margaret Wolfe. There had been a few tears from Bernie’s brother, his wife and Charlotte. Serena lent over when she saw Charlotte’s eyes glistening and gave her hand a squeeze. There were readings and hymns, all very religious, but reflected Maggie Wolfe entirely! They all made there way back to the house for a gathering - a huge variety of friends and family. They all liked Serena. Bernie had introduced her as her friend and ex-colleague, only a selected few had known the extent of their personal relationship, each of them preferring not to be the centre of attention on a day like this.

‘You did a lovely reading, Cameron. Your Grandmother would be really proud.’ Serena said as she stood with the Wolfe cubs and a few of their cousins. Bernie had disappeared earlier, stating she was going to get a top-up, that was twenty minutes ago.
‘Thanks, we thought it would be nice if one of the grandchildren said something and nobody else wanted to, so I decided to fill the breach.’

‘Good for you!’ Serena smiled. She knew Bernie was immensely proud of both her children and could especially tell from her face, when Cameron was stood at the lectern.

‘I wonder where Mum’s gotten to?’ Charlotte questioned.

‘I saw her go outside about five minutes ago.’ Bernie’s nephew piped in as he walked past, he was called something like Josh or Jake, she couldn’t quite remember.

‘I’m gonna see if I can find her.’ Serena spoke, Bernie’s children nodding in agreement.

Bernie was sat outside on a bench, overlooking the finely kept garden. There was a pack on cigarettes next to her but they looked untouched. Everybody else was in the house, eating and drinking from the buffet that Bernie’s sister-in-law had prepared in order to feed the tens of people who had come to show their respect. The back door was still open from when Bernie exited the home and Serena saw her from the doorway. Bernie was appreciating the view. She remembered running around, her father chasing her when she was younger and spending hours outside beside the oak tree at the far end, revising for her final exams. It also reminded her of the times when she attempted to figure herself out, the peaceful nature of the environment serving as a medium for meditation and reflecting on the confusing feelings she was experiencing - the feelings of whether it was normal that she loved women. Serena cleared her throat to alert Bernie that she was there.

‘I wondered where you had gotten to, me, Cam and Charlotte thought you’d disappeared.’ Serena spoke as she settled herself beside Bernie on the bench.

‘Sorry, I just… I just needed a breather from that lot inside’ Bernie confessed and Serena completely understood. The whole family get-together was not one of Bernie’s favourite things, the chaotic kids running around the place, the gossiping from the women and the homophobia and unappreciated looks coming from friends of her mother’s.

‘Well you could’ve shared your hiding spot with me! I’ve had two women come up to me and ask if I’m married already and another who attempted to tell me that medicine was only for men!’

‘That definitely sounds like Maureen, she used to live down the street from us and has given me that same lecture at least twenty times,’ Bernie laughed, ‘she hasn’t spoken to me since that one time, a few years ago, when I finally cracked and shouted at her for her old fashioned, racist and homophobic attitudes of women and when she told me same-sex relationships were unnatural… I’ve been given the death stare all day’

‘Bitch!’ Serena retorted, ‘you don’t need that in your life… good for you, standing up to people!’

‘I think, now my mother’s not here to bad mouth me to her friends and make me feel small, I’m finally ready to be honest and brave with myself.’ Bernie spoke, a small tear, ran down her face. Serena immediately used her thumb to get rid of the stray tear. It wasn’t a tear of sadness, more a tear of relief. Freedom.

‘And I am extremely proud of you. No more hiding in the shadows and behind people who make you feel small. Love yourself and love who you want - time to be brave, Bernie’ Serena smiled at her. Bernie recognised that face.

‘Thank you for being here today.’ Bernie whispered, her eyes not leaving Serena’s.

‘My pleasure.’ They were both closer to each other now, there bodies flush together, side-by-side on
Nervously, Bernie brought her hand to caress Serena’s cheek. Serena seemed scared, she didn’t want to use Bernie in such a delicate situation. But before Serena could pull away, Bernie brought their lips together for the first time in over three years. It was awkward but familiar and Serena eventually responded, slipping an arm around Bernie to pull them closer together. Their lips mingled and Bernie didn’t want to let her go. No, she couldn’t do this, Serena thought and pulled away to look at Bernie. Serena heart was telling her to dive straight back into another kiss whilst her head told her to stop. They both remained close with their foreheads pressed together.

‘Bernie, we can’t,’

‘Why not?’ Bernie replied. They both spoke, hardly reaching above a whisper - too scared of facing the reality of the situation.

‘It’s not fair… I can’t...can’t take advantage of you like this.’

