Timing

by OnceUponAWhim

Summary

They've come back to many slightly altered realities by now. This is not one they've seen before. [Wyatt/Lucy]

Notes

My first foray into Timeless. I hesitated because I don't really have time for keeping up with posting, and I didn't want to get too invested given that it's a bubble show and may not be back anyway :( But the imaginary Lucy and Wyatt in my brain would not go away. I can't promise super-frequent updates, but hopefully imaginary Wyatt and Lucy push me to stay on track.

A new fandom and new characters is always tricky for me. Here's hoping I've managed to stay true to them, even in this quick prelude. Feedback/thoughts would be much appreciated, if only to improve for future chapters.

Wyatt/Lucy - rating subject to change. Takes place at an undetermined time following episode 11, "The World's Columbian Exposition"
Chapter 1

It's always been this way, unfortunately. At least since fourth or fifth grade, when boys suddenly began the transition from (possibly cootie-ridden) playground playmates to hand-holding objects of affection.

It was always an onslaught. She'd go from perfectly fine and oblivious one day, and then a trigger. Maybe the middle-school cafeteria grapevine suddenly hinted that Kevin liked her. Maybe she randomly had a dream about Brian. Maybe David did something nice for her out of the blue. Or even just her own mind finally allowed her to admit things to herself.

No matter how it came about, when Lucy developed feelings for someone, they hit HARD.

Say, like when an otherwise strictly professional colleague just happens to pull her in for a kiss under the auspices of securing their cover story such that a pair of notorious 1930's criminals wouldn't figure out that they weren't who they said they were.

Yeah, it was that kind of situation that could really throw Lucy for a loop.

And since that kiss, nearly every waking thought that wasn't occupied by the pressing issues of work, Flynn, Mason Industries, and Rittenhouse, was now occupied by butterfly-inducing musings about Wyatt. And some non-waking moments too, if she was being honest with herself.

Of course she'd known since meeting him that he was good-looking; there was no point in denying that. (She's always had a weakness for blue eyes like that, probably because she'd always been so bored with her own brown ones as little girl.) But he was also a bit of a jerk. And since then, everything related to this time travel gig had had to take precedence over whatever her feelings might have been for anyone, Wyatt or otherwise. She'd come to trust him implicitly, of course, even with her life; all three of them on the team had grown closer by default, but it was still work. So even if she'd had the slightest inclination to being interested in him, it was tamped down and buried immediately, everything restricted to mission-based and colleague-level interactions. Purely professional.

But that had all been blown out of the water the split second she'd felt his lips on hers. The floodgates were open and she was falling - or maybe already had completely fallen, only now able to admit feelings to herself - for Wyatt.

Not that it could ever be anything but one-sided. Wasn't half his motivation for even being there, for even having met her in the first place, his wife? Lucy knew that Jessica's death weighed heavily on Wyatt's mind, and he certainly showed no indication of be ready to move on, or even wanting to be ready to move on. He'd definitely made it a point to emphasize that the kiss meant nothing. Purely for show, purely to convince Bonnie and Clyde.

If nothing else, at least the last few trips to the past were nerve-wracking enough that she'd had enough to deal with that she wasn't spending a ton of time dwelling on thoughts of Wyatt. Of course, she'd be lying if she didn't relish finally seeing him come out of that death vault in Chicago, and the bear hug that had gone along with it. And for better or worse, since then, there had been nothing quite so dramatic on their missions.

Lucy shook her head after pulling her modern shirt over her head. This was the hard part, the being back in the present. It's not like she could slip right back into her regular life and teaching position. (Honestly, wasn't even sure where she stood at the university anymore. It had certainly sounded like
tenure was off the table even before this fiasco began anyway, and beyond that, all she knew was that Homeland Security had dealt with the department and getting her courses covered.) So as she'd be as soon as she finished changing, she'd often been left to her own devices between missions, puttering around while simultaneously trying to figure out getting Amy back and avoiding her mother's scrutiny. And avoiding Noah, when they ended up in a timeline in which he was around, which wasn't always. But sitting in the locker room at Mason was just delaying that inevitable.

So she smoothed out her shirt, letting out a soft chuckle as she inspected it. Sometimes they arrived back to exactly the timeline they'd left, sometimes there were changes. Amy, obviously the worst, her mother's lack of illness the best. The amusing, innocuous ones were like this, when she ended up in clothes she'd never seen before.

At least this version of herself had good taste, she mused.

Once she was dressed and feeling presentable, she rifled around in the locker she'd been provided, seeking out her phone, wallet, and keys. But while she was able to retrieve the first two items, she came up empty-handed as far as her house keys or her car keys. That was a first.

"What the...?" she mumbled, while stretching to reach further back on the locker shelf, patting around in hopes that they'd just been pushed further back accidentally. Her hand didn't hit the keys, but did encounter other cool metal objects. She grasped them and pulled them out for inspection.

An engagement ring. Not entirely surprising anymore, considering that when they did arrive back to a timeline with Noah in it, more often than not, they were engaged. However, the second piece was a bit more disconcerting to Lucy.

A wedding band. That was definitely a first.

A knock at her door startled her out of the shocked stupor that had set in upon seeing the ring. She hurriedly shoved them both on her finger, grabbed her other things, and yanked the door open.

"Rufus! Hi," she chirped, her eyes simultaneously darting around behind him for someone she could ask about her current timeline.

"It's still early," Rufus replied, "and that week-old corn mush didn't do it for me. Figured we could go get dinner? I'll check with Wyatt too."

But Lucy had spotted Agent Christopher across the warehouse, only half hearing Rufus' suggestion. Which he noticed. "You ok, Lucy?" he inquired.

That brought Lucy back to the conversation. "Uh, sort of," she whispered. "Apparently I'm married? And I can't find my keys." She nodded down to where she held out her hand, rings glittering.

Rufus' eyebrows shot up. "Hoo, boy. Noah?"

"Yeah, I mean, it's always him otherwise," Lucy said with a weak shrug. "I should ask about that. But yeah," she added, "I could use real food."

Rufus nodded, and the two of them made their way over to Christopher.

But halfway across the room, they could see Wyatt reach her first.

Lucy hurried her steps, now curious if something had changed for him. She knew he came back every time with the hope that Jessica would be here waiting for him. But she stopped short when she
got within a few feet and could make out her car keys dangling from Wyatt's hand.

"Why do you have my keys?" she blurted out.

His gaze darted in her direction, his brow furrowed in confusion. "They were in my locker..." he explained, "with this."

Lucy inched closer to where he held out his open palm. A wedding ring.

She gasped softly. Jessica. Well, maybe she could use that to finally put an end to the feelings that had been bubbling up since their kiss.

Agent Christopher was the next to speak, her voice tinged with confusion. "I don't see the problem. Does it matter who has the keys?"

"Well, they're mine," Lucy hedged, wary of the Agent's confusion.

"And why do I have a wedding ring here?" croaked Wyatt. "Is Jessica... Is she..."

Agent Christopher crossed her arms in front of her chest, still clearly confused, but also clearly impatient with the conversation. "I don't know who this Jessica is, you always leave your rings before going on a mission, and yes, Lucy, fine, they're your keys. Sometimes you bring his keys instead. I still don't see the problem here."

By that point, Lucy's head was spinning. No Jessica. Rings plural when Wyatt had only mentioned his band. Interchangeable keys?

She only half-heard Wyatt's protests, angry inquiries about the lack of Jessica in his file. A whisper of an idea was curling in the corners of her brain. It couldn't...

Lucy hurriedly tugged off the rings she'd just put on. She sucked in a quick breath. The engagement ring was different. It wasn't the one she always got with Noah. Looking closer at the wedding band, she squinted at the small loopy cursive inscription inside.

No...

"Rufus..." she whispered, just as he stammered his own "Umm..." as he was clearly putting his own mental puzzle pieces together just behind her.

"Wyatt," she managed to croak out softly. But he didn't hear, still busy interrogating Christopher about Jessica's whereabouts. "Wyatt!" she hissed, louder. He finally paused and turned to look at her.

She held out her own open palm, two rings sparkling.

Next to Wyatt, realization dawned on Agent Christopher's face. "I take it you two aren't married in the timeline you started in?"

TBC...
Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

I hope you all enjoy this part, and once again, fingers crossed that I've gotten close with the characterization. This one was a bit more of a challenge.

Also, a reminder - this takes place some number of missions following "The World's Columbian Exposition" and after tonight's episode may be even more inaccurate and off-the-wall than it already is. Also, for the purposes of this story, we'll be ignoring the fact that Flynn revealed the name of Jessica's killer. Pretend that didn't happen. Finally, please excuse any typos. I often become blind to my own errors until I go back hours later to re-read.

Wyatt's heart pounded in his ears as his gaze darted between Agent Christopher and Lucy's outstretched hand.

He was married? But not to Jessica. Never to Jessica. To... Lucy. Lucy. His wife.

"Master Sargea-" Wyatt blinked, not even hearing whatever words followed out of Christopher's mouth. He couldn't deal with this. Not here. Not now.

Curling his fingers around the ring in his hand, and the keys in the other, he turned abruptly, needing to be anywhere but there.

Without even realizing where he was going, he soon found himself in the room where he'd first met Lucy, the door slamming behind him. Of course. Why wouldn't he end up there. "FUCK!" The word burst free unbidden as he landed a punch to the wall. Tears stung his eyes, not even from the pain, but the futility and hopelessness. Punching the damned wall wasn't going to bring Jessica back. For all his efforts to get her back, now she never existed in the first place and he was that much further from ever seeing her again. He sank down onto one of the couches, numb.

He had no idea how long he'd sat there, head in hands, when a soft knock at the door finally jarred him out of his stupor. He ignored it.

But the knock repeated, followed by the sound of someone easing the door open.

"...Wyatt?" Lucy. He drew his gaze up to where she hovered timidly in the doorframe. With a sigh, his eyes slipped closed. He couldn't exactly avoid her, or the situation. Looking back up, he nodded ever so slightly, indicating she should come in.

She got the message. She shot a quick glance behind her into the hallway before slipping gingerly inside and shutting the door behind her. She'd put the rings back on, he noticed, the stones glinting as she let go of the doorknob.

Wyatt stared blankly across the room as he blindly rolled her ring's counterpart between his fingers. He still couldn't process that aspect of the whole situation.

Jessica was his wife. It had taken him so long to come to terms with not wearing his ring after... after. And even that had only started as a result of the coaxing of the other guys in his unit. They'd
decided he'd needed to get back out there, so off came his ring, drinks were gulped, and he'd ended up hungover in bed with some random naked woman the next morning. He'd vomited, but it was disgust with himself and not the alcohol. After that, he'd felt too guilty to put the ring back on, as if he'd dishonored Jessica's memory. And he'd also never let himself be with a woman since. He played up the sleazy flirting, letting his buddies think what they wanted. But the only thing he went home with these days was whiskey.

And now here he was with a new ring. And Lucy.

She'd seemed so uptight, almost prickly, when they'd met. He hadn't been able to help himself when it came to the poking fun and grating on her nerves with the "ma'am"s all the time. Like teasing a sister, sort of. But with all the life or death situations they'd been thrust into in such a short span of time, it had quickly become so much more than that. They truly were a team, the three of them. He'd put his life in Lucy's and Rufus' hands, and they theirs in his. With the magnitude of their missions, and with Jessica never far from his thoughts, he'd not allowed himself to see Lucy as anything but that, a trusted teammate, no different from a fellow soldier.

...Except when he'd caught a glimpse of her slipping out of her bra in New Jersey. And looking stunning when she'd been off to her date with Lincoln's son. And...

And when he'd pulled her to him in Arkansas and pressed his lips to hers.

Wyatt clenched his eyes closed at the memory. It had been for show. It had. But he'd felt...something. A spark of something that was laced with guilt every time he allowed himself to ponder what it might mean. He needed to get Jessica back, not to be liking when he was forced to have Lucy draped across his lap on a couch, not to be feeling frissons of electricity where his arm pressed up against Lucy's in the narrow bed of Clyde's cabin.

So he'd buried it. Convincing both himself and Lucy that it was nothing, and ignoring it. Until Flynn had gotten her and his brain had whispered not again, you can't lose another one, it'll be your fault again. It had been more than just relief when they'd finally gotten her back - twice - in Chicago.

But again. He'd forced any hint of anything but comradery away. Colleagues.

Denial ain't just a river in Egypt.

Now, they were apparently married, and that hint of something was trying to claw its way back to the front of his mind, but the cool metal of the ring still gripped in his hand was just serving to remind him of the last ring he'd worn, and the person he'd sworn he'd get back.

Fuck, indeed.

A rustling noise eventually caught his attention. He'd nearly forgotten that Lucy was actually there in the room. She'd sat in a chair across the room.

Her eyes finally met his, for the first time since the mess downstairs, and she smiled nervously.

"So I guess we missed our last anniversary, huh?" she offered, her voice tinny and high.

Wyatt's eyes widened. He rolled his eyes and glared. Seriously?

Lucy sobered quickly. "Sorry, not the time? Right," she apologized hurriedly. She paused a moment, staring to the point that he started to feel uncomfortable under her gaze. "...are you ok, Wyatt?" she eventually asked, her voice soft.
He took a deep breath, fulling intending to steady himself and force the calm, cool, and collected front that he'd nearly perfected. But it failed him this time. "Did you hear that?" he yelped angrily, "She had no idea Jessica ever existed. I mean, I knew it's a long shot to ever get her back, but never existed at all?"

Her expression in response was sympathetic. "I know. I..." she stuttered. "Amy."

Lucy's words hit Wyatt like a dousing of cold water. Of course she understood. "Right," he murmured, absently toying with the key ring in the hand that didn't hold the ring.

Keys. He'd forgotten he had them. He flipped over the lone keychain attached to her car key to inspected.

He allowed himself a silent chuckle. It was very Lucy. "Little House on the Prairie?" he inquired with a smirk, waving them in her direction.

The worry on her face softened to a weak smile. "I liked the stories when I was little. Part of what got me into this history thing, I guess," she added with a shrug.

Wyatt nodded, looking back down at them.

"...What are those other keys on there?" Lucy asked, breaking the silence that had set in again.

He looked a little closer, but really already knew the answer. He sighed. "My apartment," he said flatly. "Our apartment, apparently."

Her reply was just a hollow "Oh."

Wyatt looked over at her, "You didn't have any in your locker?"

"No," she replied. "I was living with my mom when she was sick, and since then, it was still either her place or with Noah. But, uh, now..."

Now we live together, Wyatt finished mentally, still not able to truly wrap his mind around it. Playing the part in the past was one thing, but now they weren't even living their own real lives anymore. "Yeah," he muttered.

They slipped back into a charged silence again, for how long he didn't know, but eventually he caught Lucy trying to stifle a yawn.

She looked tired, uncomfortable. This was dumb, Wyatt told himself. Just deal with it. He took a deep breath, trying to collect himself and stood up. "Alright. We should just... go," he said, trying to sound more sure of himself than he felt. "There's no point in staying here."

"Go... home?" she stammered shakily.

The word sounded foreign to Wyatt's ears in that context, and he couldn't get a real answer out. "I..."

He could practically see her mental transition into no-nonsense, practical professor mode. "You know what," she said, standing up, "you can just drop me off at my mom's. Take my car tonight, it's fine."

Wyatt mentally kicked himself for not being able to come up with some sort of more comforting or reassuring sentiment. Even as purely colleagues, he felt somehow responsible for her. "Luce...," he offered apologetically.
"No, it's ok," she replied, all business. "I probably have clothes at her place. I can get other stuff from your... our place tomorrow. I'll just make sure she's home."

Wyatt hung back and watched as she managed to tap out a text message. She was trying to put up a strong front in the face of... whatever this was, but he could see her thumb shaking even from a few feet away. Once she'd finished the message and looked up, he reached for the door, pulling it open as he guided her out of the room with his hand in the small of her back. "Come on, let's go." As the door to the room shut behind him, he couldn't help but glance down at the contents of his hands.

With a sigh, he slid the ring on his finger.

They both inched towards the external door of Mason, guardedly. They'd clearly come to an unspoken agreement that neither one of them felt like dealing with anyone else that evening.

They'd just made it out to the parking lot, a slight chill in the night air, when Lucy's phone buzzed with a reply from her mother. She stopped short, falling away from Wyatt as she read it. "She's home," she stated, her voice tinged with confusion. "But she said Lena is waiting."

He felt his own brow furrow. That's not anyone he'd ever heard Lucy mention. "Who the hell is Lena?"

"I- I have no idea," Lucy stammered anxiously, "I don't know that name."

They resumed their slow walk away from the building, both wracking their brains. "Does she have a cat?" Wyatt offered. "Would she get a cat?"

"No," Lucy replied, shaking her head. "She- Oh god," she gasped, suddenly grasping his forearm, "what if it's Amy? Like a different version of her?"

A shiver ran up Wyatt's spine. He hadn't thought of that possibility. And if Amy was here, Jessica coming back was possible... "Which is your car?" he quizzed, a bit more urgency tingeing his voice.

Lucy pointed, nudging him to the left hurriedly. "There."

"Well, let's go," he said, pulling her by the arm. His step faltered as they approached the driver's side and he glanced down at the keys he still clutched. It was her car, technically. "You want to drive or..."

"No, you; it's fine," she waved him off, yanking open the passenger door for herself.

Wasting no time, he slid into the driver's seat, looking down to adjust the seat backwards to accommodate his height. He was mid-backslide when Lucy's shaky voice echoed in the car. "Wyatt..."

"What?" he asked, rushed as he finagled the keys to start the car.

She was silent.

He looked over, taking in her wide-eyed, incredulous expression as she held up a child's pacifier. And subsequently pulled from under her thigh a pack of wipes and a baggie of Cheerios. Wyatt tensed, his own eyes widening as his gaze darted around the car's interior for... well, he didn't know what he was looking for.

But they both tuned as nearly the same time, and even in the dim glow of the parking lot lights, he was able to make out the pale, flower-patterned blanket half draped over a baby's empty carseat.
He inhaled sharply as Lucy gripped his arm tightly and whimpered a soft, "Oh my god."

Wyatt stared blankly at the contents of the backseat. He didn't remember a conscious decision to speak, but heard himself say, "Well, I guess that covers who Lena is."

TBC...
Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

I didn't intend for this part to be so long, but things tend to get away from me sometimes...

Note - I think we've seen the interior of Wyatt's bedroom? With articles about Jessica on the wall? If so, ignore that. I'm taking a little artistic license with his apartment.

Lucy's mind was swimming as Wyatt backed her car out of the spot and headed for the road. It didn't make sense. It just didn't make sense. She wracked her brain, trying to formulate some sort of explanation for the situation they'd found themselves in. Married was one thing; rearranging of the lives of adults who already existed was one thing. But... She squeezed her eyes shut, trying to block out the mental image of the car seat, even as she was still absentely gripping the pacifier. It didn't make any sense.

Wyatt was clearly grappling with the same issue as he sped away down the long access road to Mason Industries. He was the one to finally break the tense silence a few moments later. "I don't understand," he mumbled, sounding far less self-assured than she'd ever heard him. "How could there be new people because of something we did in the past?"