‘I want you, Serena. Just one night,’ Bernie spoke, pressing kisses to Serena’s face between words, ‘help me forget for just one night - you always made me feel better - help me feel better - let me be with you, Serena, just one last time. Please’ she said, close to tears.

Serena finally brought a hand up to Bernie’s face. Did she want to spend one more night of passion with Bernie? One more night and then have to go there separate ways? Could she risk it? She loved the woman and she was terrified they’d immediately regret it. In this instance, her heart ruled over her head and she claimed Bernie’s lips once again and this time, both sets of arms wrapped around one another. Serena brought a hand up to Bernie’s hair and ran her fingers through the wavy locks whilst Bernie risked swiping her tongue along Serena’s bottom lip. They spent a good five minutes in each others arms, lips mingling before they had realised how much time had passed and eventually broke from kissing for breath. Both of them pulled away, sniggering at each other and the revelation of their necking on a bench with the possibility that anybody could interrupt them.

‘I can’t believe I’m sat outside of my parent’s house, snogging a woman!’

‘She’s one lucky lady,’ Serena replied, a wave of confidence coming over her as she pressed another kiss to her friend’s lips.

‘So… what now?’

‘Come home with me?’ Serena whispered.
They had commandeered Cameron’s car, asking if Charlotte could drop him home after the gathering. Bernie had told him she wanted to drop Serena off and didn’t know when she would be back, that she would make sure his car was returned by the next morning. During this exchange, Serena hung near the door, nervous and excited at what was going to happen. She looked over to the conversation between Bernie and her children, blushing at the point where Bernie motioned towards her, she felt the red creep up her neck and onto her cheeks - it wasn't much longer since Bernie had placed small, delicate kisses in them exact same spots. Cameron wasn’t fazed by the ask from his mother, just glad that she and Serena were back on track with their friendship - had know the loneliness and sadness which both women had suffered after the separation - although a niggling thought in the back of his head scream to him that they were rekindling their friendship in more ways than they were letting on. Bernie brought both her children in for a hug and Serena gave them both a wave when Bernie made her way over to her. They left together, eager to go back to Serena’s.

The drive was rushed - Bernie getting cross at every red light they stopped at. Serena sensed this and brought Bernie’s hand to her mouth, giving it a subtle peck before they moved again. Bernie thought she may spontaneously combust if she didn’t get them to the house sooner rather than later. Eventually they pulled up and neither of women hung around getting out of the car - it was quick and they couldn’t wait to get through the front door, away from the outside world and into their own bubble. As soon as the door closed, Bernie backed Serena into the door, kissing her like it was their last. Hands roamed underneath Bernie’s black shirt and Bernie caressed her hand up the entire length of Serena’s stockinged leg.

‘You sure?’ Bernie panted, still attacking Serena’s neck with kisses. She suddenly wanted to check Serena was okay with this given she had practically pounced on her back at the Wolfe family home.

‘Positive, Major,’ Serena replied, before a moan slipped out - Bernie had kissed that sensitive spot just behind her ear, the spot she always used to take care of, ‘fancy taking me upstairs?’

‘It’ll be my pleasure!’ Bernie announced, her shirt now hung open and exposed her chest, Serena knew she couldn’t wait any longer to get her upstairs. Bernie pulled at her hand up the staircase, the familiar route which Serena had shown her the night after she returned from Kiev. Although, this time, the ascend to the bedroom was slow with Bernie when she pinned Serena to every surface of the stairs and landing, unable to keep her hands to herself. Bernie eyed the door she wanted to go in the other night. She remembered the time after Jason’s wedding when she sped back to the room, gathering up all her things in attempt to run away from the memories of Serena Campbell. She had looked back at the door, her eyes sore and red from crying the whole time she packed and then finally left the house.

‘You alright?’ Serena questioned, her arms still wrapped around her ex-lover.

‘Yeah.’ Bernie sighed before dragging her through the doorway and slamming the door behind them.

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‘Do you want me to leave?’ Bernie asked, unsure of what the answer would be.

‘No, you don’t have to.’
They both lay facing the ceiling, a sudden wave of awkwardness upon them despite the antics which had occurred over the last couple of hours. Serena still attempted to catch her breath. God, that’s even better than I remember. She had not experienced that for quite a while, at least not with that enthusiasm or stamina. They were both still covered by the sheet and dared to look at each other, moments earlier hands and mouths were everywhere yet the post-coital bliss had scared them back to reality - they weren’t a couple, they hadn’t spoken in over three years, it was the day of Bernie’s Mum’s funeral and they’d broken up because this sort of thing was the only reason they had stayed together in the first place. What were we thinking?

‘Are you okay?’ Bernie whispered into the darkness of the room.

‘Yeah, I’m fine, are you?’