"I, I, I don't know," Lucy stammered, casting a nervous glance at him. "I mean, obviously people who should be here can be erased," she continued. Amy. "And other new people probably exist just because of who didn't die because of our changes," she reasoned. That could make sense. But not this one person in particular. "But I don't know how there could be a new..." she trailed off, not even wanting to put the whole mess into words. "How WE could have... created a new person without even being here!" she finally blurted, the floodgates now open. "We we didn't have sex!" she yelped. "We're not married! I've never been pregnant, I didn't give birth!" She felt her cheeks flame retroactively; references to being with Wyatt in that sense still not fully overridden by the other distressing aspects of the situation. "How does a new child exist like that?" she finished quietly, asking not Wyatt, but whatever it was that caused this to happen.

So obviously Wyatt had no answer for her rhetorical question as they finally reached an intersection with a main road. He stopped longer than would be necessary, given the lack of traffic. Lucy glanced over.

He was studying her pensively. "I guess she could be adopted?" he finally offered, not sounding convinced himself.

"Oh," Lucy exhaled. Oh. Right. Duh. "Yes," she replied numbly, chastising herself for not having realized that possibility. "That could work. Ok. Ok," she repeated in an attempt to calm herself down. "Adopted." She took a deep breath, finally realizing that Wyatt was also stopped because he had no where to go. "Take a right up there," she pointing, beginning the trek towards her mother's house. And Lena.

Somewhat calmed given the new assumption that they hadn't actually managed to procreate, but had simply ended up with a child that would have already existed anyway, Lucy managed to relax into her seat, indicating turns to Wyatt when necessary.
Until his next earth-shattering idea. "If we're... *parents...*," he hedged, shooting a glance in her direction, "wouldn't we have pictures? Check your phone."

"Oh," Lucy replied dumbly. *Duh again.* "Right," she muttered, fumbling for the phone in her lap.

She quickly tapped her way to the photo app. It only took the first image that popped up to cause her to let out a soft gasp as tears sprang to her eyes.

It was Wyatt, holding the child that had to be Lena. She was reaching for the camera with what appeared to be blue frosting smeared on her tiny hands and face. They were both sporting big smiles. *Matching* smiles. She dropped the pacifier, the now free hand coming up to absently cover her gaping mouth.

Flipping through other pictures only served to confirm what the first had shown. The smile, the big blue eyes... This wasn't some random child they'd adopted. She was practically a carbon copy of Wyatt.

Aside from the dark, nearly black, wispy curls that Lucy recognized from her own baby pictures.

She swiped through a few more, butterflies fluttering in her stomach as, even through the blurry film of emotional tears, she could make out the image of herself, mid-kiss with Wyatt, and Lena between them, smiling and reaching her chubby hands up to their cheeks.

She jumped when Wyatt's voice finally broke the silence again. "So?"

"You're right," she confirmed in a numb whisper. "There are pictures. Of us. Of everything. We..." Her voice cracked as she fought to finish, "have a daughter. Go left," she added automatically.

Wyatt obeyed, making the turn, but remained silent.

Lucy scrolled through a few more pictures. In a hushed voice, she elaborated "...she looks like you."

That earned a practically comical double take. "She," Wyatt stuttered, "uh, what?"

"She looks like you," Lucy repeated, landing on yet another image that confirmed that words she was saying. "I don't know how," she admitted as she swiped at a stray tear that had managed to escape.

When Wyatt still didn't respond, she cast a wary glance in his direction. He looked as stoic as ever, but the tension in his jaw gave away that he was just as unnerved as she was.

"Left up there," Lucy indicated a few moments later. "Third house on the left."

Wyatt pulled up in front of the house, turned the car off, and then just sat a moment, making no move to get out, nor even to look at her. Finally, with a sigh, he turned to her. "So what's the plan?"

"I, I don't know," Lucy muttered. "I mean..." She glanced over to the house as if she'd find an answer there, only to see her mother pulling back the living room curtain to wave at them. "Oh, hi, there's my mom." She gave a weak wave back, "Yeah, hi, mom." She groaned, turning back to Wyatt. "We can't just sit out here now, she saw us. We have to go in."

Wyatt's eyebrows show up. "We?"

Like she was dealing with this alone... "We're apparently a two for one deal in this timeline, aren't we?" Lucy chastised. "She'll probably think it's weird if you don't."
To his credit, Wyatt nodded in acquiescence, climbed out of the car, and dutifully followed her up to the front door.

And that was the last moment in which they had any illusion of anything resembling normal for them. The door flew open to reveal her mother, who pulled her inside for a hug immediately. "Hi, honey, how was the work trip?" she inquired. She didn't even wait for an answer, pushing Lucy away to pull a dumbfounded-looking Wyatt in for a hug of his own.

"Oh, uh great," Lucy spat out stiltedly, not able to really process the odd juxtaposition of her mother and Wyatt hugging. "How are you?"

"Oh, you know I love grandma time," her mom gushed, releasing Wyatt. "I put her down for bed about an hour ago, but she'll probably sleep through getting her into the carseat."

It took Lucy a moment to register what her mother was even talking about. Right. The kid. "Sure, ok," she nodded belatedly, casting a helpless glance at Wyatt for backup. "Right?"

"Yeah, good," Wyatt mumbled.

Luckily, her mother seemed oblivious to any awkwardness as she headed up the stairs, explaining. "I'll go pack up her bag and bring her down."

As soon as she'd disappeared at the top of the stairs, Wyatt hissed in Lucy's ear. "What the hell are we doing?"

"I don't know!" she snapped, keeping her voice hushed. "It's one thing to avoid this marriage thing by staying here if it's just me. I can't stay here now; we're supposed to be one big happy family."

"Do you know how to take care of a kid?" he shot back, eyes wide, "'Cause I sure as hell don't know how to take care of a kid!"

"No! I mean, I tried to help with Amy," she added, "but I was only seven when she was a baby! We have to just... figure it out," she finished with a helpless shrug.

"I'm not doing diap-"

Lucy cut off his protest with an elbow to the ribs as she saw her mother begin to descend the stairs. "Shhh."

She froze, dumbfounded, as the small child in her mom's arms came into view. It was one thing to see pictures on a phone. It was entirely another to see the living, breathing thing in person.

And suddenly, there she was, being pushed into Lucy's arms as her mother whispered, "There's mommy and daddy..."

"Oh, ok, hi..." Lucy stammered, caught off-guard by the sudden armful of ...baby? ...toddler? She wasn't even sure what this size little person counted as. She shot a helpless glance at Wyatt behind her as she awkwardly hefted Lena to what she hoped was a better hold.

Luckily her mother wasn't paying attention to Lucy's less-than-graceful handling of Lena, but was instead directing Wyatt. "Wyatt, I left the diaper bag at the top of the stairs."

Lucy caught his eyes go wide for a split second, but again to his credit, he slipped into the 'dad' role relatively quickly. With a slight nod, he replied, Right. Got it," and was headed up the stairs.
Which left just the three generations of females. At a loss for what else to do, Lucy shot her mom a shaky smile, just hoping that Lena stayed asleep. She wasn't sure she was ready to deal with her while she was sleeping, never mind awake and possibly crying.

Wyatt returned a few seconds later, clutching a pale green totebag. "Bag," he stated, pointing out the obvious.

Lucy's mother smirked and gently made another suggestion. "There's half a bottle and two opened jars of food in the fridge, you might as well grab that too."

"Uh, ok," he replied, heading hesitantly towards the back of the house. Lucy tried to subtly direct him to the right. She knew he wouldn't automatically know where anything was, and in this timeline he should.

He was gone for a few minutes, probably longer than he should have been.

When he finally returned, Lucy couldn't deny that her heart did a little flip flop at the sight of Master Sergeant Wyatt Logan juggling not only the pastel diaper bag, but a bottle, a handful of Gerber jars, and also a fuzzy bear, alphabet blanket, and some sort of other baby toy contraption. "These too?"

Lucy's mother nodded, and plucked the items from his hands to help put them into the bag. Once everything was situated, the three adults were left standing there awkwardly.

"Uh, we should go?" Lucy spoke up hesitantly.

Wyatt cleared his throat, nodded, and moved for the door.

"We'll talk later this week?" Lucy's mother asked.

"Sure," Lucy nodded, clutching Lena tightly as she stepped out the door. "Bye, mom."

And finally the door shut behind them, leaving Wyatt, Lucy, and Lena alone on the porch.

"And then there were three," Wyatt mumbled. Lucy caught his gaze as he turned to look at her, probably really taking in the presence of... their daughter... for the first time. He took a deep breath as he studied them, before offering, "So to my place?"

Lucy bit her lip, looking down at Lena. "Our place, apparently," she agreed.

She followed him down to the car, where he graciously pulled open the back passenger seat for her. Lucy peered in. The carseat was strapped into the middle, and there was no way it wasn't going to be awkward to place Lena in it, never mind while trying to not wake her. So Lucy slid herself into the adjacent seat, facing backwards, and carefully pulled the seat's straps out of the way before settling the child into the seat.

And even in the midst of whatever the insanity surrounding them was, she couldn't help but feel herself smirk. Wyatt had already rounded the car and slid into the driver's seat, but she poked his shoulder and gestured for him to come to the back seat. "Hey, captain seatbelt. Time to try carseat straps."

He smirked right back in appreciation of the mild humor.

Lucy was grateful that he caught her drift and pulled open the back driver's side door to sit himself next to Lena, mirroring Lucy's position. He eyed the straps for a moment, and Lucy took the opportunity to really take in Lena in person. Her impossibly tiny little fingernails, rosy round cheeks,
perfect little mouth... *How was she here?*

Just as he'd been in the lifeboat, Wyatt was quickly able to finagle the carseat straps into what appeared to be the correct, secure arrangement.

"I think that's right," he declared, but made no move to get back to the front seat.

After a moment, he spoke up again quietly. "You think she looks like me?"

Lucy felt a smile take over her face. It seemed she wasn't the only one in the car entranced by the little person they'd found themselves faced with. "The eyes," she confirmed softly with a nod. "She has your eyes. In the pictures, you can see. Blue."

When he didn't immediately respond, she bit her lip, blushing in the dim light of the car, worried she'd just revealed too much about what she might be feeling about Wyatt and his eyes.

She couldn't deny that her breath caught in her throat when he responded in a murmur, "Your hair."

She felt her cheeks flush hotter at the fact that he'd notice her hair, and she didn't dare look over, lest her rapidly growing inappropriate feelings give themselves away any more than they already were.

"We should go," she replied, proud of herself for managing a level voice. "I kind of just want this day to be over with."

So they extricated themselves from their clumsy backwards positions in the backseat, sliding back into the front and getting on their way.

A few red lights later, while they sat waiting for green, Lucy caught a glimpse out of the corner of her eye as Wyatt toyed with the other keys attached to hers as they dangled from the steering column. She looked at him questioningly.

He looked over at her, gesturing to the keys. "I think it's the exact same key. If it is, to my actual place, she must be in the office. You can take my room. I'll take the couch."

Lucy forced herself to ignore the missed opportunity to share a bed with him for the second time, focusing rather on the issue of where they might be going. She thinks for a split second that he could check his driver's license. But then the sobering thought hits her that she could just check *hers*. They live together, after all.

She reached for where her wallet had fallen on the floor, and she fished out the license quickly.

*Lucy Logan.*

Her stomach clenched. Even having been mentally prepared to find Wyatt's address, she'd managed to forget she could have his name.

She looked up to find Wyatt eyeing her curiously, so she pulled herself together and managed to rattle off the address on her license.

Wyatt's stoic nod confirmed that it was indeed his place.

A few moments of silence later and the car rolled to a stop in the parking lot of a nondescript, modern apartment complex.

Neither of them moved.
Lucy didn't know how long they'd sat there, avoiding each other and the situation, when a small gurgle from the backseat jarred them both out of their stupor.

She looked over at Wyatt as he glanced back at the still-slumbering Lena. Her own anxiety must have been plainly written across her face, for when he turned back to her, he nudged her knee with his hand, some sort of attempt to be comforting. "We can go to Mason tomorrow and figure this out. It'll be ok," he assured her, not that he sounded particularly convincing.

Lucy nodded with a nervous gulp as she looked back at Lena. Taking a deep breath, she nodded at her. "I'll get her if you take the bag."

Wyatt agreed, and rather quickly, the trio was making their way into the apartment. He ushered Lucy and Lena in first, following them as he pulled the door shut behind them.

"This is..." he started, flipping on the closest light switch. "...not what it normally looks like," he finished, voice laced with confusion. "What the hell?"

Lucy scanned the room. A decent-sized living room, with an open kitchen and small dining area, and a hallway that she assumed led to a bathroom and bedrooms. But everything was in disarray, with cardboard boxes scattered about, some full, some not. "Are we... moving?" she wondered aloud.

Wyatt wandered around among the boxes, clearly befuddled. "I don't kn-" He stopped short, and Lucy felt his gaze on her as she shifted Lena's weight in her arms. "Here," he sighed, beckoning to her from across the room, "let's see what the bedroom and office look like."

Lucy nodded, stepping around boxes to follow him to the hallway at the far side of the living room. At the first doorway in the hall, Wyatt nodded towards it. "This was my office." And reaching past the door frame, he flipped on the lights, revealing a small, pale green room replete with teddy bear and balloon wallpaper on one wall, crib, and rocking chair. "Ok, well at least that makes some sort of sense," he mumbled.

Grateful for that, Lucy made her way across the room, only stopping to look down at Lena once they had reached the crib. She was dressed in some sort of footed onesie, which made sense for baby pajamas, but over it was a hooded zip-up sweatshirt. Even in the absence of any parenting experience, Lucy figured that the hoodie should probably come off. But how?

"Wyatt," she whispered over her shoulder, "help me get this shirt off her."

He dutifully came right over, but once there, looked just as perplexed as she felt by the prospect of getting sleeping baby arms out of the garment. He hesitantly reached out to unzip the shirt as Lucy shifted Lena in her arms for better access. Following that, he gingerly tried to tug one of the sleeves off, and he was nearly successful. One arm came out, but as he tried to free the second, the sleeping Lena decided to clutch the fabric of the sleeve's wrist. He set his jaw and went to work prying her little fingers open. But that resulted in the baby grasping tightly to his finger instead. His eyes widened with slight panic, and he looked over Lena's head at Lucy. She shrugged helplessly.

A few breaths later, Wyatt appeared to relax, and his thumb absently stroked Lena's little fingers until she too relaxed and lessened her grip on him.

Released, Wyatt quickly removed the last of the sweatshirt, and Lucy carefully set the little girl down on her back in the crib.

"And that's it?" Wyatt asked from behind Lucy, peering down over her shoulder. "We leave her there?"
"I guess..." Lucy breathed, the gravity of the situation sinking in once again now that Lena had been dealt with. She scanned the contents of the room as if the answer to all of their problems might somehow be sitting on a dresser or changing table. It wasn’t, but she did manage to recognize what looked like a walkie talkie set. "Oh, baby monitor." Grabbing the smaller of the two, she tried flipping one of the switches on it. A red light glowed to life on both. Casting one last glance at the crib, she gestured for Wyatt to follow her out of the room as she flicked off the light.

But then there was the living room. Still very much in disarray. "So you said this is not normal?" she asked, needed to start some sort of conversation somewhere.

"Uh, no," Wyatt confirmed. "Some stuff looks right, but I..." he trailed off with a wave of his hand. "And that looks like packing, not unpacking."

Lucy nodded, agreeing. "Well, it makes sense, at this stage, people would probably be looking for a house. More space for a kid..." And there certainly was evidence of a kid, of Lena scattered all about the apartment. She scanned the boxes, the furniture... A bookshelf, still not fully packed up, caught her eye.

Behind her, she heard Wyatt state, "I think I need a drink."

As she scanned the bookshelf, full of titles like "What to Expect When You're Expecting" and framed photos of the three of them - including, what was that? Yeah, a wedding photo. Lucy squeezed her eyes closed before she ended up studying that too closely. Taking a shaky breath, she forced herself to look back to the shelf with books. "Baby's First Year" Not much better... "I second that," she called over to Wyatt.

But her curiosity got the better of her, and she plucked the book from the shelf before heading over to where Wyatt sat at the small dining table, already downing his first drink.

Lucy flopped unceremoniously into the chair across from him, dropping the book in front of her. Wyatt nudged a second glass towards her, already refilling his own. "Cheers," he said flatly, before downing a second shot.

Without hesitation, Lucy did the same, downing her glass and relishing the burn as the alcohol slid down her throat.

"What's that?" Wyatt asked, his voice gravelly.

She reached out, sliding the book back closer to her. "Her- Lena's," she corrected, "baby album." Halfheartedly, she flipped open to the first page, reading aloud, "Eleanor Susannah Logan." She eyed the birthdate inscription, quickly doing the simple math. "She's... thirteen months old now." Skimming back up to the name, a smile of recognition crept onto her face. "Eleanor Roosevelt," she said wistfully, running her finger over the name of one of her childhood heroines, "that's from me."

Wyatt's voice broke through her contemplative moment. "Susannah was my mom's name."

"Was?" Lucy shot up to meet his. "Was?

"It's ok," Wyatt shook his head, deflecting. But he reached for the book. "Can I see?"

Lucy slid it across the table, watching him as he began to flip through.

He smirked up at her. "8 pounds 10 ounces? Ouch."
She flushed, but rolled her eyes. "Don't look at me. Time travel, the easy way to avoid labor and delivery."

Wyatt was silent for a few moments, still studying the book.

"We didn't miss our anniversary," he said, looking up to Lucy. "Next month. Five years."

Lucy's stomach flipflopped at the new reference to their supposed marriage. But how did he know? She furrowed her brow quizzically.

Without needing her to articulate the question, he explained, "The 'mommy and daddy' page."

That phrase did nothing to stop the butterflies in her stomach. Lucy barely managed a short "Ah" of acknowledgement.

"We met at work, apparently," he continued, reading the page's hand-written narrative.

Curiosity beat out the butterflies. "But... five, six years ago," Lucy asked, confused, "weren't you off fighting wherever?"

He nodded, adding grimly, "Still managed to marry Jessica."

And the butterflies were dead. Jessica. "Right," Lucy replied. "Is... Is it just the same dates as her, but with..."

"You?" Wyatt finished. "No," he explained. "It's different. She was before... I don't know. I... We need to go back to Mason tomorrow and get the full story. They must have all our information if we're still on the Flynn project, right?"

He looked so damn hopeful. Lucy nodded, agreeing shakily. "I hope so."

Wyatt turned back to the book, flipping through what looked to Lucy like a slew of baby pictures. She was curious as well, but the weight of the day was closing in on her quickly, and exhaustion taking over. A yawn threatened, and though she tried, she wasn't successful in stifling it.

It caught Wyatt's attention. He glanced over his shoulder at the kitchen, asking "Are you... hungry? Or just want to sleep?"

Lucy offered a want smile. "Uh, no. I was, but I think..." she trailed off, shrugging, "this all kind of wiped me out. Not really hungry anymore."

He nodded in response, and picked up his glass once more, downing the rest of the contents. "You can have the bed. I'll take the..." He paused, and Lucy followed his gaze to where the would-be couch sat wrapped in thick plastic, the cushions stacked in a bag beside it, and stacks of boxes strewn across the frame. "Uh, floor," he finished stiltedly.

Lucy squeezed her eyes shut, mentally forcing herself to forget Jessica, to forget Arkansas, to forget the they were supposedly a couple who'd already had a child. Be practical. She opened her eyes, drawing her gaze to him. "Is your bed bigger than the one in 1934?"

He looked back warily. "Yeah."

"Then we can just share."

He studied her for a moment, before acquiescing, "Ok." And with that, he got up, heading back down the hallway without a word. Lucy followed, clutching the baby monitor. They passed Lena's
room, they passed a bathroom, until a third door frame. Wyatt stepped in and turned on the lights. Lucy let out a soft gasp. Though she'd noticed some of her things among the mess in the living room, only now was it truly obvious that they were really meant to be a couple, their lives and belongings integrated. She could see her favorite sheets on the bed, the jewelry box from her grandmother on the dresser, a bunch of her shoes piled in the corner by the closet, a framed photo of her mother - holding Lena - hanging on the wall.

She was at a loss for how to proceed, and given that Wyatt hadn't really moved next to her either, she figured he was pretty taken aback as well. The last time he'd have shared a room, it would have been Jessica's stuff, not hers.

Eventually exhaustion won out. If she really lived here now, her pajamas should be in the dresser. Sleep would hopefully a be reprieve from everything the last few hours had brought on. So she slipped quietly across the room, heading for the bedside table that appeared to be hers - some earrings and a favorite novel sitting atop it. She set down the baby monitor and turned for the dresser. Opening the drawer she'd normally have pajamas in, she was relieved to see familiar things. Lucy grabbed the first shirt and shorts she saw, and turned back to Wyatt, who still hovered near the door. She clutched the clothes to her chest and gestured back towards the bathroom. "I'll just..."

He nodded dumbly in response as she slipped past him.

She changed quickly in the bathroom, even going so far as to splash cold water on her face in the naive hope that somehow it would wake her from this bizarre, bizarre dream.

It didn't work.

So she went through the motions of her normal night routine, still unsettled to find so many of her recognizable belongings mixed in among Wyatt's in a home that wasn't hers. But eventually there was nothing else she could do to avoid going back into the bedroom and facing him. And the bed they had to share.

So she gathered her things and slipped back into the bedroom.

The lights were off save for the lamp next to his side of the bed. She couldn't tell if he was asleep or not; he was on his back on his side of the bed, eyes closed. She took the opportunity to study him for a second. He'd shed some clothes, but had kept his white undershirt on, leaving him looking much as he did back in Arkansas. Even given the circumstances, the fleeting thought that she'd prefer him with the shirt off still managed to flicker in the back of her mind. But she pushed that away, dropped her clothes on a chair by the closet, and crept closer to her side of the bed.

She peeled back the covers gingerly so as to not wake Wyatt, only to have him eye her through lidded eyes. "I'm not asleep."

"Oh, right." Still taking care, she slid between the covers. "You can turn the light off."

As he turned to do so, Lucy couldn't help but notice the stark difference from 1934. There's she'd felt every move, every breath, there in that twin bed. Here, with both of them clinging to the edges of the queen-sized mattress, you could fit another three people between them. She missed 1934.

The lamp flicked off, and she felt him still across the mattress. But sleep didn't come. And by the sound of it, he hadn't fallen asleep either.

In a low voice, on the off chance she was mistaken, Lucy whispered, "I'm sorry, Wyatt. I know this isn't what you would ever have wanted to come back to."
He took so long to respond that Lucy thought he actually had fallen asleep. But then came a sigh, and "It's not your fault."

"I know but... this? *Me*? A *baby*?" She turned towards him, barely able to make out his profile in the darkness. "There's getting Jessica back or even moving on, but this is suddenly having a whole new life dumped in your lap."

She could see him do the same, turning toward her. "I'm guessing this wasn't what you were expecting when you signed up either," he challenged.

Lucy could hardly deny that. "Not exactly," she admitted.

He didn't add anything else, and she could see him roll onto his back once more.

It was a few moments later, sleep finally starting to win Lucy over, that she heard him speak again. "...we never lived here."

In her sleepy daze, Lucy wasn't clear on what he meant. "Hmm?"

"Jessica. I moved here after..." Wyatt trailed off, the rest of the sentence not really necessary. "You're not just taking her place or something," he added.

Why he'd chosen to tell her that, Lucy wasn't sure. But she couldn't deny that it made her feel a little better to know that she wasn't just filling Jessica's space in the apartment, in the bed. But she felt she had to acknowledge his admission somehow, so she forced out a soft "Oh."

It was another beat or so, but he did speak up one more time, this time with a lighter, teasing tone, even if it did sound a little forced. "We could do worse, right... babydoll?"

Lucy let herself smile at the reference. But she couldn't quite bring herself to voice her expected response, the 'sweetheart' not willing to make its way to her lips. *Could* she do worse? What was worse that this - this bizarre torture of suddenly finding yourself married to the object of your burgeoning affections, sharing a child no less, all while said object was still mourning his beloved wife, who now suddenly had even existed? All while her own sister had never existed either.

She squeezed her eyes shut, willing sleep to come before she could think too hard about it and bring herself to tears.

It was some hours later when Lucy found herself blinking in the darkness, disoriented. It was the red glow of the baby monitor's power light that brought it rushing all back. But she certainly wasn't precariously clinging to the edge of the bed, a wide expanse of mattress separating her from Wyatt. His warm, solid body was pressed to the length of her back, their legs and feet tangled, his breath tickling her ear, and one of his hands snaked up under her shirt, resting on her abdomen dangerously close to brushing against the underside of her breast. She winced. In another world, another lifetime, she could allow herself to enjoy waking up to him like this. But while Jessica may never have lived here, never slept in this bed, she was certainly in Wyatt's heart and head.

As carefully as she could, she wriggled out from Wyatt's embrace, escaping back to the edge of the bed, willing sleep to take over again.

TBC...
Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

Thank you so much for all the kind and inspiring feedback! You're awesome for sending so much great encouragement :)

I hope you all enjoy this part - some was easy to write, some trickier. Hopefully it still averaged out for an interesting chapter for you to read. Oh, and reminder - I started this after the Houdini episode (minus the revelation of Jessica's killer's name), so we're officially way off course when it comes to things that have happened in the actual show since then.

Consciousness crept in on Wyatt slowly. Warm and relaxed, he pressed closer to Jess, cuddling her closer and nuzzling at her collarbone. He took a deep breath, inhaling her scent and sighing it back out with contentment. Absently, he wondered what time it was and if they had time to fool around before they had to go anywhere. With a grin of anticipation emerging on his face, he blinked in the early morning light, with the intent of seeking out the clock on Jessica's nightstand.

Except the sight that met him was dark, wavy hair instead of a sleek mix of sun-kissed light browns and blonde.

So not Jessica... Wyatt tensed.

It was only a split-second - a highly panicky split second - before he focused in on Lucy's slumbering face and the whole of the previous night's preposterous situation came rushing back.

Roughly one second after that was when it registered that he and Lucy were touching in a whole lot of ways that were not ok for co-workers. He pulled away roughly. This whole thing with Lucy was already incredibly unnerving, even if he ignored the fact that he'd just mistaken her for his wife.

Safely across the bed, he peered over at Lucy carefully. Luckily, she still hadn't stirred, even after the rather abrupt disentanglement of their various body parts.

Wyatt flopped onto his back. *Fuck*. This was such a mess. How the hell was he supposed to get Jess back now, when he'd yet to be able to do anything at all? And that was when she'd at least existed. Now she was just as non-existent as Lucy's sister was. *Fuck*. He rubbed his eyes in exasperation.

He was halfway to falling back asleep, trying to avoid the mess by simply avoiding consciousness, when a noise caught his attention.

It wasn't something he recognized; he couldn't place it. Leaning up on an elbow, he eyed Lucy warily. But she was nearly silent.

Then the noise again, louder this time, and it finally dawned on Wyatt.

The baby monitor. He'd almost managed to forget there was a kid caught up on this mess. A freakin' kid who suddenly existed as if by magic.

A kid who sounded like she was well on her way to crying, if the noises coming from the baby
monitor were any indication.

Wyatt shot another glance at Lucy. Still out cold. Lucky... But given that she looked so peaceful asleep, and knowing that she'd not be nearly as relaxed if awake in this new reality, he figured he'd let her sleep.

Resigning himself to what he was about to do, Wyatt steeled himself and headed hesitantly out of the room and down the hall to his not-office-anymore.

He peered in cautiously. The ki-Lena, he mentally corrected himself. Wasn't her fault she wasn't supposed to be here. Lena was standing at the edge of the crib, gripping the edge. He little face was red, and not at all happy.

Kids were not his thing. He had nothing against them, he just had no experience with them. But even he knew that she was going to start screaming soon if he didn't do something.

She let out a louder whimper, loud enough that Wyatt forced himself to enter the room without a plan other than to somehow head off a tantrum with some sort of preemptive strike.

But all it took was him stepping into Lena's line of sight for her face to brighten and a wide grin to spread over her little face.

It was such a stark change that even Wyatt had to chuckle. "...hey, kid," he said softly, stepping a little closer to the crib as he did. She was cute, he had to give her that.

"Da!" was the happy little shriek he got in return.

Well, at least he'd headed off the crying for the moment.

But Lena wasn't finished, and babbled on. "Da da da," she seemed to insist. All while staring straight at him.

And that's when it registered in Wyatt's mind what she was actually saying. His stomach twisted into knots at the insinuation being made by the tiny little person in front of him. Dad. He'd never given all that much thought to when he might have had that title, but he sure as hell had never envisioned this.

Of course, Lena wasn't wrong. In her world, the little that she knew, he was exactly who she said he was. For her sake (and in the hope of continuing to ward off tears), Wyatt managed to choke out a gravelly acknowledgement and a forced smile in her direction. "Right. I guess I am."

Except that admission did little to appease Lena, who escalated her side of the conversation to a continuous "da da da da" while simultaneously stomping her little feet, dancing and reaching one pudgy hand towards him.

Again, Wyatt didn't know kids, but it didn't take a literal rocket scientist like some of those at Mason to be able to figure out what Lena was asking for. Tentatively, Wyatt covered the remaining distance to the crib.

Now both little arms were reaching out for him.

"Uh, ok," Wyatt acquiesced, carefully slipping his hands under her arms and hauling her upwards. "Don't scream if I drop you." Trying to mimic how he'd seen Lucy hold her the night before, he brought her in closer, tucking her against one side of his torso.

It was immediately clear that Lena was the one in the pairing that was far more comfortable with the
relationship; almost right away, she rested her head on his chest and firmly planted her thumb in her mouth.

And that was that. No longer any sign of an impending meltdown, so Wyatt wasn't going to mess with that. He didn't move his arms, save for his thumb-absently stroking her tiny back as he slowly walked himself around the room.

The last time he'd seen it, it had been sparsely furnished. Desk, chair, cheap half-empty bookcase. The only decoration, as it were, had been the clippings and printouts of any information he'd been able to gather. Now? Gone was the industrial Ikea, in its place a crib, a rocking chair, changing table, dresser... Bears, bunnies, and other stuffed critters galore. Colorful picture books filled the... Wyatt squinted. Ok, well, maybe the bookcase actually was the same one.

Gracing the walls were numerous framed photos that Wyatt was only now really registering. One collage had Lena at various ages, reminding him of a similar one at his grandparents decades ago. He moved in closer, studying the images of her little face intently. He could see what Lucy saw. He'd seen the photos of himself as a child enough.

The reality starting to set in even more, he bent his head down, whispering to Lena in a quiet admission, "You do kind of look like me."

Lena offered a subtle but silent confirmation when she turned to look up at him upon hearing the sound of his voice. She blinked at him, her pale blue eyes wide.

Wyatt's breath caught in his throat, just a little.

But Lena broke the eye contact and nestled herself back up against him. And so Wyatt was back wandering and taking in the photo arrays. Including a set of images that looked to be from the day she was born.

A few were just of her at what must have been within a few hours of birth, looking far more red and scrunchy and way less admittedly cute than she did now.

Other candids must have been taken by him, showing Lucy, absolutely glowing, even post labor, as she held Lena. Even he couldn't deny it; she was beautiful in them, looking just as enthralled as she always was when they headed to her favorite historical periods for the first time.

But someone else must have been there to take the others. Lucy's mother? The rest included him, looking equally as smitten as Lucy did with Lena. Others... the others were unsettling to say the least. It was a plain as day; the way he looked at Lucy... He'd seen it before in pictures with Jessica. And he felt almost queasy, knowing there was a version of him that didn't feel that for Jessica and only Jessica. This whole new reality felt like a horrible betrayal of Jess. Baby birth pictures? What about the little boy she'd wanted, that he was supposed to have with her? That's what was meant to be in these pictures, not Lucy with a daughter.

Lena took that opportunity to remind Wyatt that she was there, whether she was supposed to be or not, by reaching up and slapping her drool-covered hand against his cheek.

Wyatt grimaced, shifting Lena in his arms as he reached up with a wrist to wipe at where she'd slimed him. In doing so, he was reminded of another rather pressing issue as her diaper crinkled against his arm.

He leaned back so he could level with her. "I don't quite know how the diaper thing works. Or bottles. Or any of this," Wyatt sighed. "Hopefully Lucy- your mom," he corrected, "knows a little
more than I do." He shook his head slightly at his own wording, turning to eye the set of family photos once more.

In the meantime, Lena yelped happily in response to hearing the reference to Lucy. "Ma!"

"Yeah, she is," Wyatt murmured, rubbing her back and still staring contemplatively at the photos.

Lena just grew more emphatic, twisting in his arms and reaching out with another "Ma!"

That was enough to prompt him to turn around to see what the fuss was all about. Lucy stood in the doorway, hair disheveled from sleep, still clad in pajamas, and waving the baby monitor at him. "I can hear, you know," she admonished lightly, even as she acknowledged Lena with a soft smile. "Don't think you're going to stick me with all the diapers."

Wyatt grimaced, even though he'd never really expected he'd be able to pawn everything off on Lucy.

"Look," Lucy continued, her voice a little shaky but determined. "We need to get to Mason and see if we can figure this out."

"Yeah, no shit," he agreed. Understatement of the year. Belatedly, he realized that maybe you shouldn't curse in front of impressionable little ears. Looking down at Lena, he absently muttered a soft "Sorry."

By then, Lucy had inched into the room, close enough to offer Lena her fingers to grab. "We have to bring her, I guess," she added. "Can you get her dressed and ready while I shower? I mean..." she stammered, catching herself. "Is it ok if I shower here?"

Wyatt hesitated, a sudden mental picture of Lucy, naked, standing in the billowing steam of his shower, in his bathroom, flashing unbidden through his brain. Fuck. He squeezed his eyes shut, willing the image to go away. But it had to happen, right? She lived there too, at least in this reality. "Your place too, right?" he ended up sighing with a shrug, then nodded down at Lena in his arms. "Yeah, I'll figure her out."

Lucy flashed him a grateful, if sheepish, smile as she pried her finger from Lena's grasp. "I'll deal with her breakfast after," she promised, "so you can get ready." And she was gone, leaving Wyatt and Lena alone once more.

So began his first venture into the field of diaper changes. He'd disarmed bombs and other IEDs. He could assemble his weaponry in record time. He'd been trained in hand-to-hand combat. Surely he could wrangle a 13 month old into a new diaper and clothes.

Once he'd managed to get the pajamas off her, and finally open the diaper, he'd couldn't think of anything he'd been more grateful for than the fact that the diaper was only wet. Lucy could deal with whatever showed up later in the next one. It took him a minute to fiddle with the stupid sticky tabs on the sides of the new one, but still, Lena was relatively quickly re-diapered and grinning up at him from the changing table.

Clothing proved to be a bit more of a wrestling match, but even so, just a few minutes later, he was pretty proud of the fact that the kid was looking entirely reasonable in some stretchy blue pants, a t-shirt, and the hoodie they'd pulled off the night before.

Wyatt could still hear the water of the shower running - no, don't think about who was in what state of undress in that water, Wyatt warned himself - so he scooped Lena from where he'd set her on the floor to shove her feet into socks and tiny sneakers, and headed out into the living room. He cast a
glance at the kitchen, but figured Lucy could deal with food. He still couldn't wrap his mind around the mess of half-packed boxes. How could a quick trip to the past bring all of this on? It hadn't even been a particularly eventful mission, at least compared to some of the other ridiculous things they'd had to deal with before.

He was still scanning the room, eyeing the boxes incredulously when he spotted his laptop out of the corner of his eye. The one he used so diligently to research Jessica's murder. The one that, now, would probably show absolutely nothing of the sort. More anxious than ever to get to Mason Industries and figure out how to set things right, he shifted Lena in his arms helplessly.

Luckily, Lucy appeared from the hallway relatively quickly. Her appearance took Wyatt aback for a moment; he was so used to seeing her either look put together in modern clothes, or in the whole range of historical getups they'd been forced to parade around in. The casual, wet ponytail, makeup-free, barefoot look rattled him for some reason. But he didn't allow himself to dwell on it, instead crossing the room with a purpose to shove Lena at Lucy. "She's ready," he declared bluntly, stating the obvious.

Lucy looked a little rattled herself upon the unceremonious dumping of a fully dressed daughter into her arms. "Well, look at you, all SuperDad."

Wyatt didn't respond. Lucy in his apartment, Lena, no Jessica - it was all suddenly hitting him full force, and escaping to the bathroom for a shower seemed like the best option at the moment.

Until he was assaulted by the scent of Lucy's shampoo and whatever else. Dammit. He used to love walking into a room full of the smell of Jessica's bodywash, and shampoo, and perfume. And he hadn't had that luxury in so long. Now, to have it be Lucy's? It didn't sit right.

So he hurried through his shower, ducking into the bedroom for clothes practically before the water had stopped running. He dressed quickly, emerging back into the living room just a few moments later.

He was greeted by the oddly domestic sight of Lena in a high chair, smearing something all over the tray, and Lucy by his stove, dumping what appeared to be scrambled eggs - Jess' favorite - onto a small plate.

It was a moment before either of them realized he was there, but Lena soon gave him away with a shriek of "Da!"

He could see Lucy startle at the sound. "Oh, hi," she began, looking over at him and waving a piece of paper in his direction. "Apparently you really are SuperDad. Super detailed lists of what she likes to eat. Not my handwriting."

She slid on across the counter towards him, and he did indeed recognized his own precise print.

"I guess we're gone enough that a sitter would need it," she explained. "I figured eggs and banana seemed easiest. Although somehow a banana ended up being way messier than I thought it could," she added.

Wyatt grimaced at what he now recognized as banana goo being expertly worked through one side of Lena's hair. As if on autopilot, he snagged a paper towel, wet it in the sink, and began wiping her and the high chair clean. He'd just finished when Lucy slid the tiny plate of now-cooled eggs onto the chair's tray.

"I'm not really hungry," she explained, "But if you want, I could make more..."
He shrugged off her suggestion, the domesticity really now hitting full force and leaving him in need of an escape to Mason for an explanation as quickly as possible. "No, me either. Let's just go."

Lucy nodded in agreement.