‘I’m good… although I daresay I’ve felt that good in a long time,’

‘How long?’ Serena said, rolling on her side to see Bernie.

‘Give or take three years,’ Bernie smiled, following Serena and laying on her side.

‘You always were a charmer.’

‘It’s how I get all the pretty girls,’ Serena chuckled at her, ‘… but we… we’re alright?’ Bernie questioned, slipping her hand onto Serena’s which rested in between them.

‘We’re good… I think we both needed that… let off some steam and satiate our undeniable sexual chemistry!’ Serena announced.

‘You’ll stay the night?’ Serena reluctantly asked.

‘Yeah… as long as that doesn’t mean in the spare room,’

‘Course it doesn’t, you daft bugger. Just don’t be hogging the cover like you always do.’ Serena leaned over Bernie and gave her a peck on the lips. She then climbed out of the bed to use the bathroom. Bernie watched the sway of her hips as she moved towards the ensuite after picking up Bernie’s shirt and slipping it around her shoulders. Bernie got more comfortable, rearranging the pillows and bringing an arm above her head to wait for Ms. Campbell. Serena soon returned and made herself comfy beside Bernie, closer than they were before, she wanted to curl into her chest like she used to, an arm wrapped around her frame and a leg thrown over, for good measure but didn’t dare.

‘I don’t mind you know… if you want to… to… you know… like we used to after… after…’

‘Sex?’ Serena butted in.

‘Yeah,’ Bernie sighed, ‘I don’t bite.’

Serena then wrapped herself around Bernie, ‘you do sometimes’.

‘Only if you ask nicely.’ Bernie replied, a snigger escaping both of the women.

They both finally felt safe and content. All the vulnerability had vanished and it was as if time had stopped. Serena let her eyes rest as she listened to the beat of Bernie’s heart, her fingers traced the scar bisecting her chest.

‘I’ve missed you,’ Bernie said, Serena’s hand still travelling up and down her chest, occasionally
drifting to her belly button, ‘and not just this… just being friends and talking to you after a long day and being in theatre with you and going out for dinner and waking up to you in the mornings and falling asleep with you at night’ Bernie again was on the verge of tears. Out of everything she had learnt from the past few weeks back in Holby it was how much she had missed out. Her relationship with her children, her mother and the woman who was the love of her life.

‘I know,’ Serena sighed, ‘me too - that’s why we were so good, because you weren’t just my partner, you were my best friend.’ Serena finally looked into Bernie’s eyes - those beautiful, dark brown eyes she had found herself losing herself in over the past few weeks.

‘Do you ever wonder what life would be like if we didn’t work on other sides of the world?’

‘Sometimes, but then the Bernie Wolfe who travels the globe, sets up new trauma units, patches people up, who knows 13 ways to kill people with her bare hands, might have not been the Bernie Wolfe I fell in love with and we might not be where we are today if we were other people.’

‘True… but then I think I would’ve always fallen in love with Serena Campbell no matter what!’

‘You softie! That big macho army medic image is completely obliterated when I have you on your own! Maybe… maybe this time when you go back on your travels, we can keep in touch better this time - I don’t want to leave it three years before I see one of my best friends again’ Serena replied, a yawn escaping her mouth.

‘Deal! Sounds good, to me. Close your eyes, if you want, it’s late - I don’t mind.’ Bernie said.

‘Do you want me to move?’

‘No, it’s fine.’ Bernie responded. She didn’t want to lose the feeling of Serena in her arms just yet. Bernie gave her kiss on her hairline and laid her hand atop of Serena’s that rested on her stomach, before falling asleep as well.
Chapter Eight

Chapter Eight

It had been two weeks since Maggie Wolfe’s funeral and the night of sapphic antics between Bernie and Serena. They had both acknowledged it had happened but agreed to not talk about it to other people - only that Bernie had stayed the night at Serena’s (in the spare room) after drinking too much. They carried on their lives as usual as they had agreed - Serena back on AAU and Bernie sorting out her life before heading back to work in Kenya although the elephant in the room regarding when she was returning had not been mentioned. They both loved each other but distances, loyalties and priorities were still questioned. Serena hadn’t seen Bernie much over the past couple of weeks, she had been more distant, and on one hand Serena was grateful because she didn’t want to get too attached. She was aware Bernie would be leaving soon and even the thought of that made her heart clench. They both agreed they’d keep in touch and be better than they were post-breakup.

Serena was working a shift, finishing off the backlog of paperwork, she urgently needed to catch up on. Holby City remained a cycle of paperwork and Serena felt as if she had hardly welded a scalpel in the last few months - the odd few basic procedures but nothing like she and Bernie used to work together on. Her thoughts drifted back to Bernie. They had a wonderful night, it was like the farewell they hadn’t managed three years ago. It felt so right - she was the only women and person she wanted to share a bed with and share a life with. She was scared of letting her go - of letting her leave again. Coincidentally, through her stream of thoughts, a small knock came from the door. She saw said surgeon looking at her. God, that hair!

‘Hey,’ Serena smiled.

‘Can I speak to you?’

‘Course, you can.’ Serena said. Bernie moved into the office, closed the door and sat on the sofa beside Serena’s desk.

‘So… I’m just going to say this… I should’ve told you last week but… well… I just couldn’t face it.’ Bernie mumbled.

‘Well… go on then,’

‘I’m heading back to Nairobi tomorrow… tomorrow evening… and I know I should’ve told you sooner but…’

‘What?’ Serena felt heartbroken. She knew it was coming, just didn’t expect it to be this soon. Her mother’s finances and belongings needed to be sorted and Serena assumed Bernie wanted to help.

‘I know I’m an idiot… it’s just not been the right time. I tried to the other night when we were talking on the phone, but you were so tired and…’

‘Bern… it’s fine. I knew you weren’t going to stick around forever.’ It was the truth, at least she was leaving before Serena could truly make a fool of herself, beg Bernie to stay and be rejected for the adventurous life. This hurt Bernie, was she that easy to read? Serena thought after their night together, there may have been a chance for them to get back together, the distance between them be damned - she definitely assumed wrong!

‘Are you okay?’
'Well… you’ve left it quite late, but I’m sure we can gather the troops for one last farewell at Albie’s before you go home,’ Serena spoke, feigning a smile. Inside she was heartbroken but her British reserve urged her to remain positive, ‘you free at seven?’

‘Yeah… just not too many, my train for London leaves at two tomorrow afternoon for my evening flight.’

‘Sounds good.’ Serena stood up to leave - a way to get Bernie to leave without completely kicking her out.

‘I’ll see you later then?’ Bernie got the message.

Serena nodded, holding back the tears and watched Bernie leave the ward. Serena closed the office door, grateful the blinds were already closed, before collapsing on the sofa. Tears streamed down her cheeks - she didn’t think she would be like this. She attempted to wipe them away but the floodgates were opened. She was losing the one person who understood her, who supported her in every way, all over again. She told herself after Bernie Wolfe had gone this time, she was going to forget her and completely move on with her life.

Bernie made her way down to the carpark. A familial sense when she found herself banging her head on the steering wheel of the car. She should’ve told her earlier. She should have made sure she was alright. She should’ve been brave and told her she loved her. Similarly, she found her own eyes leaking tears. Could she risk losing Serena all over again? She wasn’t sure. Bernie drove off, mentally preparing herself for the evening drinks.
Serena managed to get the message out that Bernie was leaving and they were having drinks in the evening. The AAU gang gathered, along with Jason, Fletch, Sacha, Essie, Dom and company to say a final farewell to Berenice Wolfe. The place was lively, and when Bernie walked in, she got a large cheer from Fletch who beckoned her over for a glass of wine. Serena was there too, she smiled at her and offered her squeeze of the arm, as a way to possibly say ‘it’s alright that you’re leaving’ although there was still some tension between them. It truly was alright, Serena thought despite the tension - Bernie still had her life in Nairobi and there was no reason why she should stay any longer than was needed. Ric was already on his third whisky and offered the members of his team a dance.

‘Alright?’ Bernie asked Serena.

‘I will be.’

‘And us… we?’

‘We’re good, Bernie. Buy me a couple of drinks and we’ll be grand!’ Serena joked. They tried to pretend as if they weren’t both as equally upset, although they didn’t know the true feelings of the other.

‘Maybe I can convince you to have a whiskey… how about a shot of something?’

‘Not a chance, Wolfe!’ Serena quipped. They both didn’t know what to say, there was tension in the atmosphere until Ric intervened and pulled Serena towards him.

‘Care for a dance, Serena?’ She laughed, looked back at Bernie and the tender smile on her face before nodding and was led to the dance floor by Ric. A couple of others were dancing - Donna and Xavier, Dom and Lofty whilst Sacha attempted to convince Essie and Fletch wiggled his hips at the side of the floor, not to the delight of Jac. Ric moved her to the middle and positioned her so that his back was to Bernie and Serena had a clear view of the woman she loved. He pulled her close, in friend proximity, over the years he had been her closest confidant and he could read her like a book.

‘You still love her?’ Ric spoke into her ear.

‘What?’ Did she hear him right?

‘Bernie. You still love her and well...’

‘Is it so blatantly obvious?’ she said as she pulled back to give Ric the trademark eyebrow and saddened smile. Of course he knew!