And so, a few moments later, as soon as Lena had shoved the majority of her scrambled egg in her mouth and the diaper bag, among other things, was tossed in the car, the trio was off. They rode in awkward silence, save for Lena's nonsensical babbling from the back seat.

Once they arrived at Mason, Lucy made quick work of pulling Lena from the carseat, leaving him to grab the diaper bag, stroller, and some other bag of toys and snacks.

It was this state, hurried and laden with a baby and baby paraphernalia, that they burst through the door of Mason, only to run directly into Rufus and Jiya.

Jiya squealed, reaching for the baby immediately, clearly far more used to her presence than any of the rest of them. "Lena! Hi! Hi guys," she added, smiling up at Lucy and Wyatt. They exchanged a wary glance and returned the smile weakly.

"Do you want to practice walking with me again?" Jiya continued to gush, turning her attention back to Lena. "You're almost there..." And as if she'd done it every day before, she plucked Lena from Lucy and headed down the hallway, helping Lena toddle along with her.

Wyatt raised a questioning eyebrow in Rufus' direction.

Rufus clearly caught his drift immediately. "I didn't tell her," he admitted. "I wasn't sure who you'd want to know that this..." he waved his hand between the two of them, "isn't a thing."

Wyatt snorted. Well, at least Jiya thought everything was normal. Lucky her. "Did she tell you about this?" he shot back incredulously, gesturing to his awkward grip on the stroller and diaper bag and glut of stuffed animals.

Rufus nodded sheepishly. "I was kind of starting to pick up on the fact that this might be a thing."

Lucy finally spoke up, hushed, her gaze darting between the two of them. "Do you know who Christopher told?"

"I don't know where she went after you guys split last night," Rufus replied. "I kinda wanted to make sure I didn't have a surprise wife waiting for me at home. No offense," he added hurriedly, warily looking at Wyatt. "I didn't, so... You win," he joked nervously.

Wyatt rolled his eyes. "Did anything change for you?" he asked insistently, "Why just us? Why this big?"

"Turns out Jiya has an older half brother by her dad this time," Rufus explained. "I haven't met the family yet anyway, so no big deal for me. Whatever."

"Another new person..." Lucy murmured.

"Yeah, but not one apparently spawned by people who weren't actually there," Wyatt corrected incredulously.

"Man, seriously," Rufus agreed, "How does a baby exist if you guys never even-" He stopped short, suddenly looking at them skeptically. "...you didn't, did you?"
Wyatt’s stomach flipflopped at the insinuation, as he willed himself to not somehow inadvertently telegraph to Rufus that not only had he woken up tangled in Lucy, but had also pictured her as she showered. Jessica was who everyone needed to focus on.

At the same time, Lucy swatted at Rufus, with an emphatically hissed "No!"

Wyatt forced himself to avoid looking in her direction, instead turning to Rufus and setting him on the right track. "Look, that's what we need to figure out. And it seems like Jessica was never in this timeline. Who's here?" he inquired, looking around for any evidence of Denise, or anyone else who might have some insight.

"Everyone, I think," Rufus confirmed.

It was only after a few steps in the direction of Mason's office that Wyatt and Lucy seemed to simultaneously remember Lena. Their eyes met quickly, and they stepped back to catch a glimpse down the hall of Lena and Jiya. "Are they-"

Wyatt cut her off, nudging her back on track. "I think they're good. We need to find Mason and Christopher."

TBC...
Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

Snow day = story time. Bear with me on this one; we're still in exposition phase to some degree. More things actually happening will be coming in future chapters. Thank you again so much for ongoing support, comments, and feedback :)

It wasn't long before the three of them were seated in the conference room, with a dumbfounded Denise Christopher and Connor Mason staring at them in confusion.

"So when you said you weren't married last night, it wasn't just a technicality of a ring to make things official?" Christopher asked, clearly not convinced. "You've never been in a relationship, much less had a child?"

Lucy closed her eyes and rubbed at her temples. "No," she sighed. "Nothing."

"So," Mason reiterated, "Lena exists today - and has existed, as far as we're all concerned, aside from you," he clarified, nodding towards Rufus. "...in spite of the two of you, as you are here, never having had intercourse."

With a nod and groan, Lucy slid down further into her seat, trying to will herself not to blush at the blunt language. It had been bad enough to suddenly be dealing with essentially a middle-school crush on him. Now? The marriage, the kid? If people could stop bringing up the non-existent sex with Wyatt, that would be great. If they could only know how preoccupied he was with Jessica, they'd certainly understand why such a thing was so preposterous.

She could practically feel the weight of Agent Christopher's gaze as the older woman studied them intently, with an awed murmur of "Fascinating..."

It quickly became obvious that she wasn't the only one uncomfortable with the line of questioning; Wyatt snapped back at Denise, "Super, *fascinating*. But now we're thrown into this, there's a kid who shouldn't even exist." He leapt to his feet, pacing in agitation. "And you have no idea who Jessica is?"

Mason's brow furrowed as he asked, "Jessica...?"

"*My actual* wife," Wyatt snarled, whirling around to face them from where he stood.

Lucy sucked in a quick breath at the vehemence of his words. He wasn't *wrong*, but it still stung, knowing that Wyatt was essentially horrified by the notion that in some timeline he might have deigned to be with her instead. She felt the beginnings of tears in her eyes. Blinking hard to ward them off, she let her gaze fall to her lap. She still had the rings on.

In response to Wyatt's accusatory question, Denise flipped through a bland file folder, and eventually looked back up at him apologetically. "No, we have no record of a prior marriage for you."
And while Wyatt may have been indifferent to how his words were affecting her, Lucy could see the devastation on his face as that news set in. "So she was erased like her sister was?" he whispered, gesturing in her direction.

Christopher shrugged. "I suppose-

It was at that moment that a tentative knock came on the conference room door.

Rufus, who the whole time had been observing silently, wide-eyed, made to see who it was, scanning the room for some sort of permission from the other four. Denise nodded.

He pulled the door open to reveal an apologetic Jiya and a red-face, wailing Lena. Jiya hurried in, wincing as she explained, "Sorry, Lucy, she wouldn't stop crying for you."

With Jiya still knowing nothing of the altered reality they'd returned to, and given the fact that none of it made any difference to little Lena and who she knew to be her mother, Lucy had no choice but to reach for her, taking Lena into her arms in an effort to soothe her. She hadn't thought about it at the time, but now faced with piercing screams, she realized that she and Wyatt had been exceedingly lucky with good behavior since picking Lena up at her mother's.

Instinct took over as she walked the room, swaying and rubbing the little girl's back, whispering half-hearted attempts to shush her. Slowly, the cries quieted enough to intermittent hiccup-y whimpers that Lucy could better follow the ongoing discussion of Jessica's erasure from history.

Which was when a sudden realization struck her. Mason had no record of Jessica in Wyatt's files, but...

"Wyatt," she said suddenly, interrupting them, stunned by her own thoughts.

He turned to her quizzically.

"She could be out there," Lucy stated numbly. "You just didn't get married. She could be out there and alive."

In any other situation, the degree to which Wyatt's eyes bugged wide open would have been comical. But knowing that she'd just pointed out that her ad hoc husband's actual wife could still be out there kind of put a damper on any humor. She could tell he was completely bowled over by the possibility, even before he managed to get any words out.

Collapsing down into a chair, he breathed out a muted "Holy shit." And then he got frantic, stammering, "I didn't see articles at home, but I just- I assumed- Can you find her in government records?" He demanded, turning to Agent Christopher. "Does she exist? Where is she now?"

"We can look into it-" Denise assured him, though he barely let her get a word in, cutting her off right away.

"If she's here, why aren't we together?" he asked, the agitated nature of his question escalating even further. And then he turned to Lucy with an incredulous, "Why would I be married to you?"

Lucy shrank away from him as if the words had landed an actual blow, the second in as many minutes. Was it that miserable, having to be around her, associated with her, for all of what, twelve, thirteen hours so far? He missed Jessica, sure, but weren't they a team, friends, at least? She willed back the tears that once again threatened, pressing her face to the side of Lena's head.

At least he had the decency to realize, this time, that his words had stung. "Luce..."
She waved him off with a sniffle. "Just... figure out what's going on with Jessica."

She could tell Mason and Christopher were watching the two of them warily. Lucy just hugged Lena closer, practically using the baby as a shield. Mason eventually cleared his throat and turned back to Wyatt. "We'll need her information, as you knew it to be. We'll have the team run it."

Lucy didn't look up, but could hear the room's door open, followed by multiple sets of footsteps exiting. She let out a shaky breath, still clutching the now-quiet Lena, as she sank back down into a chair. What she wouldn't give to just go back to before she knew anything about time travel and Mason Industries. And Wyatt.

"Lucy?"

Denise's voice jarred her from her daze, and Lucy jumped, startled. "Huh?"

With Mason, Wyatt, and Rufus gone, her voice was significantly less business-like, her expression significantly softer. "How are you holding up?" she asked, nodding down to where Lena now sat cuddled in Lucy's lap, a fistful of Lucy's shirt crumpled in her little grasp. "This must be a big adjustment."

Lucy looked down at Lena with a watery smile, "I-", she started, a near-hysterical laugh bubbling out. "I don't even know what to think anymore."

Lena took the opportunity to snuggle up closer to Lucy, wiping her nose - still runny from her bout of crying - on Lucy's shirt. Lucy couldn't help but cringe; Denise let out a chuckle at her expense. Still grinning, Denise prodded Lucy further, "So you and Wyatt..." she led, "Really? Never?" she questioned, surprised. "As far as we know, when we brought you on here, it only took a few weeks for you to get involved."

Lucy balked at the information, opening her mouth to respond, then pausing. What would have happened, if anything, between the two of them if they'd both showed up at Mason emotionally unattached? Not that it mattered in the slightest... "No," she confirmed with a shake of her head. "Look at him. He's focused on Jessica."

Denise shot a skeptical look at her. "And you wish he wasn't?"

Maybe... "We just... work together," Lucy replied, though even she knew she didn't sound particularly convincing.

Thankfully, Denise left that issue alone, turning back to the issue of Jessica. "She was... killed?"

"Yeah," Lucy confirmed, nodding. "He never told me much more... Wait-" she froze, one piece of the puzzle regarding her supposed marriage to Wyatt suddenly jumping to the forefront. "We met here?" she wondered aloud. He'd said their five-year anniversary was soon. And she couldn't imagine herself marrying anyone without having already been together at least a year, so that was six... "We've only been doing this a few months. How could we have met here is we've supposedly been married almost five years? Plus whatever before that?"

Denise eyed her with skeptical concern. "What do you know in terms of your work here?"

Lucy rattled off the basics: "Flynn stole the mothership to mess with things and we were brought in for my background and Wyatt's military experience."
"Ah," Agent Christopher said, nodding knowingly. "Well, that is the current situation," she confirmed before elaborating. "But the original project was a pilot program to have a modern historian - you - go back and make discreet observations of major events in the past. It was joint with the National Archives, stemming from your dissertation work, I believe. Wyatt was hired as your bodyguard."

_Huh._ Lucy remained silent upon hearing that information. _That_ actually sounded really interesting. She could see herself being on board with something like that. Way more than the way she'd actually become involved in this mess...

"But," Denise continued, "your recollection seems to jive with the current issue with Flynn. Which, yes, has been just the past few months."

Lucy frowned, trying to imagine how she would have taken it, having started what amounted to an immersive research project only to have it turn into a government conflict. "So it was initially more... peaceful?" she asked.

Denise nodded. "Very much so."

"...which makes more sense given... this," Lucy continued, gesturing to Lena.

"Ah. yes," Christopher conceded. "Once Flynn disrupted the original project, we tried to get at least one of you to back out, but you were adamant about being the one to preserve history, she explained. "And Wyatt absolutely refused to have you go without him, specifically, as your guard."

"But..." Lucy trailed off. She wasn't even actually a mother and she was already having a hard time wrapping her mind around the notion of two parents leaving a child behind when both of their lives were so often in danger in the past. Then again, she supposed, people like Wyatt in the military had to deal with such things all the time.

"Lena stays with your mother," Agent Christopher explained gently, interrupting Lucy's thoughts. "She's the custodial guardian should anything happen."

Lucy nodded at the new information, yet another thing that she couldn't quite handle at the moment. She'd barely gotten used to her mother being anything but sickly and bedridden, never mind well enough to be a full-time caretaker of a child.

And because she couldn't catch a break, Wyatt chose that moment to return, an exhilarated grin on his face. "They're working on it. They'll find her if she's out there."

Lucy barely responded, but Lena, having heard his voice, perked up and squirmed on Lucy's lap, reaching for him. As Wyatt seated himself, Lucy absently passed the baby over. He took her easily, settling her on his own lap as if they'd been making such exchanges for the full 13 months of Lena's life.

Which apparently didn't escape Agent Christopher's notice. Lucy spotted her smirking in their direction, and she pointed out with a knowing grin, "You're naturals together."

Lucy felt heat creep up her neck to her cheeks as she realized how the ease of the handover had probably come across. She snuck a quick peek at Wyatt; at least he looked just as flustered by the comment.

She deflected, steering the conversation back to Denise, trying to get more filled in on just what this version of her life was supposed to be. "Um... What do we do between Flynn's jumps?"
"You've still been working on your records from the purely historical jumps, I believe," she explained. "You," she added, turning to look at Wyatt, Lena lounging contentedly in his lap, "Master Sergeant, are a stay-at-home dad."

Despite the tense air in the room, Lucy couldn't help but let out a soft snort as Wyatt's shocked expression at that news. Afghanistan to stuffed animals.

Wyatt glared at her, then turned to Denise, agitated. "So... what? We just sit around now, wait for the next jump and hope things are back to normal when we get back? Can't we go and try to just fix things on our own? And to get Jess and Amy back?"

"You know we can't go back to where we've been already," Lucy sighed, adding under her breath, "I don't even know what normal is anymore anyway..."

It just earned her another glare from Wyatt.

The door flew open before anyone could say anything else. Jiya rushed in, blurtling, "Guys, Flynn's on the move. Manhattan. April, 1897."

All gazes fell on Lucy as she wracked her brain for any specific events. But she came up empty. "That could be anything," she stammered. "Teddy Roosevelt, Tammany Hall politics, all sorts of immigrant and union conflicts..."

Denise stood up, as if to usher them all out of the room to prepare. "Well, you'd better find Flynn and figure it out."

Lucy followed, Wyatt and Lena close behind. "Wait," she called after Denise, "What about Lena?" She gestured to the wriggly toddler still in Wyatt's arms.

Jiya piped up, stepping between them to pluck the baby from Wyatt grasp. "Just give me your keys; I'll bring her over to your mom's."

"Our keys?" Lucy wondered aloud.

"The carseat?" Jiya pointed out skeptically, as if it should have been obvious. "My car doesn't have one.

"Right, right," Lucy nodded, playing along. Inwardly, she marveled at how nonchalant Jiya was, but who knows, maybe this was how it always happened. But before she knew it, Wyatt had obediently handed over the keys for the car, Jiya and Lena were gone, and Lucy and Wyatt were down in the wardrobe room. She grabbed the first dress on the right time's rack, dodged Wyatt, and headed for her dressing room.

Once there, she collapsed into a chair. She knew she didn't have much time, but she need a moment to catch her breath and try to make sense of everything. Or anything.

Unfortunately, she hadn't woken up to all of the night before having been a dream. Lena was still there, the rings were still on her finger, Wyatt was still... Well, not really there. She'd felt him jump away from her in bed like he'd been burned. Not the greatest for her ego. Still, even with that, she couldn't stop her stomach from letting loose a few fluttering butterflies when she'd heard him talking softly with Lena, or when she'd made her way to Lena's room to find him cuddling the baby adoreably. But he'd been skittish and on edge after that, and it had only gotten worse once they'd gotten there and she'd had the realization that Jessica could conceivably be out there, 100% fine and alive.
His insistence on finding her - and not that Lucy blamed him for that in the least - just served as a stark reminder that, even if she herself had been feeling... something... since Arkansas, Wyatt clearly wasn't. If you could ignore the larger implications, it might have actually been exciting to be thrust into the fake marriage situation, playing house, sharing a bed... But not when he clearly was so uncomfortable with it.

Lucy bit her lip and pulled on the outfit she'd selected. It wasn't really fair of her to impose in his home, his life, regardless of what this timeline was telling them they should be to each other.

She spent a few more moments twisting her hair into a reasonable style for 1897, then headed to the lifeboat, her mind made up.

Of course she was greeted by Wyatt's gloating about the possibility of Jessica. "We still don't know about Jess," he gushed, even as he leaned over to clip her seatbelt for her, "but they're working on it. You're right; she really could still be out there."

"That's great," Lucy forced out, offering a wan smile. She hesitated for a second, watching him, practically glowing with anticipation. She let her head fall back against her chair and she closed her eyes, resolving to just get it out. "...I think I'm going to go stay with my mom when we get back."

She avoided Wyatt's gaze when she opened her eyes again, but she did catch Rufus looking over his shoulder skeptically in Wyatt's direction.

She'd obviously managed to catch him off guard; he spluttered out, "What, why?"

Staring him in the eyes for the first time in a while, possibly since the night before, Lucy leveled with him, stating plainly, "Come on. We're not actually married. You don't need me hanging around your place."

"But..." he started in protest, "what about Lena?"

"I-" Lucy faltered, kicking herself for managing to forget that aspect of the situation. She shrugged. "She can stay with you, or I can take her. I guess at least I'd have my mom to help," she added.

And then it finally dawned on her that it may not even matter; the little girl could be gone as suddenly as she'd appeared, depending what they managed to mess up in history. She pointed that fact out, rather glumly, "She may not even be here when we get back anyway." And she hadn't really even gotten to say goodbye. She was surprised to feel a twinge of heartache at the prospect of not coming back to a timeline with Lena, as nonsensical as it was.

She figured Wyatt might have been thinking the exact same thing, given the hollow silence that settled in the lifeboat.

Finally she spat out anxiously, "Rufus, are we going or not?"

And then they were.

TBC...
Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

Thank you again, everyone, for the lovely comments and feedback. I know not everyone was thrilled with Wyatt and his mindset, but it had to be that way for now. Patience, grasshoppers.

A few notes on this part:

1) *This contains non-explicit references to non-consensual sex. Nothing happens, but the possibility is alluded to. If that's not for you, maybe do some fast scrolling through the middle of this one.*

2) Apologies to any true historians out there. I'm not one. I think I did my due Google diligence in an effort to keep things vaguely historically correct for 1897 Manhattan, but my NYC expertise begins roughly 85 years after that and great-great grandma didn't leave me any Cliff Notes...¯\_(ツ)_/¯

3) I realized after writing this that my brain defaults for them to arrive back from the past at night, as if it's just some regular 9-5 job that kept them a few hours late. Why, I don't know. Bear with me for this one, and I'll work on mixing it up in coming chapters.

Wyatt mumbled an unenthusiastic "Thank you" before trudging back out of the restaurant, heading to the shop next door as he slowly made his way back in the direction of where he was to meet Lucy and Rufus in a few minutes.

But the store's owner and patrons were of no more use than the employees at the restaurant; Flynn was in the wind. No one had ever seen him, never mind recently. That 1897 Manhattan had less than half as many residents as modern Manhattan was of little consolation to Wyatt. He glowered as he headed to the next business; the odds of finding Flynn lurking among the 3 million or so people in the city were about as high as finding a needle in a haystack the size of the Empire State Building, which happened to be conspicuously absent from the pre-1930 skyline.