‘You two only have eyes for each other and I’m quite positively certain that if Bernie Wolfe’s glances could kill, there would be a whole in the back of my head by now.’ Serena chuckled, she gave Bernie a subtle look and could tell she was looking in their direction.

‘So… you’re still in love with her?’

‘I… I...Yeah…’ Serena took a breath, to gather her thoughts, ‘I am...I don’t think I’ve ever stopped being in love with her.’
‘Then why are you two still being idiots and not doing anything about it!’

‘It’s not that simple, Ric!’

‘If you love each other, then nothing else matters, everything around you will fall into place eventually. Think about it, Serena… I want you to be happy. You deserve to be happy.’ Serena smiled. They continued to dance a bit longer, until the end of the song, before Ric felt a tap on his shoulder and saw Bernie nervously shuffling from one foot to the other. Ric got the message and left the two women on the dance floor.

‘Fancy dancing with me?’ Bernie said. All Serena could do was nod. They wrapped their arms around each other’s waist before slowly moving. They were close together yet nobody wanted to mutter a word and break the silence. Eventually Bernie pulled back to look at Serena in the eye and anxiously took Serena’s hands off of her hips, to wrap them around her shoulders, immediately bringing them closer together - mirroring the way they used to dance when they spent the Summer in France many moons ago. At the time, it was like there was nobody around them - just the two of them in their own bubble. Their bodies were flush together and Bernie brought her chin to rest on Serena’s shoulder.

‘Do you remember the last time we danced together?’

‘At Jason’s wedding?’

‘Mmm’

‘Of course, I do. You stood on my foot several times!’

Bernie laughed in response.

‘Do you still mean what you said that day?… because I do…’

‘What?’ Serena had no idea what she was talking about.

‘That we,’ Bernie took a breath, ‘that we’ll always love each other… because I still believe that. I love you, Serena. There’s never been anybody quite like you.’ Her eyes glistened.

‘Of course… I love you and you’ll always be the one for me,’ Serena said, bringing her hand to caress Bernie’s cheek, swiping at the stray tear, ‘but these few weeks haven’t been about us… we had fun, God, we had fun… but that’s all it was… I’m sorry.’ Serena pecked her cheek, before immediately breaking from the hold, retrieving her coat and ran out of Albies, leaving Bernie emotional on the dancefloor. Without thinking, Bernie grabbed her coat and exited the building, attempting to catch up with the love of her life.
Chapter Ten

Serena didn’t want to look at anyone, talk to anyone, think about anyone. She wanted to go home, curl underneath her duvet and hide from the outside world. She had tears running down her face and the endless stream wouldn’t stop flowing and her legs worked faster and faster to get her destination. She couldn’t believe she gave in so easy, she wasn’t supposed to fall in love all over again with her best friend - they definitely should not have slept together - they should’ve stayed friends, sent the odd christmas card after they had parted and moved on. They had become different people and Serena was still reluctant to pull Bernie away from the adventure she so craved. Nairobi and Holby were still the issues - it wouldn’t work - it couldn't work - not again. Serena was not willing to go through the loneliness and heartbreak all over again.

She heard her name being called from behind her, which she ignored - didn’t want to see the distraught face of the woman she loved, couldn't bare to say goodbye.

‘Serena!’

Carry on, Serena thought - she’d give up at some point. They were both brilliant at giving up easily - Bernie had when she went to Kiev and they both ridiculously gave up on their relationship on a whole at Christmas three years ago.

‘Serena, wait!’

She attempted to hold back the tears more. She was going to have to face her - to tell her to go away and to leave her alone. She couldn’t dare to do that though, tell the women she was in love with to go away was not on the table.

‘Serena, just stop… please, let’s just talk.’ Bernie cried, catching her up.

‘Bernie, please… don’t.’ Serena shouted in reply at her, still determined to escape reality. She had stopped near the peace garden - not far from where Greta and Jason had gotten married three years ago. There had been so many moments over time where she wished her and Bernie had married then - their relationship solid, announcing their love in front of their colleagues, friends and family.

Bernie marched onwards, straight to Serena when she was stood still. Like a reversal of three years previous, she spun Serena around and captured her lips in her own - as if it was the last kiss they would ever get to share - as if it were a matter of life and death - it was the only thing Bernie could do in attempt to get Serena to listen to her plea. Serena melted into the kiss, tears travelled down her cheeks as she wrapped her arms around her shoulders, internally not wanting to ever stop. It was heartbreaking for both of them. Bernie cupped her face with both hands attempting to communicate the amount of love she had for this woman. Eventually they broke the spell binding kiss.