They'd been at it all day, splitting up and reconvening repeatedly, but always reporting back that no one had seen anything. And that was on top of the trek they'd had to make from far northern Manhattan. Rufus couldn't exactly land the lifeboat in the middle of Times Square - did that exist yet, Wyatt wondered absently - so they'd found themselves crawling through a thickly wooded area before they could even think about looking for Flynn. They'd made their way to a train that ran along the west side, and had been slogging it through the streets from West Side Station to... wherever he was now, since then.

And all the while, the existence they'd left behind them in 2017 may well have included Jessica, alive and well.

It was killing him to think that she could have actually been there, but could just as easily be gone again in whatever reality they returned to. He'd been so worked up, excited at the prospect her of being out there, and then Lucy had to go and remind him that Lena may not be there when they get back. If Lena could disappear as quickly as she'd appeared, so could Jess, without him even having had the chance to find her.
He pushed the thoughts of Lena, and the fact that she may not even be there when they returned, from his mind. The whole issue of Lucy and Lena... He didn't want to - couldn't - deal with that. Jess had to be the priority. Finding out if she was in that timeline, and if so, finding her.

Which meant first finding Flynn and getting the hell out of 1897.

Wyatt checked the pocket watch that had come along with his 1890's outfit, knowing he'd have to make his way to the park a few blocks away to meet Rufus and Lucy. He stopped at a few more businesses along the way, asking questions to no avail.

He temporarily gave up, making his way into the nearby city park they'd appointed as the meeting spot. Rufus was nowhere to be seen yet, but Wyatt spotted Lucy sitting on a bench. He wasn't prepared for the sudden memory of that morning, a vision of Lucy, sitting not so differently, in the conference room at Mason, cradling a fussy Lena in her lap. The image flashed across his brain and was gone before he knew it, but he couldn't help the niggling thought in the back of his mind that she looked so much more right with the little girl than she did just now, perched primly on the bench waiting.

Rufus chose that moment to dash up to them, out of breath; Wyatt was ever so grateful for the distraction and the reprieve from what could have been a few tense moments were it just him with Lucy. She'd been distant since she'd brought up the possibility of Jess being ok.

"A few blocks over," Rufus panted. "A newspaper stand guy thinks he saw Flynn go into a dance hall."

Wyatt groaned, even as he begrudgingly began heading in the direction Rufus had just come from. "Thinks? I think I saw George Clooney having lunch over there, but I'm pretty sure it wasn't actually him," he groused.

It earned him a punch in the arm from Rufus. "It's all we've got, man," he reminded Wyatt. "We have to try, right?"

Wyatt rolled his eyes, hoping he was proven wrong. At least if he was, they'd figure out whatever Flynn was up to and get back to 2017.

As the trio crossed the next street, Rufus pointed toward an otherwise nondescript building that claimed to be a dance hall. It looked respectable enough. Then again, Wyatt reminded himself, the outfits made pretty much everything look upscale compared to modern times.

He was still gazing around, half looking at the fashion, half scouting for any signs of Flynn when Rufus stopped short, leading Wyatt to stumble into him. "Jeez, Rufus," he grumbled, "Your brake lights are out."

Rufus looked unimpressed with the quip as when he turned around. "It's not like I'm getting in there," he pointed out, gesturing to the dance hall and the strictly white patronage flocking in and out of it. "I'll have to be out here. No way they'll let me in."

Wyatt nodded at the reality he always managed to forget about in these situations. So he turned to Lucy, nodding in the direction of the establishment.

"Almost no women," she observed stoically. "I can probably only get in if they want me as a dancer."

"You're going to dance?" Wyatt asked, skeptical.
Lucy huffed quietly at him. "I dance. I took lessons. Tap and ballet, for almost ten years."

Jesus, they may as well have been married for as much as he managed to keep upsetting her today. "I didn't mean- I didn't mean you couldn't dance," he amended. "But whatever this is," he gestured to the hall's entrance, "do you know anything about it?"

Her face softened ever so slightly as his clarification. "It's not like I need to make a career of it," she acknowledged hurriedly. "I just need to get in. Ask people about Flynn."

Wyatt nodded; she had a point. He nodded up the few stairs to the front door. "You first? I'll follow separately once you're in."

She nodded in agreement, then turned and was off.

An hour or so later, Wyatt found himself nursing a drink, drawing it out as slowly as possible to stay aware, and had been suckered into joining a game of poker. He'd only relented and agreed to play considering he'd already made the rounds, asking anyone he could manage to speak with if they'd so much as seen Flynn. He'd gotten nowhere. As best he could tell, Flynn hadn't even actually been in there. Luckily, he'd gotten good enough at cards in back-room games in the various places he'd been stationed, so he could still keep an eye on the rest of the room while playing.

He could only hope that she was having more success. Although, he realized, he'd yet to see many performers, never mind Lucy.

So there he sat, hating the wasted time, and half-heartedly flicking cards around when he thought he heard a distant, panicked cry of "Wyatt!"

A shiver ran up his spine. Lucy.

His heard jerked up, and he scanned the room in the direction of her voice. His gaze came to rest on a dark hallway in the back corner, with a cluster of costumed dancers. He'd barely noticed it before, just assuming it went to dressing rooms or something...

He whirled around to face the card table once more. "Where does that hallway go?" he demanded urgently.

"Upstairs," came one blasé reply, from a gentleman more interested in studying his hand of cards than the question.

Wyatt had no time for this. "And what's upstairs?" he snarled.

A second man at the table eyed him warily, replying in a bored voice, "The whores' rooms."

"The..." Wyatt's blood ran cold. He flung his cards on the table, muttering "I fold" as he left the table in the dust. He darted through the spotty crowd as quickly as he could.

Women in various degrees of revealing clothes mostly blocked the hall, which Wyatt could now see housed dingy stairs. He barely had time to feel discomfort from their lascivious stares when an older woman, who appeared to be in charge, approached him. "See anyone you like, sir?" she purred.

"Your newest girl," he spat out. "Dark hair, dark eyes?"

The woman smiled knowingly. 'Mmm hmm," she murmured, maddeningly slowly. "She just went upstairs."
"I'll pay twice what he did," he insisted. "I need to see her."

"You'll have to wait your turn," the woman scolded.

"What did he pay?" Wyatt demanded desperately, fishing for the vintage wallet he was grateful the costuming department had given him. "I'll give you... ten dollars. Twenty?" He had no idea what going rates would be in 1897. "Fifty!" he pleaded, waving said bill at the woman. "Anything. Please, let me see her."

Thankfully, somewhere in there he'd hit upon the magic number, and the madam took the bills and shooed the rest of the women out of his way. Only her glare as she ushered him up the stairs stopped him from pushing her out of the way to bound past her.

Of course once at the top of the stairs, Wyatt found himself faced with a seemingly endless hall of closed doors. Shit. "Lucy!" he cried, the yell escaping of its own accord.

And the madam was of little help, as she didn't appear to know which room held who. One-by-one, she gave curt knocks and thrust open the door, with Wyatt frantically looking past her into the rooms. He saw more than he ever wanted to of many, many people, but no Lucy.

There were only a few rooms left in the hallway when finally - thank god, Wyatt breathed inwardly - the madam pushed a door open to reveal some man (still clothed - again, thank god) was just in the process of trying to push Lucy onto a ratty looking bed.

This time he was not following whatever protocol the madam had in her mind; Wyatt pushed past her with a relieved "Lucy!" and crossed the room to her in record time. He could make out the sound of the other guy's protests, but he did. not. care.

He heard the room's door slam behind him just as he pulled Lucy, looking both shocked and grateful, into a tight hug. "Shit, Luce, are you ok?" he murmured into her hair as the panic he'd felt since downstairs finally began to subside.

He could feel her nod against him, quiet aside from a soft sniffle that escaped.

Wyatt just continued to hold her, relief still dominating, but tendrils of grief snaking their way into his consciousness as well. So much for being the one to keep her and Rufus safe...

Lucy eventually pulled away, looking determined as she wiped at her face. "Um, we should figure out how to get out of here," she finally said. "Find Flynn."

"Forget about Flynn!" Wyatt admonished, only half-surprised that she'd be so stubborn to want to continue after what had nearly happened. "Jesus, we-" His voice trailed off as it finally registered that the guy had not been gentle; her costume was torn near the ruffled shoulder, the bodice now hanging loose on that side of the chest and threatening to expose her. Anger bubbled up anew in his gut. "Here," he insisted, roughly tugging off his own jacket to drape over her shoulders. "I don't give a rats' ass about Flynn," he then continued, practically snarling. "We shouldn't have come here," he admitted, anger giving way to guilt once more. "He's not - he's never - worth..." His gaze darted to the bed before his eyes squeezed closed to ward off the mental image of her nearly being shoved onto it. "...that."

Lucy nodded, agreeing, and somehow still looking far less rattled than he himself was feeling. "But how are we going to get out of here? They won't exactly let me walk out the front door with you," she observed.

Wyatt scanned the room. She was right, and he didn't recall any sort of back stairs in the hallway. He
headed to the window, lifting the sash and peering out into the dusky shadows. An alley. No fire escape. Either not required yet, he realized, or just too shady a place to bother with it. But, they’d only come up one flight of stairs. He looked over his shoulder at Lucy. "It's not that much higher than the wall at Fort Duquesne," he reported. He figured once they were out the window and hanging onto the sill, it'd still be a six- or seven-foot drop. He'd be fine, but it'd be easier on Lucy if he could already be out there to help catch her. Which meant leaving her alone in the room, even if only for a minute.

He balked. If anyone came back...

But in the moment of hesitation, it was as if Lucy could read his mind. "With whatever you just paid," she pointed out, "they're not going to bother us for a while. Just go first," she urged. "I'm fine."

Reluctantly eyeing the door to the room, Wyatt accepted what they had to do. He carefully climbed over the sill, gripping it and lowering himself as far as his arms would stretch before letting go. He stumbled a bit on impact, but quickly stood, waving hurriedly for Lucy to follow. Soon enough, he was reaching for her ankles and guiding her as she fell against him with a solid "oof". He may or may not have held her to his chest a bit longer than necessary, just grateful to have gotten her out of there.

"Come on," he whispered, nodding in the direction of the main street. "Let's get Rufus and get the hell out of here."

And find Rufus they did, right where they'd left him. He, of course, wasn't expecting them to be sneaking out of an alley, particularly with Lucy in a bizarre outfit consisting of stockings and Wyatt's long suit jacket. He gave Lucy a quick once over, eyeing both of them sideways. "What the-?"

Wyatt had no patience for explanations. "Have you seen any sign of Flynn?" he asked, purposely shifting his stance and trying to shield Lucy from the view of anyone at what he now knew to be the brothel's entrance. Dance hall, my ass, he glowered inwardly.

Still appearing incredibly confused, Rufus replied, "No, but-"

"Then fuck it. Fuck Flynn," Wyatt declared, already moving to usher Lucy down the block. "This was a wild goose chase in the first place. Let's go home."

Beside him, she nodded numbly. Rufus gave them a shrug, but thankfully followed without questioning.

It was an oddly subdued trek for the three of them, all the way uptown, through the wooded area, back to the lifeboat. Night had settled, and Wyatt had never been so grateful to see the stupid sphere in his life.

He boosted Lucy up carefully, and followed quickly behind, pulling the hatch closed after him. Once he could see that Rufus was preoccupied with booting everything up, Wyatt leaned close to Lucy, who still, to him, seemed almost numb. "You ok?"

She watched him with a ghost of a smile as he reached to buckle her seat belt. "I'm ok," she confirmed softly, adding, "A shower and real clothes would be good."

Not entirely convinced, Wyatt sat back in his own seat.

A few minutes later, back at Mason, he was even less convinced when Lucy ran off towards the dressing rooms, practically before Rufus had even landed the damn lifeboat.
Not that Wyatt was far behind her. He rushed over to where Jiya stood at her desk. "This timeline," he spat out hurriedly, "I'm married to Lucy?"

Jiya nodded to the affirmative, despite the bewildered expression on her face.

"And Lena?" Wyatt demanded.

Jiya's face wrinkled further in confusion as she shot Rufus a quizzical glance when he approached the pair. "...is at Lucy's mom's?" she confirmed hesitantly.

Wyatt breathed a sigh of relief, surprising himself. But making sure Lucy was ok mattered more than whatever he was feeling. He mumbled a hurried thanks to Jiya before taking off again, rushing through the wardrobe area towards the dressing rooms until he felt someone grab his arm.

"Dude," Rufus asked, somewhat alarmed, releasing Wyatt's arm, "where's the fire?"

"I gotta get Lucy," Wyatt blurted out.

Concern crept onto Rufus' face. "What happened back there, man?"

Taking a deep breath, Wyatt glanced around them. Not seeing anyone nearby, he leaned towards Rufus, hissing quietly, "It wasn't just some dance show. It was a brothel."

"What?" Rufus yelped, eyes wide. Quieter, he continued cautiously, "Did she-?"

Wyatt shook his head vehemently. "No, I got her before, but..." He trailed off, not wanting to think about what he'd almost allowed to happen to her.

Rufus shook his head in disbelief, then pushed Wyatt on the back. "Yeah, go, go."

Wyatt hurried to the men's dressing room, wanting to be rid of the 1897 clothes as much as he bet Lucy did. He set a speed record for throwing on his own clothes, not caring that he left his vintage outfit in a crumpled pile on the floor. Once he'd shoved his feet into his shoes, he pawed for the few things at the top of his locker, wallet, keys - thank you, Jiya - phone, ring. He absently pushed the wedding band onto his finger, shoving everything else into his pockets as he exited the room and headed a few doors down to where Lucy would be.

Reaching the door, he gave a tentative knock.

Nothing.

He knocked again. Still nothing.

He knocked a third time, a bit harder, calling out gently, "Luce?"

She still didn't reply, and all it did was confirm for him that she was more shaken than she'd let on, just as she'd been in Germany, the first time she hadn't heard him knocking at a door for her. She hadn't been fine then either.

As he'd done then, Wyatt carefully cracked the door open, peering inside. Her clothes were piled on the floor, much as his had been, and he spotted her seated at the end of the bench in the corner, one knee pulled up as she tied her sneaker.

Well, at least she was well enough to get dressed, Wyatt told himself as he slunk into the room and closed the door behind him.
But not that well, he realized a split second later. She finished with the sneaker, but pulled the other foot up, hugging both knees to her chest. Wyatt could see her chin tremble, with shiny tear tracks down her cheeks.

"Lucy..." he breathed, rushing over to her. In one fell swoop she’d unfolded herself from on the bench, and Wyatt was pulling her to him. She buried her face against his chest, arms wrapped tightly around his torso.

He wasn't sure how long he held her like that, stroking her back, smoothing her hair, as her tears dampened the fabric of his shirt. It didn't matter; he hold her all night if it made her feel any better, and if it helped assuage even a little of the guilt he felt over letting this happen in the first place.

*All night.* Suddenly, Lucy's words from before they'd even left the present echoed in Wyatt's mind. She'd been planning to stay with her mother. The thought of going back to the apartment, filled with Lucy's and Lena's things, alone left a gnawing emptiness in him.

Pulling back ever so slightly, he brushed a stray wisp of hair back from Lucy's face. "Stay with me tonight," he murmured.

She pulled back from the embrace further, looking up skeptically.

"Please?" he pleaded, for her sake and his.

Lucy squirmed out of his arms at that point, shaking her head in protest. "Wyatt, I'm fin-"

"What if I'm not?" He shot back, cutting her off. "I almost let-" His words caught in his throat as the telltale prickle of threatening tears stung his eyes. He blinked them away, turning the focus back to Lucy. "And I know you're not ok."

Something in there hit home; she hesitated before protesting again, weaker this time. "We have to go to my mom's for Lena anyway... Wait," she amended, suddenly tense, "do we?" She turned to face Wyatt again, concern etched across her delicate features.

Wyatt felt a weak grin creep up on him, glad to be able to confirm that for her. "Yeah," he nodded, eliciting a relieved shoulder sag from Lucy. Pointedly, he continued, "So we get her and bring her home with us."

He could feel her studying him warily in response to his words, but she eventually relented. "Ok," she agreed.

Just a few moments later, he'd ushered her out of the building, managing to escape attention from Christopher, Mason, or anyone else, and they were on their way to Lucy's mother's home.

Picking up Lena luckily involved little fanfare given that they'd known what to expect this time around. She hadn't quite slept through the transfer out of the crib as she had the previous night; as they came down the stairs, Lena lifted her head from Carolyn's shoulder, plucked her thumb from her mouth, and extended her hand to wave at him, the gesture accompanied by a sleepy grin and a gurgled "Da" before her eyes drooped closed again. Wyatt was caught off-guard by the surge of affection that the simple action elicited, and he couldn't stop himself from reaching out to stroke the wispy curls on her head as she was deftly transferred into Lucy's arms.

Still, he knew a not-quite-asleep child also meant the threat of a tantrum, so he hurriedly gathered up Lena's bags, just as he had the night before, and followed the girls to the car.

Once they'd reached his (their?) apartment and made their way inside, Lena was indeed a bit fussy.
He couldn't blame her, given that they seemed to always be interrupting her night, if the past two
days were any indication.

So Wyatt had sent Lucy off to the bathroom, knowing she'd wanted to wash away any remnants of
1897, and they'd all essentially ended up right where they'd started the day, with Lucy in the shower
as Wyatt paced Lena's little bedroom, trying to soothe her back to sleep.

Eventually the little girl's fussing stopped, and her breathing steadied. Ever so carefully, Wyatt laid
her down in the crib. He breathed a sigh of relief when her eyes stayed closed. He snagged the baby
monitor once more, backing out of the room and heading to his own to wait for Lucy.

But she took longer than she had that morning; even after however long it took to settle Lena, Wyatt
had managed to throw on pajamas and still he could hear the water running. He was just starting to
get concerned once again when he finally heard the shower turn off.

Relieved, he turned off the lights in the bedroom, leaving on only Lucy's bedside lamp. He eased
himself into bed, but didn't dare let sleep overtake him until he saw Lucy again.

Eventually, he heard her in the hallway, a smile creeping up as he could make out the footsteps
detour and heard a soft rustle on the baby monitor as she checked on Lena. And then there she was,
tentatively slipping into his (their?) room.

Wyatt rolled over to face her as she dumped clothes in the hamper on her side of the bed. "You sure
you're ok, Lucy?" he murmured in the dim light.

She let out a tired sigh in response. "It's no worse than other things we've seen," she reminded him.
"I'll be fine." Then, reaching to shut off the small lamp, she slipped into bed.

Wyatt fought the urge to wrap his arms around her; if she said she was fine, she was fine.

He'd just rolled away from her when her voice came across the darkness. "I just-," she whispered
haltingly, "hate it all sometimes, you know?"

Understatement of the year. " Seriously," he echoed.

A beat later, she spoke up again, asking, "Did they find anything out about Jessica?"

Wyatt froze, stunned.

*Jess.*

In everything that had gone on since meeting in the park - the supposed Flynn sighting, Lucy
practically getting attacked in the brothel, finding himself completely unnerved by said near-attack -
he hadn't even thought of Jessica once. Even at Mason, where they might have actually had useful
news, Lucy had been his sole priority. *Fuck.* His stomach twisted. Talk about unnerving.

"Uh, no," he stammered, fishing for some sort of plausible cover, "they're still looking at...
databases," he blurted out awkwardly. "I'll go back tomorrow."

*TBC...*
Thanks so much again for the kind reviews, everyone! They really mean a lot.

I hope this chapter came out ok. I had most of it done in a Google Doc. And suddenly the whole doc/text just disappeared, never to be recovered - believe me, I tried. I was ready to throw my computer out the window violently. (And this was right after receiving unrelated bad news. Argh.) Luckily, a slightly older version of the first 60-ish% was in Word on my laptop, so it wasn't a complete loss, but I still feel like I couldn't fully replicate the good stuff that was lost :( So this should have been up much earlier today, and possibly would have been better the first time around. Sorry :( 

Sitting perched at the edge of the bed, a depressingly early 5:07 glaring at her from the clock on the nightstand, Lucy quietly turned to peer at Wyatt over her shoulder. He was still asleep, again a whole lot closer to where she'd slept than to where he'd started out.

In any other circumstance, she'd relish having to share a bed with what could only be described as an aggressive cuddler (a fact that, in any other circumstance, she'd tease him mercilessly over), and she would have burrowed back under the covers against him to try to steal an extra couple hours of sleep together. It had been far too long since she'd had that... But, in any other circumstance, she'd actually be in a relationship with whoever she was in bed with. Hardly the case here, she reminded herself wryly.

She sighed, not sure what to do with herself. Sleep was the best possible option, seeing as it would be the only way to escape the utter craziness that was her current life. But it had already eluded her for the past twenty minutes as she'd lain awake next to Wyatt. So Lucy was pretty well resigned to the fact that it was one of those mornings when she was just awake for the day well before she'd wanted to be.

Which meant having to face Wyatt. And their bizarre fake marriage. And the fact that the bizarre marriage still involved feelings on her part, which just made the whole fake, one-sided aspect that much worse. And Lena, the kid she'd apparently managed to birth without even being there. And the fact that Amy was still gone, that their mother wasn't sick. And that she'd gotten herself into a dicey situation yesterday...

It was her own fault, and she felt badly that Wyatt seemed to blame himself. Lucy had pretty much suspected that a place like that probably involved some prostitution, but she'd, naively perhaps, thought she could get information about Flynn from the other women before anyone paid any attention to her. Even when she'd ended up bought and paid for, between the fear and nerves, she'd still had the fleeting thought that she could probably take the guy by surprise; he wouldn't have expected her to be anything but willing, right? But once they'd been given a room, things were a blur, moving too fast, and he'd been too pushy right away, ripping her costume, and she hadn't really been able to think quickly enough, and then suddenly Wyatt had been there.

Lucy blinked hard, willing herself not to get emotional about it again. The prospect of having been that close to being forced to sleep with someone for money was jarring, sure. But it hadn't happened, and ultimately she'd ended up in Wyatt's protective embrace. She absolutely knew Rufus would have
done the exact same thing were he in a position to do so, but... Whether they were after this particular traumatic incident, or after all three of them had ended up locked up at different times by Holmes, or whenever... Rufus’ bear hugs were different from Wyatt's. For her anyway.

It would make all of this a hell of a lot easier if they were the same. Emotions just made everything that much more complicated. Especially when those emotions were unrequited feelings for your - fake? temporary? sham? - husband.

It was that, on top of the fact that her life was practically unrecognizable at this point, that had triggered the meltdown in the locker room the day before. Yes, the New York incident played in, but really, it was just everything all at once. And of course Wyatt had had to come in and be all perfect and huggy and comforting and upset and guilty and had asked her to stay with him and had called his place their home.

Lucy shook her head, as if she could physically shake off all the thoughts jumbled in her minds. Resolving to not think about Wyatt for a bit, she stood, glancing at the clock again. If the previous morning was any indication, Lena was a little early bird and would probably be up soon. Not that Lena's mere existence wasn't a whole mess in and of itself, all tied to the larger craziness of the past few days, but at least the mundane things like diaper changes and tiny clothes and sippy cups would take her mind off everything else for a while. Or at least Lucy hoped.

So she left Wyatt to sleep, scooped up the still-silent baby monitor, and crept down the hall towards Lena's room. Lucy still didn't hear anything yet, so she tiptoed in to peek into the crib.

To her surprise, Lena actually was awake, sitting there quietly and entertaining herself with a stuffed bunny. But Lucy's movement must have caught her eye, for a split second later, Lena looked up at her, her little face brightening instantly. "Ma!"

She'd barely known the child for a day and a half, but Lucy felt a sweet ache in her chest upon hearing that name burst out in Lena's little voice. She reached down to smooth down Lena's morning hair with a smile, muttering, "At least you're not looking for Jessica instead, huh?"

Lena just responded with a grin of her own, and offered Lucy the toy bunny with an outstretched arm. "Buh?"

"Yeah, it's a bunny," Lucy chuckled softly.

But Lena was insistent, repeating "Buh" as she pulled herself up to stand at the crib's rail.

Lucy nodded, "Yeah, I know it's a bunny," and finally obliged by taking the slightly drooled-upon toy from Lena.

However, Lena's giving away of her bunny was ill-advised on her part, for as soon as Lucy had it, Lena's face crumpled and a whimper slipped out.

Still clutching the bunny too, Lucy quickly reached for Lena, and scooped her up for damage control. "Shh, shh," she hushed, holding the toy back in Lena's line of sight as she bounced her gently. "He's right here."

Having the bunny back in her immediate proximity settled Lena; she proceeded to shove one of its ears in her mouth before snuggling up against Lucy's chest. Lucy let out a soft snort of a laugh and absently pressed an affectionate kiss to the top of Lena's little head. If only her own problems could be so easily solved with a stuffed bunny...

At that point, a cozy, snuggly baby was about as good as Lucy could do, so she plucked a book from
the shelf and settled herself and Lena into the rocking chair in the corner of the little bedroom. With her legs tucked up underneath her and Lena leaning against her on her lap, Lucy quietly read the words to Lena, letting her touch the textured patches on each page.

They'd even begun flipping through a second time when Lena let out a sudden squeal.

Lucy looked up from the book; leaning against the doorframe was Wyatt, looking still half-asleep as he squinted at them. "G'mornin'," he greeted them, his voice gravelly with sleep.

"Hi," Lucy replied, partially not sure what to say, partially preoccupied with struggling with the suddenly wriggly Lena. Not wanting her to squirm her way into a fall, Lucy finally just set her down on the floor next to the chair.

From there, Lena took off, power crawling toward Wyatt. Lucy couldn't help but smile weakly; Lena was certainly proving herself to be a daddy's girl. Much like she and Amy had been...

Lucy pushed aside that thought, instead taking in the sight of Wyatt bending down to lift Lena into his arms. He stood with a grin that matched that on the little girl's face. Lucy's stomach flip-flopped at the sight; Wyatt had been even more freaked out by the prospect of Lena's existence than she had, but clearly Lena's charm had already managed to disarm him as well.

She envied her other self, the one from this timeline. The one who truly lived this life, who got to wake up in Wyatt's arms, got to see him like this every morning, sleepy, dressed in a faded old t-shirt and baggy flannel pajama pants, cuddling their daughter. The one who never knew that she was missing a sister, the one who'd never known what it was like to sit vigil by her dying mother's bedside.

"You wanna head to Mason soon?" Lucy was jarred from her thoughts when Wyatt spoke.

She hesitated. Did she want to go spend her day poring over government databases for some sign of Wyatt's wife? She certainly didn't begrudge him the opportunity to do so, but no, she didn't really want to go to Mason to be the one searching for Jessica. She was concerned with getting Amy back; that was her priority, but Denise already knew that.

"Maybe only you have to?" Lucy finally responded cautiously. "Amy's not a new thing. But you can see if they can figure out Jessica. And," she gestured awkwardly between the two of them, "...this." If he righted his history with Jessica, whatever it was that had put them together in this timeline would be back to normal as well, she supposed.

She was surprised to see what appeared to be a flash of disappointment on his face. But it was gone before she could convince herself it had truly ever been there. He shifted Lena against him, uttering a stiff, "Ok."

"We still don't know about moving," Lucy added, realizing how true it was. "Until they can get things back to normal, this is what we have to deal with. If we're supposed to move, we have to move. We can't just sit here with everything half packed until your landlord kicks us out when the lease is up. I'll..." she trailed off, shrugging, "stay here and try to figure it out. There must be papers, or emails, or something," she reasoned. "Maybe I'll even be able to figure out more about whatever our history is in this timeline, and why we're here instead of Jessica." She hadn't really meant to add that last part, but she had to admit it was true; there could be useful information in their own apartment.

But it was enough to convince Wyatt; he nodded, absentely rubbing Lena's back. A few beats later, he crossed the room and eased Lena back into Lucy's arms. "I'll go..." He trailed off as he backed out
of the room, leaving just Lena and Lucy.

It was odd, knowing that once he'd gotten ready and left, she'd be left without him for the first time since they'd come back to this reality. It hadn't even been that long, and a big chunk of it had been spent sleeping, but it was just weird. Now she'd be playing *mom*, all while digging through things in *his* apartment. Weird.

She sat with Lena a while longer, not exactly eager to re-live the slightly awkward exchange of evading going to Mason. Only when she heard the apartment door open and close did she finally get up, hauling Lena with her, supporting her under her rear.

Lucy grimaced at reminder that a diaper change was necessary. But she had to start somewhere...

Hours later, Lucy found herself with Lena in one arm, and dragging the small playpen from the living room into Wyatt's bedroom with the other. In between diaper changes, clothes changes, breakfast, lunch, more reading, and some playtime, she'd managed to get Lena to sleep for a while, which had allowed Lucy to really start sifting through everything in the apartment.

She wasn't about to start pulling things out of already-packed boxes, but the kitchen counter, table in the dining room, and her own laptop (same password, luckily) had offered up enough information. Communications from the apartment landlord, mortgage banker, real estate agent, and moving company all seemed to indicate that a house had been closed on and moving day was a mere three days away. It had been at that point that she'd given up any illusion of being able to do any investigating on their background in this timeline; the practicality of packing had to take over.

Except Lena was apparently averse to the idea of an afternoon nap in her crib, screaming her head off when Lucy had tried to leave her there.

Thus the playpen. Lucy had found some empty plastic bins hidden in the corner of the living room, so she figured she'd start at least dumping all of her stuff from the bedroom into them. Lena may not have been a walker yet, but she was still proving to be way to adventurous of a crawler to be left anywhere without full attention being paid.

Lucy was hoping Lena would keep quiet in the playpen right near her instead of the crib down the hall, and she told her as much when she plopped her down in it near the foot of the bed. "Look, I'll be right here, okay? Screaming not necessary."

Thankfully, the new setup actually did placate Lena a bit, allowing Lucy to focus on the packing.

She set aside clothes for the next few days, then systematically worked her way through the closet. Clothes got folded, shoes got tossed in a separate bin, and bags or boxes on the shelves that looked even like they might contain a hint of memorabilia quickly got buried beneath more clothes. Efficient packing was one thing, but Lucy had no desire to stumble upon a wedding veil, movie stubs from their first date, or ultrasound photos. Not when Wyatt was off trying to get Jessica back.

Eventually most of her side of the closet was cleared out, and with Lena finally quietly playing behind her, Lucy moved on to the dresser on her side of the room. She was halfway through the second drawer when she heard the front door open.

"Wyatt," she called, pulling herself up from where she'd been kneeling on the floor. Heading out into the hall and toward the living room, she continued, "We have to be packed and out of here in three days..." She trailed off, stopping short when she stepped into the living room to find not only Wyatt, but Rufus, who waved apologetically, and Jiya. Surprised, Lucy cleared her throat, trying to stammer out a cover, "...which of course you knew already because you live here..." She turned to face Jiya
and Rufus more directly, "Hi?"

Jiya just replied brightly, seemingly not noticing anything off, "Hey, Lucy."

Lucy, confused, was about to ask what exactly was going on when Wyatt spoke up. "Are you ready for trivia night?" He asked, speaking oddly deliberately.

It didn't exactly clear anything up. Lucy shook her head slightly, eyeing him quizzically.

He just got closer, glaring at her as if he was trying to will her to understand with his eyes. "Did you forget it's Wednesday?"

"Um, no," Lucy replied, bewildered. "Wyatt, can I, uh," she stammered, "show you something real quick?" she asked, nodding back down the hallway. She leaned around him, forcing a smile in Rufus' and Jiya's direction, "Sorry guys, one sec. Be right back."

She grabbed at Wyatt's arm, dragging him into the bedroom, whispering a demand for an explanation, "Um, what?"

Wyatt shrugged apologetically. "Jiya said it's a thing," he sighed. "Every week."

Lucy furrowed her brow. Trivia night? It didn't sound horrible, but a standing double date? It was so... couple-y. It also didn't make sense... "But Lena-" she started.

"Comes," he finished, reaching down to pick up the tiny person in question. "It's early," he pointed out. "Kid's menu."

"I-" Lucy didn't really have any true objection; it was just hard enough to deal with this new timeline without having to play the happy couple that they both knew they were not. It was one thing in the past, if it came up as a cover while trying to find Flynn or something, but here too? "Ok, I guess..." she agreed reluctantly. But then she blurted out, "Can't we just tell her? That we don't do this every week? Any of this?"

"I don't know," Wyatt sighed, shifting Lena around to avoid getting a slimy little hand or two in the face. "Mason didn't want anyone else to know," he explained. "He's worried they'll start getting paranoid about what we're changing about their lives in ways that they don't even know about."

Ok, well, she couldn't fault that logic; it was unnerving enough for her and she did know all of the things that were changing.

"It's still just the three of us," Wyatt continued, "Mason, Christopher." He paused, eyeing her warily before continuing, "...and the guy they have researching Jess."

And there it was. Lucy took a deep breath, fixing her gaze on him. "Did they find anything?"

His gaze and demeanor darkened considerably as soon as she asked, even as Lena did manage to land a slobbery slap to beneath his chin. "...I'll tell you later," he muttered, shaking his head. "They're waiting," he deflected, nodding in the direction of the living room as he boosted Lena up higher. "What do we need for her?"

Lucy startled at the question, feeling like she was getting whiplashed, between the packing and the trivia and whatever that just was with Wyatt suddenly clamping up about Jessica. She looked around, trying to come up with an answer. "I guess she needs shoes?" she finally said, noting Lena's tiny socks sticking out from beneath her leggings. "Jacket? And the stuff in the diaper bag?"
Wyatt nodded grimly, nodding as he headed for the hallway with Lena, "I got it."

Perplexed by his change of mood, Lucy stared after him for a bit, before realizing that it wasn't just Lena who needed shoes and jacket and hurried to get herself ready.

It turned out that the place they 'always' went for this trivia thing was just a short walk from Wyatt's apartment, which afforded both Wyatt and Lucy the opportunity to imbibe in a little more of the 'happy' of happy hour than they would have were they to have to drive back home afterward. And given the preposterousness of the previous few days, Lucy seized that opportunity.

A couple of gin and tonics later, she was feeling not exactly tipsy, but definitely more relaxed. Wyatt's mood had improved, Lena had done well with some chopped-up chicken fingers, applesauce, and a handful of fries from Lucy's plate and was happily clutching a crayon and making a few stray marks on her placemat as she sat on Wyatt's lap, and Lucy had even enjoyed the trivia game.

Jiya hadn't enjoyed it quite as much, given that they only came in second. "I blame you, Lucy," she taunted.

Lucy smiled in return, defending herself wryly. "I don't know ALL the history," she insisted, absently handing Lena a new crayon after she'd flung the first onto the floor.

"Well, you can redeem yourself next week," Jiya informed her as she slid out of their booth. "Be right back, I gotta pee." With a head tilt, she gestured for Rufus to follow her.

Rufus looked confused, but still followed, which left Lucy and Wyatt alone, save for Lena, for the first time since back at the apartment.

Shifting his posture to face Lucy, Wyatt whispered desperately, "So we have to move? Like now?"

Lucy nodded stoically to confirm. "Movers come in three days."

Wyatt's eyebrows popped up, leaving him looking rather overwhelmed. "To go where?"

"I found an address, and mortgage information," Lucy relayed. "We closed on the place already. I guess we should go check it out?" She ventured, feeling helpless. "We already broke the lease on the apartment, so we have to go somewhere."

Wyatt nodded slowly, looking pensive, but he never got to respond. A split second later, Rufus appeared back at the table in a bit of a frenzy.

"Guys," he spat out hurriedly, "if we're supposed to be convincing everyone that this is normal, it's not working."

Lucy glanced over at Wyatt, feeling just as bewildered as he looked. They both eyed Rufus quizzically.

"Jiya's back there freaking out that you guys are fighting or getting a divorce or dying or something," he insisted.

Lucy just stared blankly, not sure what he was getting at.

Rufus cast a quick glance back in the directions of the bathrooms, but Jiya wasn't back in sight yet. "You're not acting right!" he hissed, exasperated. "You're normally more 'touchy-feely'," he said, waving at both of them. Then he focused on Wyatt specifically, continuing, "And you're supposed to
be more 'handsy' or something." He snickered. "Her words."

A hot flush crept up onto Lucy's cheeks at the insinuation that any other time they'd be all over each other in public. At least a quick sideways glance revealed a pink tinge on his neck and ears too.

But Rufus was still glaring at them.

Lucy looked over again, catching Wyatt's gaze this time, offering an apologetic half smile.

He sighed, but shifted Lena over to her as they repeated the awkward maneuvering they'd had to do back in Arkansas. With Lena on Lucy's lap, Wyatt shifted his position and nudged at Lucy. She obliged, turning a bit and leaning back against his torso as she felt his arm snake around behind her lower back. His hand came to rest near her hip, just at the top of her thigh. She shivered involuntarily.

All the while, Rufus watched them, looking highly amused.

"You're enjoying this too much," Lucy grumbled at him.

He just chuckled in response at their expense.

With one final tug at Lucy's hip to pull her closer, Wyatt gestured to the two of them with his free hand. "Better?" he asked sardonically.

Rufus raised his hands in mock surrender. "Don't look at me; I'm from your timeline."

Wyatt scoffed behind Lucy. "This is ridiculous," he declared. "You shouldn't have to lie to her. We shouldn't."

Rufus just nodded in agreement, "Don't have to tell me twice."

They had to leave the conversation there; Jiya reappeared from the bathroom with the news that she'd ordered them another round of drinks.

It wasn't long before Lucy was halfway into that new drink, as Wyatt, Jiya, and Rufus were deep into some argument about the realism of some military video game. Lucy didn't even care that she couldn't contribute; instead she relished the solid, warm feel of Wyatt behind her. She also wasn't going to complain about the fact that, whether intentionally or subconsciously, his fingers rubbed soft circles over her thigh. And Lena was being adorably well-behaved, sucking happily on a pacifier as she entertained herself with two spoons from the table.