‘I love you, Serena and I don’t want us to spend another three years apart,’ there was a long pause, Bernie gathering up the courage to ask Serena what she really wanted, ‘come to Nairobi with me… or we can go anywhere, an adventure… just you and me - anywhere in the world… I can’t lose you again.’ Bernie pleaded, her hands still caressing her love’s face.

‘I told you, years ago, that I never want that empty, lonely feeling ever again and for the past three years, that’s the only thing I’ve felt…’

‘Bernie… I can’t. I can’t drop everything and leave - I have Jason and the hospital… Henrik needs
‘What if I need you?’ Bernie said whilst swiping her thumb underneath Serena’s eye, clearing the tears which made her heart clench even more.

‘I can’t drop everything and run, Bernie. I’m needed here… I’m so sorry.’

‘Do I not mean anything to you?’

‘Course you do! I’ve never loved anybody like I love you… but I have to stay. I am sorry, Bernie.’ Serena whispered. Bernie nodded in acceptance - she was just going to have to let her go.

‘Okay.’ Bernie gave in, sniffling at Serena’s words.

‘Doesn’t mean I’ll ever stop loving you, though. That’ll never change, I promise,’ Serena rested her forehead on Bernie’s. She pressed a delicate kiss to her lips for the final time and brushed their noses together.

‘Have a safe flight, Bernie. I’ll see you around.’ Serena spoke before pulling away from her, their fingers still locked until they broke free, going there separate ways.

They both left the grounds of the hospital, neither of them looking back. Serena couldn’t get her head around what Bernie was asking of her - she couldn’t leave her family or the hospital which needed her - she was Medical Director! Serena made her way to the car and travelled home and as soon as she pulled up to the almost harrowing house, she climbed upstairs, stripping from her work clothes and getting into bed. The tears fell as soon as she buried her face into the pillow Bernie laid on the other night - she could still smell the hint of her shampoo and it made the tears fall even more. She wanted to spend her whole life with Berenice Wolfe but was terrified at the thought of change. They had become accustomed to their own lives, how did she know that it wasn’t going to end in heartbreak all over again? She wanted Bernie Wolfe - a life, a partner but didn’t know if she was willing to risk it.
Chapter Eleven

Serena woke up, early in the morning and unable to fall back, her mind spun with thoughts of Bernie and her proposition of moving continents. She went into work early, in order to get Bernie off her mind, although the entire journey consisted of tears and attempts to calm herself down.

‘Serena! You’re not due in for a couple of hours yet,’ Ric questioned from where he was sat at the nurses station.

‘Well, I was sat at home doing nothing, so I thought I’d come in and lend a hand.’ The ward was relatively quiet and all electives started later in the day. Serena feigned a smile and went into the office. She dumped her bag, coat and scarf on her desk and slumped down onto the sofa. She gazed around the office - her and Bernie’s private space - she really wished they had the sofa in there when they both worked on AAU. They had exchanged the odd kiss, here and there. Bernie sat on her desk flirting on a regular basis. They had bickered over patient records. But they had fallen in love here and Serena would never forget that. The memories caused tears to trickle down her cheeks.

After allowing Serena to have some time to herself, Ric reluctantly waltzed over the office, carefully knocking on the door. He walked in and saw her wipe at her face. He knew that something between the two of them had happened after they danced the previous night - the majority of the staff were aware - they were just too scared to mention it. Ric saw her red, raw eyes and immediately sat beside her and wrapped an arm around her shoulders. She sobbed even more at his kind gesture, whilst Ric drew small circles on her back to try and comfort her.

‘Wanna talk about it?’ Ric questioned, Serena scoffed at her friend.

‘Not particularly!’ She quipped.

‘Something to do with a blonde trauma surgeon, perhaps?’

‘Right on the head, Mr. Griffin,’

‘What happened?’ Serena took a breath, unsure if she wanted to disclose the truth.

‘She… she told me she loved me and then… asked me to go back to Nairobi with her,’ Serena replied.

‘And you’re tempted?’

‘I told her I couldn’t. I have the ward and Jason and…’

‘But you still love her!’

‘I know and I would love to be with her… it’s just… I… I can’t. I’m needed.’

‘Are you though, Serena?’ Ric asked, raising his eyebrow, ‘I mean there’s a whole world out there - Holby’s not everything. Jason’s moving. Why don’t you go on a new adventure too? I want you to be happy, Serena and if what makes you happy is Bernie Wolfe, then I think you should go after her.’ Ric spoke, his words full of sincerity and hope that Serena would think about what she was being offered. The opportunity if a lifetime.
'You think I should go?' Serena innocently asked.

'If she makes you happy then I think you should be selfish for once,' his hand came to rest on her own, 'maybe it’s time to think about about yourself and what… or who you really want?' Ric suggested. Serena smiled. She knew she wanted a life with Bernie, she was scared of leaving those who need her.

'So?' Ric looked at her.

'I want to spend the rest of my life with her…' Serena cried.

'Well, may I suggest you go find your nephew, talk to him then go home, pack a bag and go get your woman.' Ric spoke with a devilish look in his eye.

'You think he’ll mind?'

'He’s moving on with his life and, out of everybody, I think he knows just how much you love Bernie and how much you deserve happiness.'

Serena began to gather her bags together. She didn’t care about protocol and the resignation process - Ric would cope with the ward and Henrik would completely understand, she’d email him later. She managed to put the photograph of her, Elinor and Jason in her handbag before turning to Ric.

'Thank you, Ric’ she finally laughed at how ridiculous she had been. Serena leant over and gave him a kiss on the cheek - a sudden burst of excitement overcame all her emotions.

Serena exited her ward, confident that despite what may happen, she’d always have a home here. She pulled out her phone to call her nephew, asking if he was free to talk about something urgent. Eventually they met in Pulses - Jason was due a break and his Aunt sounded worried.

'Jason!'

'Hello, Auntie Serena. Are you okay, you didn’t sound quite yourself?

'I’m fine but there’s something I need to talk to you about,’ Serena said as she sat down opposite him, taking his hand in her own.

'What is it? Is it serious? Are you ill?'

'No, no, love. I’m fine. I just…’ she took a breath, ‘me and Bernie… we… well, the other night she told me she loved me… and, well… I love her too-'

'Well, I know that!' Serena chuckled - her nephew was always straight to the point.

'And, well… she asked me to go back to Nairobi with her, although at the time I told her I couldn’t but…'

'But now you want to go?’ Jason pipped in.

'Yeah… I do.’

Jason considered his Aunt’s proposal. He knew that over the last few years she had put her family before her happiness - he didn’t want her to be sad anymore and despite how much he would miss her, he knew that she was always happy when she was with Doctor Bernie. Auntie Bernie.

'I’d come and visit you all the time. We could facetime every week and maybe go on holiday in the
‘I think you should go, Auntie Serena. You love Bernie and I think it’s time you both live together for more than a month, for once. Plus, I’m going away soon and I wouldn’t want you to be alone - with Bernie, you’ll always have somebody to keep you company,’

‘You sure you’re okay with this? I know it’s short notice but… it’s what I want.’

‘I’m sure. I think you should probably head off if you’re going to catch her in time - she told me her train leaves at six minutes past two, to London. You’ll have to hurry if you want to catch her and pack in time,’ he stood up and opened his arms for his Aunt who tumbled into them straight, ‘you’ll send Guinevere a postcard - she loves those!’

‘Of course, I will,’ She hugged him one final time and whispered in his ear, ‘I’m so proud of you!’

‘Now go, Auntie Serena!’ he pushed her towards the exit.

‘I’ll ring you later!’ Serena shouted before jogging out of Holby City Hospital.
After immediately rushing home, throwing pieces of clothing in her suitcase, followed by a few momentos, she called a taxi to drop her off at Holby Central. When the cab pulled up outside the train station, she suddenly felt scared and butterflies roamed her stomach. What if Bernie doesn’t want her after she said no? What if she had already gone? What is she got an earlier train? What if she couldn’t find her? Her thoughts were readily interrupted by the taxi driver.

‘We’re here, love,’ he spoke.

‘Sorry.’ She fiddled with her purse, pulling out a crisp twenty pound note.

‘Are you alright?’ Serena’s hands shook and her she had to calm herself with some deep breaths.

‘I’m fine, sorry… keep the change.’ Serena opened the door, staring up at the grandeur of the station. She wheeled her case, in search for her army surgeon.

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Bernie honestly didn’t think the proposal of Serena moving to Africa, would come out of her mouth - half way through the night she had convinced herself, it hadn’t - only to remember the look of sadness on Serena’s face and remember the entire exchange clearly. It’s all she had wanted for years but knew why Serena clung on to Holby - Jason and Elinor were there. After she asked her, there was a moment she thought she would accept, they’d wrap their arms around one another and set off into the sunset together. Although Bernie was positive that she’d be ready for the rejection. She just wanted Serena. The two of them, taking on the rest of the world - teaching, building, exploring… loving. She had accept what Serena wanted and decided to move on with her life.