Content, at least temporarily, cozy, and a little buzzed, Lucy let herself indulge for a few moments, imagining that this is what it would be like if it were all real – if she and Wyatt were a true couple, a true family. She wished it were…

Unfortunately, real or not, the toddler was there regardless, and eventually her wriggles, kicks, and whines chimed away at the illusion.

From across the table, Jiya eyed the suddenly cranky Lena. "Bedtime?" she asked, knowingly.

Lucy nodded, replying, "Yeah, I think that's our cue." She reluctantly sat up, pulling away from Wyatt. Hugging Lena to her, she slowly slid away from him and out of the booth.

The check had already been placed on the table, and Wyatt reached for it. "I got it, guys," he directed at Rufus and Jiya, pulling some cash out of his wallet and leaving it in the small folder. As if she
wasn't already struggling with her feelings, the generous gesture just made Lucy's stomach flip-flop once again. And as they turned to leave, he plucked the still-fussy Lena from Lucy, and she felt his other hand at the small of her back, guiding her towards where they'd left Lena's stroller folded by the front door. But the stroller was popped open and Lena strapped in, he pushed her with two hands as they headed back to their apartment, where Rufus and Jiya had left his car. She missed the contact fiercely.

By the time they'd all covered the short distance back to the apartment complex, Lena was out like a light in the stroller. They said quick goodbyes and headed inside.

Once there, Lucy unclipped Lena's straps, picking her up gently. "I'll put her down," she whispered to Wyatt, nodding in the direction of Lena's room.

A few minutes later, Lucy made her way back to the main room, only to find Wyatt sitting at the dining table, already staring darkly at a partial glass of whiskey. "She's still dead," he stated suddenly, without warning.

Stunned, Lucy pulled out the other chair, lowering herself shakily to sit. "Wha-

"Same way," he elaborated, cutting her off bluntly. "Just married to someone else."

Well, that wasn't what she'd expected, not that she'd been expecting anything in particular. And she knew it was the last thing Wyatt had wanted to hear. "I'm so sorry," she murmured, even knowing it would be of little consolation to him.

When he remained silent, other than to take another slug of the alcohol, Lucy carefully ventured a soft inquiry. "…did we just meet first, so you weren't single, and that's why…?" She trailed off, the rest of the question implicit in her phrasing.

Wyatt shook his head. "I should have met her. Before you. I don't know what happened," he admitted, sounding more defeated than she'd heard him in a long time. "They're still trying to figure out what was different."

Lucy nodded but was at a loss for what she could possibly say. She couldn't begin to imagine how history had been tweaked to end up this way, or what his quest to right it was going to entail now.

So she stayed silent.

Eventually, it was actually Wyatt who spoke up, with a surprise change of subject. "So we have to pack?"

"Uh, yeah," Lucy stammered, shaking herself out of her daze to explain. "The kitchen is mostly done, so is out here," she gestured toward the living room, "and the closets. I got a lot of my stuff done today. So it's mostly your stuff, and Lena's room. Plus random stuff like the last few dishes and lamps." She hadn't even noticed them building as she'd rattled off the list, but as she finished, a tear slipped out, sliding down her face.

And Wyatt noticed. "Are you ok? I mean after yesterday…" his question faded out, his voice sounding tight.

Lucy swiped at the tear, embarrassed that she was letting him see her like this yet again. She shook her head, clarifying, "It's not even that. It wasn't even really that then," she added. "Thank you though. For…" Her voice cracked, not wanting to form anything more articulate on the subject.

Wyatt's face softened. "Luce, of course," he replied quietly.
"It's just a lot, you know?" she sniffled. "Everything? A few months ago, I was almost tenured, teaching great classes, my mom was sick, yeah, but Amy was there. Now Amy's still gone, my father turned out not to be my father, my mother is better but it's like she's not even the same person, we're *literally time travelers*;" she stressed, still incredulous over that fact, "we get thrown together like this, we have a baby… And just for an extra kick in the ass," she added wryly, "we're moving. I *hate* moving."

By then, the overwhelming feeling of everything was back, and the tears were coming on stronger. She gave him a watery, self-deprecating smile, "See? Again."

And again, there he was. Just like the night before. He stood, rounding the table to her in a split second, pulling her into his embrace. "C'mere," he murmured into her hair, "We'll figure it out."

Somewhere between grateful and embarrassed, Lucy avoided his gaze, keeping her head tucked against his chest.

"At least Lena's pretty quiet and cute," Wyatt pointed out as he rubbed her back. "We could have gotten some asshole kindergarten kid."

Lucy let out a choked snort. "Are kindergarteners *assholes*?"

"Pretty sure I was," he chuckled.

A muffled laugh escaped Lucy against his chest. She pulled away slightly, intending to thank him for lightening the mood, but he pulled her back in and pressed a soft kiss to her temple, following it up with a reassurance of "We'll figure it out."

Lucy barely heard it, having frozen upon the feel of his lips brushing against the side of her head. *That* was new. And she had no idea what to make of it, other than to assume he hadn't even really meant to do it.

She backed out of his embrace cautiously, managing to croak out, "Should we try to finish some packing?"

*TBC*...
Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the delay, everyone! I procrastinated on some things in previous weeks when powering through the first few chapters, and they eventually caught up to me and had to get done instead of this chapter. Not to mention that the season finale messed with me for a bit – all the moments hinting at Lucy/Wyatt were lovely, until that stupid final scene the two of them had, which was not even close to a satisfying moment. Argh.

Anyway, thank you again, all of you for the amazing comments you've been leaving. I'm grateful for all reviews, especially from those of you who go out of your way to say that you normally never leave reviews. I'm touched that you all seem to like this story so much. Thank you.

I hope you all continue to enjoy this :)
The next few minutes were a hurried frenzy of the two of them grabbing clothes, alternating turns ducking in and out of the bathroom to get ready as quickly as possible. Only when they were fully ready to go did they creep into Lena's room.

"Grab the diaper bag, get some clothes and throw them in there too," instructed Lucy in a soft whisper. "I'll get her."

Wyatt nodded, doing as she asked. If he hadn't been still half-asleep, he might have been amused by the surreal aspect of expertly packing a diaper bag in the middle of the night for a daughter he hadn't even had a week ago.

The bag was readied quickly, and he turned to see Lucy gently cradling a mostly-asleep Lena to her shoulder. She'd foregone a jacket, instead having wrapped Lena up in a little blanket. "Ready?" she asked, nodding toward the front door.

"Not ever, honestly," he admitted, but headed out toward the living room anyway.

He heard Lucy let out a soft snort of laughter behind him, echoing, "Seriously."

The trio headed out, down the hall, down the stairs, and out toward Lucy's car. Unfortunately, in the few moments that it took to cover that distance, Lena had been jostled awake and was none too happy about it, letting them both know by screeching her way across the parking lot.

Wyatt cringed at each shrill cry; he'd probably jinxed them last night when he'd tried to make Lucy feel better by pointing out that Lena wasn't so bad.

Looking just as distressed as he felt, Lucy eyed the car's backseat warily. "Should I sit with her, you think? To try and calm her down?"

Wyatt nodded, agreeing readily, given that some of Lena's screams were turning into cringe-worthy coughing fits and he was starting to worry that the kid was going to choke. On top of them still having to get to Mason as quickly as possible. He jumped in the driver's seat, turning around and leaning over into the back to help Lucy wrestle the carseat's straps into position against Lena's surprisingly strong kicks. That finally done, he threw the car into gear, letting Lucy deal with the noise in the back.

Thankfully, within a few minutes, Lena had quieted. Whether Lucy had some sort of innate magical mothering powers or just the motion of the car, Wyatt wasn't sure, but he was pretty sure he was unsettled by the warm feeling he got in his chest when he'd taken a second to glance in the rearview mirror at the two of them. Lucy had rested her head against the side of Lena's seat, alternately stroking the little girl's wispy curls and tear-streaked cheek. Wyatt blinked hard, forcing his focus back to the road as he made his way down increasingly familiar route to Lucy's mother's house.

Once they arrived, Lucy insisted it would be easier if she just run in with Lena; Wyatt wasn't about to protest. She returned soon enough, and they were off to Mason Industries.

At least once they got there, the routine was more what they'd gotten used to. They hurried into the upper-level conference room, with Lucy blurting out "When?" just as he managed to simultaneously spit out his inquiry of "Where?"

Rufus, already there, snickered, and Christopher raised her eyebrows, wearing an amused expression at their synchronized questions, but mercifully didn't comment other than to inform them, "Los Angeles, May 4, 1979."

Beside him, Wyatt heard Lucy gasp. "There was a plot to assassinate Carter the next day," she
blurted out. "If- if Flynn is trying to kill Carter, anything could happen," she stammered, sounding worried. "Iran took hostages later that year, it could change everything about Middle Eastern relations. And if Mondale becomes president, who knows if Reagan still does, and."

"Lucy, breathe," Christopher interjected. "I was around for all of that; I know what the implications are."

"Sorry," Lucy muttered.

Christopher nodded, then urged them out of the room. "I suggest you three get going."

So they headed obediently down to ground level where their wardrobe awaited them.

Ten minutes later, Wyatt and Rufus were changed, waiting outside the lifeboat and grumbling all the while. Clad in high-waisted bell-bottom jeans and some awful patterned stretchy button down, Wyatt lamented, "This is worse than Greg Brady."

"At least you have real clothes on," came Lucy's equally disgruntled retort as she approached from behind them.

Wyatt's eyes widened at the sight of her. Her pants weren't too dissimilar from his, but somehow even wider despite her much smaller frame. But on top, she'd been outfitted in what looked barely more than a handkerchief wrapped strategically halter-style around her chest.

Next to him, Rufus let out a low whistle, quipping, "They must have made the pants first and run out of fabric."

Lucy glared. "Everyone wore turtlenecks then," she groused melodramatically, "Why couldn't I have a turtle neck?"

Wyatt had to agree. She looked… stunning, at least if you ignored the dated look. But didn't all the wardrobe people here know she was married? The idea of his wife running around in an outfit that seemed more fit for only him to appreciate didn't sit right.

Except Lucy wasn't his wife, he corrected himself mentally. Well, he wouldn't have wanted Jess running around in that either. That's what he'd meant…

He pushed his mental slipup from his mind and marched towards the lifeboat, gruffly calling after Rufus and Lucy, "We should go."

Just a few moments later, they found themselves crawling out into the Hollywood Hills, presumably a better location for hiding a time machine than downtown L.A. At least it was later in the day than when they'd left Mason in 2017, allowing for some sunlight.

Wyatt scanned the dusty, scrubby landscape, and turned to Lucy skeptically. "I take it the president wasn't wandering around out here?"

"No, we have to get to near the civic center," she informed them, holding a hand up to her eyes as she looked down on the L.A. skyline below. "That's where his speech is tomorrow, but the guy – Harvey – is at a hotel across the street tonight, and so are the guys who supposedly colluded with him." She turned back to him. "That's probably who Flynn's dealing with, right?"

Wyatt shot a helpless glance at Rufus, who just shrugged right back in return.

"Better than anything I've got," Wyatt said, nodding past Lucy down the dusty road. "Let's go."
As much as Wyatt didn't like that Lucy was practically running around topless, it did prove to be a help when she was able to hitch them all a ride into the city, a feat that he and Rufus wouldn't have accomplished on their own, if the driver's ogling of her was any indication.

The next few hours had consisted of much of what the New York trip had – canvassing the neighborhood near the civic center, showing anyone and everyone photos of both Flynn and Harvey and asking if they'd seen them. In the end, the only lead was some bartender at a disco club just a few buildings away from the hotel Harvey would be at later anyway. He'd informed them that both Flynn and Harvey had been in earlier in the day, meeting with some other men.

So, with that their only lead, they'd snagged a booth in the sparse afternoon crowd of the bar, attempting to come up with some sort of strategy.

"So what do we do," Wyatt asked, not holding back on the sarcasm and frustration with the lack of information, "just wait and hope they come back?"

Rufus replied with a defeated sigh. "Well, we don't know where Flynn or these guys could be."

"Harvey, at least - he's supposed to shoot practice shots from the roof of the hotel tonight, but who knows if Flynn changed his plans already, or what the other guys are doing," Lucy added, not sounding exactly encouraging either.

"So can't we just go up to the roof and take him out?" Wyatt reasoned. Seemed simple enough.

But Lucy winced at his suggestion. "Can't we just let the police get him like they do anyway?"

"You don't know what Flynn did!" Wyatt insisted. "He could have changed things so the police don't get him. If you want to guarantee thus nutjob doesn't kill Carter, we have to do it."

Rufus piped up, pointing out, "But that doesn't mean that Flynn or someone else won't tomorrow."

With a sigh, Lucy decided for them. "Then we deal with that tomorrow," she stated plainly. And turning to face Wyatt specifically, she relented on her previous hesitation. "Do it."

"When is he up there?" he asked.

"I don't know," she admitted, "but not until after dark, I'd guess."

Eyeing them both anxiously, Rufus asked, "So what do we do until then?"

Wyatt waved a hand, gesturing to the bar itself. "Exactly what I said, I guess. Wait here, see if they show up again."

So they did.

As the afternoon began to fade into evening, the bar filled, ridiculous disco music filling the air and oddly-outfitted contemporaries writhing away on the elevated dance floor.

It had been Rufus' idea. The elevated floor would give them a decent vantage point for spotting Flynn, or any suspicious activity, really. And they were in one of the few places and times in history that didn't automatically require he be someone's driver, or servant, or slave, or at the very least be stuck waiting outside. So he got the dance floor post. And Wyatt was the marksman; it only made sense that he'd be stationed off the floor, waiting near the entrance should Flynn show. It's not like he was looking to do any disco dancing anyway, lest he have horrible flashbacks to retro 1980s roller skating parties back in middle school.
Or he wouldn't have been looking to dance. Except that Lucy was up there with Rufus. Again, it was one of the few times they could go to in which history wouldn't necessarily have looked down on such a pairing, so he didn't really begrudge the guy the chance to let loose a little. But… Wyat was the one who got coupled up with Lucy when a couple made sense. And standing down by the door, watching Rufus dance with Lucy, watching Rufus get to touch her…

Wyatt winced. That gnawing, unsettled feeling in his stomach as he watched Rufus and Lucy on the dance floor? He was jealous. He was jealous and he fucking hated that he was jealous. There was nothing to be jealous of – Rufus and Lucy were no more a couple than he and Lucy were. Because he and Lucy weren't anything. Which meant he had no reason to be jealous even if there was something to be jealous of. Which there wasn't.

Except he was anyway, and it had to stop. It needed to stop. He had Jess, or would as soon as he figured out how to get the right timeline back and keep her alive. He couldn't be feeling jealousy – or any other emotions – about Lucy. He couldn't.

He set his jaw, fixing his stare on the front entrance instead of the dance floor, determined to focus on the mission and nothing more.

Of course, that's when Lucy would choose to step down from the dance floor, suddenly appearing in front of him, practically glowing from the thin sheen of sweat glistening on her forehead. She glanced around before leaning closer to inquire, "Anything?"

Wyatt shook his head stiffly, not daring to let himself look too closely at her while still in the barely-there top. "No."

"It's getting dark," she pointed out, glancing out the small window in the front door of the bar. "We should probably figure out getting roof access at the hotel."

In spite of himself, Wyatt had to laugh, rolling his eyes at her overthinking of the situation. "We get in because we get a room."

She looked adorably embarrassed at his stating of the obvious, muttering, "Right."

Wyatt hesitated before speaking again. She probably wouldn't like it, and he was probably overreaching for someone just meant to be a colleague, but on this issue he'd give himself a pass in that respect. "Look," he spoke warily, "when we do, I want you to stay there. I'll deal with the guy on the roof."

She was protesting before he'd even finished his sentence. "But-"

He cut her off, shaking his head sternly. "I'm serious," he insisted, "Not after last time."

"What if it's not just the one guy? He had accomplices," Lucy countered defiantly.

Wyatt flicked his gaze over to where Rufus was currently stepping down from the dance floor and making his way over to them. "Then Rufus comes."

Lucy frowned, but once Rufus reached them and Wyatt had explained the plan to him, he'd been in full agreement that Lucy should stay behind, leaving her no choice but to reluctantly agree.

So they'd made their way a few doors down in the darkening night to the Alan Hotel, where, thankfully, the desk clerk didn't bat an eye at the sight of their mixed-race trio checking into one room.
Once in the room, decorated just as hideously as Wyatt would have expected for a 1970s hotel, he pressed a gun into Lucy's hands without a word, mentally willing her to be safe while left alone.

And then he and Rufus headed for the service staircase they'd found just down the hall from their room.

Once they'd reached the roof, Wyatt had barely managed to kick a piece of broken scrap wood into the door frame to prop it open when a shot rang out, and altogether too close to them. He aimed his gun, scanning the rooftop.

_Flynn..._ Instinct took over, and he fired, and fired more when he caught sight of other movement behind Flynn. Everything moved so quickly – one second he and Rufus were firing, the next Flynn was ducking into a second stairwell, disappearing as the door slammed behind him. _Shit._ With a cursory glance around him and seeing no movement, Wyatt dashed over to where Flynn had made his escape, only to find the door locked, exactly as he'd been afraid of.

He punched the door with a frustrated groan before turning back around to see Rufus cautiously approaching two limp bodies by the edge of the roof. Wyatt crept over, gun drawn. "Are they...?"

Rufus toed away a pistol that had lain next to one guy's outstretched arm and inched closer. "They're done, man."

"Is it the right guy?" Wyatt asked tentatively, hoping they hadn't managed to screw anything up further.

But Rufus confirmed, "Yeah, this one's Harvey. And Lucy said he was working with other guys, so..."

Wyatt nodded stoically. At least that was done. He eyed the other staircase, the door mercifully still propped open as he'd left it. "We gotta get out of here."

They hurried back to the room; Wyatt made sure to keep an eye out for Flynn along the way, taking one last cautious glance up and down the hallway before he ducked into their room after Rufus.

Almost immediately, Lucy raced across the room and launched herself at Rufus for a hug, questions flying out of her mouth. "What happened? I heard shots. Are you ok?"

Brushing past the others, because the last thing he needed was for Lucy to end up hugging him too, Wyatt reported, "We're fine. We got Harvey, and some other guy he was with. Flynn was there but he got away."

Pulling away from Rufus, Lucy turned towards him, crestfallen. "So he could still try to take out Carter tomorrow," she surmised glumly, collapsing down on the edge of one of the beds.

Between the two of them, it wasn't as if he and Rufus had anything to reassure her otherwise; all Wyatt could do was nod.

"Well," Lucy replied, sounding more like she was trying to convince herself than anyone else, "we just have to make sure it doesn't happen."

Wyatt scoffed, "Easier said than done. But yeah," he added, for Lucy's sake, "that's what we do."

They lapsed into silence, given that they'd pretty much just articulated that their plan was to just sit around and wait for tomorrow. And given that Flynn knew they were in the area, it would mean basically staying put, the three of them trapped in a small hotel room until Carter's speech the next
day.

Eventually Rufus broke the silence, his gaze darting between Lucy and Wyatt expectantly. "So…," he drawled out, "if we're just waiting around, we've all been up since that super awesome wakeup call at 4am…" He gestured to the two beds emphatically. "It's a hell of a lot better than the woods in 1754."