Bernie had gone back home, she was staying with her brother, and immediately packed her case into the night - she travelled light so it didn’t take long. Shortly, after, she fell into bed, tears falling onto the pillow as she attempted to get Serena Campbell out of her mind. She had enough time to have breakfast with her brother and his family, where Cameron and Charlotte had managed to join them. Her children weren’t sad she was leaving, had gotten used to having a long distance mother and they knew she would come home in a few months, or they’d meet up in some foreign country later in the year, together - they always managed to make it work. Cameron offered to drop her off at the train station.

‘Are you sure you don’t want me to wait at the platform with you?’

‘It’s fine, Cam - I don’t want you to be late for you shift.’ She smiled at him - he was becoming a brilliant surgeon and she didn’t want him to miss out on the complex surgeries.

‘Mum… are you okay… I don’t know what happened last night, I just…’

‘Cam, I’m fine. I will be fine’ She spoke, looking at him sincerely.

‘I’ll keep an eye on her, Mum.’
‘Thank you.’ She lent over kissed his head and gave him an awkward hug over the gear stick. Bernie whispered that she loved him and made her way into the station. She shortly found the platform number and sat down waiting for her train to pull up.

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The train for London was scheduled to arrive on platform two. Serena rushed to the correct platform, luckily the train station had no barriers - she didn’t even have a ticket, she just needed to find Bernie. She walked up to the platform scanning the long runway but she couldn’t see her. Suddenly a glimpse of blonde hair caught her eye. She was sat on a bench, hidden by a family and a pushchair. Her legs found themselves picking up the pace, just wanting to get to her.

‘Bernie!’ Serena shouted as another train flew past on the tracks. Bernie looked up from where she was slumped, thinking she could hear somebody shout her name. Definitely going mad, Wolfe!

‘Bernie!’ Serena shouted one more time, almost reaching her.

This time Bernie looked up to her. Serena was right in front of her, looking windswept, flushed cheek yet still beautiful, in her eyes. What’s she doing here?

‘Bern-’ Serena spoke as she let out a sob. Bernie was so gobsmacked, she couldn’t move or speak. Slowly she managed to stand up from where she was sat. Serena stood there, opposite her. Ethereal.

‘I know… I’ve been an idiot. But now I realise the only thing I want in my life if you, Berenice Wolfe. I don’t want to spend another day, not beside you… I want everything with you - no matter where we are, I just want to be with you - every single, bloody day!’ Serena laughed, almost a cry, ‘I love you, and if you’ll have me… despite this whole dramatic debacle, I’d love to come to Nairobi with you and spend the rest of my life with you…’ Serena had tears rolling down her cheeks. Bernie had remained silent during the exchange, her face not changing at all until she let out a laugh and her smiled stretched across her face.

‘Is that a yes?’ Serena laughed back - partly for how ridiculous they had been!

‘Yes!’ Bernie cried out, moving to Serena and gathering her up into her arm, kissing those lips she always wanted kiss, ‘are you sure?’ she managed to speak after they pulled apart from their embrace.

‘I’ve never been so sure...’ Serena’s face lit up when looking up at Bernie, ‘I love you.’

‘I love you, too… so bloody much,’ Bernie honked, stroking at Serena’s cheeks and nuzzling into her hair. They remained in their tight embrace until Serena exclaimed.

‘I just remembered, I don’t even have a train ticket!’

‘Don’t worry… we’ll get you one,’ she chuckled. Bernie couldn’t believe the sight in front of her - the woman of her dreams wasn’t just before her eyes, but wrapped in her arms and coming to Nairobi so they could be together. This, right in front of her, was her future - Serena was her future and she vowed, she’d never let her go again and not in such a ridiculous way.

‘Is that all you have?’ Bernie said as she peered down to look at Serena’s case - even for Serena, the ever organised woman, this was light luggage.

‘Well, I didn’t have much time. A certain grey-haired surgeon and a nephew reassured me that I had to follow my heart and come after you… after that I didn’t have much time to pack… just the essentials,’ Serena spoke, her smile widening more and more as she spoke, ‘and besides… I have everything I need, right here.’ Serena buried her face into her love whilst Bernie wrapped her arms as
tight as she could get them, neither one of them ever letting go again.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you to everybody who has been reading and for all the lovely comments - it means a lot especially after not writing for so long.

At the minute, I don't have any plans to write any more chapters but partly because my last uni assignments are due soonish. But who knows... a couple of one-shot/spin-offs could occur in the not so distant future!

Thank you again,

-Q-

End Notes

This is my first fic for a long time and I'm hoping this will help me get back into the swing of this writing business!! And God, it has been an absence!

This chapter is there to set the scene and I promise the next few chapters will have some more action!

I have already finished writing this, so hopefully, I will update every 1-2 days!

I hope you enjoy it - I needed some Berena reunions after Xmas, I don't know about everybody else!

Feel free to let me know what you think.

Merci,

Q

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!