With a chuckle, Wyatt nodded. "Yeah, you guys sleep. I'll stay up in case Flynn finds us." He was almost grateful for the threat of Flynn possible locating them; the last thing he needed was Rufus there to witness his recent bad habit of gravitating to Lucy in his sleep.

While Rufus enthusiastically jumped into the far bed, Wyatt felt Lucy's eyes boring into him questioningly from the closer one. Without looking at her, he toyed with his gun and insisted quietly, "Just sleep, Lucy. All three of us can't let our guard down at the same time."

She eventually acquiesced, the rustling sheets giving her away as she burrowed beneath them. Only when the room grew quiet, save Rufus' occasional snore, did Wyatt allow himself to look up.

He still avoided letting his gaze linger on Lucy, instead pacing around the room trying to find something to keep himself alert. The phone book and the bible weren't going to cut it, and the labels on the toiletries in the bathroom were even less appealing. He even attempted the small television, keeping the sound muted, but cable hadn't made its way to this particular hotel in this particular year yet, and the three fuzzy antenna stations left something to be desired. Still, with literally nothing else, Wyatt left it on, a bland, mute, black and white movie flickering across the screen.

At some point later, he jerked awake in the chair he'd been sitting in, startling himself. *Shit,* he hadn't been meant to fall asleep. Shaking his head to get his bearings, he stood. Nothing seemed amiss, but he gripped his gun, crossing the room to check the bathroom on the off chance Flynn had managed to get in and was lying in wait.

Neither the bathroom nor the closet revealed anything of the sort, letting Wyatt breathe a little easier. He headed back towards the other end of the room, peering down at Rufus first – still asleep – and then Lucy – still asl- Wyatt blinked hard, his mind temporarily fritzing out.

She was still asleep, but had managed to work her way halfway out from under the covers. She was flat on her stomach, her arms pushed up near her head.

And the flimsy top she'd been put in was doing almost nothing to cover her.

Wyatt squeezed his eyes shut, but the vision of the soft curve of the side her breast peeking out from beneath the tiny shirt was already emblazoned in his brain. *Fuck.*

Out of self-preservation, he opened his eyes, shifting his line of sight lower, to where he could grab the wayward bedding and pull it up over her shoulders. With her finally covered, he sank back down into his chair with a shuddery breath.

There was no point in denying it anymore – in all the stupid insanity of this time travel crap and the ridiculous situation with their supposed marriage… He'd gone and let himself become attracted to her. *Shit.*

Except, he admitted to himself darkly, it was *more* than that. She was good-looking, beautiful even. He wasn't blind, and there was a reason he'd tried to sneak a look when she'd been maneuvering her bra off during their first time trip.

He was beyond just attraction (though it was certainly there, given that he still couldn't push the
image of her near-bare chest from a few moments ago out of his mind). Wyatt was pretty sure he was starting to encroach on the real of having actual feelings for her. Which meant he was fucked.

*Jessica* had to be the priority. He had a wife; he couldn't let himself get caught up in the acting with Lucy and Lena. He was getting too attached, too wrapped up in both of them, in the stupid family life they'd been dumped into. He had to stop.

When they got back to 2017, he had to really start pushing for Mason's team to figure out how to right the timeline with Jess. And get Amy back too, for Lucy's sake, but… *Jessica*, he reminded himself. She was the important thing. He'd get her back. He had to.

Wyatt had never been more grateful to hear Rufus' voice as he was when he was pulled out of his daze a few minutes later.

"Dude, anything?" came the hushed question from the far bed.

Wyatt shook his head to indicate no, no Flynn.

So Rufus climbed out of the bed, crossed over to Wyatt and plucked the gun from his hand. "Get some sleep. I got this."

Wyatt wasn't in a position to protest. Physically he was drained; they'd been up for who knows how many hours, and not even on a full night's sleep to boot. Mentally? Emotionally? Possibly even worse. So he crawled into the bed Rufus had vacated, turning his back to Lucy's bed.

When he woke again a few hours later to find Lucy and Rufus speaking in hushed tones as the dim light of dawn crept in from the window, and he felt a twinge in his gut, he tried to tell himself that it wasn't jealousy, that it wasn't him missing getting to be alone with Lucy after barely a day without. He almost believed himself.

Once he announced the fact that he was awake with a small cough, the rest of the day went on rather uneventfully. There was no sign of Flynn, nor anyone else who might have threatened, at President Carter's speech. Everything was fine, no assassination even attempted, leaving history relatively intact. Later, faced with the prospect of hiking out to the hills to the lifeboat, they collectively decided it was too daunting a task after the unsettled night they'd had. Which made for a confused cab driver when they asked to be dropped off in the middle of nowhere, but they were all too exhausted to care. All Wyatt wanted to do was get some real sleep. Preferably alone, without Rufus in the room, and without Lucy in the same bed. Not that he currently had anywhere to do so…

It was only back in 2017, that Wyatt was reminded that not only did he not currently have anywhere to sleep alone, but while time was linear while they were away, departing 1970s L.A. in the evening didn't make for arriving back in 2017 in the evening. As he finished changing, plucking his phone from his locker, it glowed an annoyingly early '12:36 pm' up at him.

So instead of napping himself, he was right back where he'd left off, at with Lucy, at her mother's house to pick up the little one who actually did the napping during the day.

He hung back when they entered the house, letting Lucy go first, calling out to her mother. It was this kind of crap that he didn't need to be dealing with right now – the couple-y stuff with Lucy, the family stuff with the kid. He needed to get Jes-

Wyatt lost his train of thought when a squeal rang out and Carolyn rounded the corner from the kitchen, leading a toddling Lena by one finger.

"She still won't do it on her own," she informed them with a smile. "She absolutely could, but
someone's still afraid of letting go, huh, little one?” she finished, directing her question down to Lena, who just gurgled back up at her with a gap-toothed grin.

They took a few steps closer to where he and Lucy still stood at the door, then Carolyn carefully pried her finger from Lena's grip, using it instead to point in their direction, softly coaxing Lena to walk on her own. "Go see Mommy and Daddy, sweetie. You can do it."

Lena stood uncertainly, wobbling ever so slightly as she looked over at him and shoved her fingers in her mouth.

Everything that had dominated his thoughts – getting Jess back, pushing away thoughts of Lucy and Lena – since overnight in L.A. flew out of Wyatt's brain. As if on autopilot, he squatted down, waving at Lena, calling over to her, "C'mere, Lena…"

He felt Lucy's hand rest on his shoulder as he encouraged Lena further.

But Lena just stood still, wobbling again as she debated her next move. A few seconds later, she gave up, instead plopping down on her butt with a yelp and then scooting over to them on her hands and knees instead.

Wyatt felt his face fall a little, but smiled down at her when she reached him. He scooped her up and stood, Lucy's hand sliding down his back as he did so. "Next time, kiddo," he assured her, hugging her to him.

He looked up, only to find both Carolyn and Lucy watching him with Lena with soft smiles on their faces. His stomach dropped. This is what he'd meant to avoid, what he was supposed to be putting a stop to. Shit.

His discomfort was only exacerbated when Carolyn made a comment about the new house, reminding them that their extended excursion meant that they were down to less than a day until they had to be moving out of his apartment. Shit indeed.

"We're pretty much ready, mom, don't worry," he heard Lucy assure her mother, despite all the evidence to the contrary that he knew was still awaiting them back at his place. Lena’s room hadn't been touched, the kitchen wasn’t fully packed, and neither was his stuff or the living room.

With a deep breath, Wyatt forced himself to push aside all of the conflicting emotions over Jessica, and Lucy and Lena, instead focusing on the more immediate logistics. He bid a quick goodbye to Carolyn, and ushered Lucy and Lena back out to the car.

Between Lena being dumped in the playpen, plus an impromptu trip to Target for extra plastic bins just before they closed, he and Lucy managed to finish everything the possibly could. A few bins remained empty, awaiting the last of the bedding, clothes, and the morning's dishes, but otherwise they'd gotten everything packed.

By the time he and Lucy fell into bed, he was exhausted enough to forget that he'd intended to separate them with a wall of pillows.

TBC…
Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

Thank you again, everyone who's reading and following, and especially those commenting. It means a lot that you guys are liking this so much.

Also, a few people have mentioned how 'slow burn' this is. And yes, I know it is in terms of your reading/my writing time, but it's actually only been a few days in their world since they came back to find wedding rings and a kid! I'm actually trying to work on how to not have things be moving too fast in their timeline :) But trust me, the slow burn will ignite eventually!

(PS – Someone stop me; the lengths of these chapters are getting out of hand. Too many ideas!)

Lucy stroked Lena's hair, holding tight to her with her other hand to keep her from squirming off the ledge of counter between the kitchen and the living room. While Lena gnawed away on a colorful set of plastic keys, Lucy warily eyed the set of real keys on the counter, just a bit out of Lena's reach. Keys to a house that she'd apparently purchased but had yet to see outside of Google Streetview. A house that she'd be living in later that day.

Lucy sighed, looking around. Even amid the stupid trips to New York and L.A., she and Wyatt had managed to get everything packed in some semblance of order. Now that she and Lena were up, all that was left was to yank the linens off the bed after Wyatt woke up and toss them in an Ikea bag that already held Lena's crib sheets and Lucy's used towels from the bathroom. And throw anything from the fridge into a cooler. But everything else was done. And the moving company still wouldn't be there for another two and a half hours.

Impulsively, she shot a glance toward the hallway where Wyatt still slept, then simultaneously grabbed both the keys and Lena. "Let's go see where we're going, huh?" she whispered down to the little girl. With a short detour to the dining table to grab the scrap of paper with the address she hadn't quite yet memorized, the pair slipped out of the apartment quietly.

Lena was surprisingly cooperative when it came to the carseat, still happily gumming away at her toy, so it wasn't even fifteen minutes before Lucy rolled to a stop in the driveway of a modern-looking, medium-size, light blue house just across town.

Taking a deep breath, she steeled herself for actually going in, actually going to see this place that was supposed to be such a big part of this new phase of her life. Never mind that the life didn't feel like hers.

"Should we go in?" she asked, turning around to face Lena's seat.

Lena just let out a squeal and flashed a toothy grin in Lucy's direction.

Lucy couldn't help but smile back herself, in spite of the vaguely queasy apprehensive feeling settling in her stomach. But sitting in the car even longer wasn't going to change anything, so she slid out of
the driver's seat, plucked Lena from the back, and made her way up to the front door.

Her stomach twisted as soon as they stepped inside. Light, bright, cool walls and a wide, open living room and stairway spread out before her. It was only a few more feet into the kitchen and dining room – equally clean, bright, and modern – and Lucy's eyes were tearing up as she hugged Lena to her.

It was exactly what she would have picked out, if someone had asked her, months ago before any hint of the time travelling fiasco had begun. If she had to pick a house, any house, for her nebulous future family, it would have been just like this one.

And now she had it.

But the life wasn't really hers. For all the perfection of the house, and the effort they'd put into moving, wouldn't it all just vaporize the second that Wyatt figured out how to bring Jessica back? They'd get the happily ever after, and she'd be back to… back to what? Living at home with her mother? Tenure out the window? Still single well into her thirties? And Lena-

Lucy froze, realization dawning on her for the first time. She'd known that anything was possible; she herself had pointed out before New York that if Lena had materialized out of nowhere so easily, she could just as easily disappear, like Amy, on any one of their trips. But since then… It had only been a couple of days, but she'd grown so used to having the sweet little toddler around that it had never really registered that, while pretty much anything was up for grabs on any given trip, Wyatt specifically re-setting his own timeline with Jessica would almost surely erase Lena from ever having existed.

She blinked hard, the tears finally spilling over as she set Lena on the edge of the high counter in the kitchen and studied her chubby little face. Suddenly it was really hard to imagine not having her around. "Maybe he won't figure out how to get her back," she said softly, meaning the words for Lena, despite the fact that the 13-month old would have no idea what they meant, nor the situation that they referred to.

Then again, Lena did choose to respond not with a happy shriek, but a solemn "Da" as she held her drooled-on keys out to Lucy.

"Yeah, Dad," Lucy murmured, once again scooping Lena into her arms. "Dad and his actual wife."

But Jessica wasn't showing up today and Lena wasn't going anywhere today. Movers were, and futile as all the efforts might have eventually proved to be, Lucy knew the only thing she could do was, once again, push actual feelings aside and focus on the immediate issues. Thinking too much about Wyatt and Lena and Jessica and what it all meant for her would get them all nowhere, and at the very least, Lena did exist right now. And she needed her parents to get their act together and make sure she got moved into her new house when she was supposed to.

Brushing away the remnants of tears from her cheeks, Lucy forced a more cheerful mood for Lena's sake, asking brightly, "Should we go check out your room? Yeah?"

Rewarded with a bubbly giggle, Lucy rubbed the little girl's back as they headed upstairs.

It was just as perfect as the downstairs, Lucy realized with a wistful sigh. Sunny bedrooms – one of the smaller ones painted a soft blue that just matched Lena's (…and Wyatt's…) eyes, decent closets, and an updated-looking bathroom. Nothing huge, just enough to give a little family some extra space. If only they actually were a real family…
There had been that one fleeting second the other night, when she'd been halfway to a meltdown and he'd pressed a kiss to her head; for a half a heartbeat, she'd let herself wonder if just maybe… But more than likely it had been an old habit, resurfacing from when he would have done the same for Jessica, right? It's not like he'd been anything but stoically reserved the whole time they'd been in L.A. in the 70s.

Walking from room to room, Lucy scolded herself for letting emotion sneak in yet again. It's not like she wouldn't have more time for that later. Instead, she tried to picture the haphazard mix of her furniture and Wyatt's that was currently crowded into his apartment, attempting to mentally figure out what would go where given the array of rooms she was currently faced with. Barely two bedrooms worth of stuff would have no problem fitting into three. And wandering back downstairs, she realized she'd managed to miss the fact that a separate dining room and small office-looking room with built-in bookshelves were just off the far end of the kitchen. The basement further revealed a completely finished den or family room that opened out onto a patio, with a swingset just beyond.

Well, at least they'd have no trouble fitting the rest of the tiny apartment's stuff in.

By that point, Lena was getting a little restless, making it tricky to hold onto her. And, Lucy realized, casting a quick glance at her watch, they'd been gone for a while and Wyatt was probably up, wondering where they were.

Or, she mused wryly, he wasn't wondering and was just using his free time to figure out how to track down Jessica.

With one last look around, Lucy stepped out of the house, pulling the door closed behind her to lock it, only to have Lena let out a whimper when she realized she'd have to go back in the carseat. "We'll be back later," Lucy soothed her as she clipped her into the seatbelts. "Promise."

The drive back to the apartment was as quick as the drive to the house had been, so it was just a few minutes later that Lucy was letting the two of them back into Wyatt's place.

Only to be confronted by an agitated-looking Wyatt, who rushed across the room to them, stopping short when he seemingly thought better of it. "Jesus," he breathed. "Are you ok?"

"Why wouldn't we be?" Lucy asked, half touched by his concern, half amused. It was one thing – and much appreciated – when she was in the midst of getting kidnapped or attacked or whatever, whenever in the past, but a little out of place here, now.

But he was clearly affected. "I just…" he sighed, "I don't know." He ran his palm over his face. "I didn't know where you were."

"We just went to see the house," Lucy admitted apologetically, now feeling a little guilty for so obviously stressing him out. "Considering she's the only one of us," she nodded down at Lena in her arms, "who might have actually seen it already, I thought it made sense. You were still asleep," she explained.

"I- I woke up and you weren't here, and…" Any anger had faded by now, and Wyatt just sounded helpless as he waved to where Lucy's phone sat on the counter. "I tried calling, but your phone's right there."

"Wyatt," Lucy reassured him, reaching out to place a hand on his arm, still a bit puzzled by his overreaction, "We're fine-"

As Lucy reached for his arm, Lena took note of Wyatt's sudden closer proximity. "Dada," she
declared, twisting in Lucy's grip and leaning towards him.

That elicited the first smile on his face since they'd come back in. "Hi kiddo," he murmured, taking Lena from Lucy, giving her a hug as he settled her against his hip. Turning back to Lucy, he continued, "I know. Just..." he trailed off with a deep breath and a sheepish grin, "let me know next time you decide to disappear, ok?"

Lucy nodded, still surprised by his strong reaction, "Ok."

But she wasn't afforded any time to try and figure it out, for just a few seconds later, that same phone that she'd neglected to bring when she'd gone over to the house rang out in an alarm tone.

"That's only an hour until the movers come," Lucy relayed to Wyatt as she reached to silence the tone. "Are you ready, or...?"

He shook his head as he pushed Lena back to her. "Let me go shower," he said, nodding toward the bathroom. "I'll load the cars after."

Lucy watched him go, still curious about his worry while they'd been gone. But she had other things to do. Setting Lena in the playpen, she hurried to finish up the last few things like grabbing pillows and sheets off the bed.

Just over an hour later, the cooler of the last of the food, a couple duffels of clothes and toiletries (just in case), the loose Ikea bags of bedding and paper plates, Lena's stroller, playpen, and diapers were all stashed in Wyatt's beat up old Jeep, and the three of them watched as a team of movers carefully (and not so carefully) rolled furniture and stacks of bins and boxes to a truck in the parking lot. Lucy traded off with Wyatt, alternating supervising and holding Lena, with doing some final cleaning up once rooms were emptied. It didn't take long to clear out and clean the small apartment, so once that was done, Lucy took Lena to head back to the house to meet the truck, while Wyatt did a final walkthrough with the landlord and turned in the keys.

Or at least it was the plan for Lucy to meet the truck.

She and Lena were sitting in the middle of the bare living room floor, rolling a small ball around, when Wyatt arrived, still no moving truck to be seen.

He peered in the front door tentatively, his face wrinkling into a frown when he spotted them on the floor. "Where's the truck?" he asked, his voice laced with confusion.

Lucy rolled her eyes, waving her phone at him. "The company said it got lost," she informed him.

"It's a ten minute drive!" he yelped in disbelief.

Lucy shrugged. It's not like they could do much beyond complain, but that still wouldn't get anything moving any faster.

She was pretty sure Wyatt eventually realized the same, as he let out a sigh, his shoulders slackening. He still lingered in the entryway, and finally took a moment to take in his surroundings. Lucy could see his eyes darting about. "It's... nice here," he observed quietly.

Swallowing hard, Lucy nodded stiffly. She certainly agreed, but it still was hardly the ideal circumstance to be moving into. "I guess we have good taste in this timeline," she added blandly, willing herself not to choke up as she had earlier that morning.

With that he, turned away, wandering off to absently explore deeper into the house. Lena looked up
at her from between her legs on the floor. "Da?" she asked, her voice curious.

"He'll be right back," Lucy promised as she distractedly handed the ball to Lena, still watching where Wyatt had disappeared toward the kitchen.

Thankfully, the movers finally showed after another ten minutes or so, though they still left something to be desired once they arrived. They'd barely begun bringing things in when Lucy stood in the hallway to the kitchen, watching two guys bump into not only the door frame, but also the bottom of the stair's railing, and then drop one corner, leaving a scrape on the wood floor of the entry way. She winced.

"Why did we hire these clowns?" Wyatt hissed in her ear suddenly, causing her to jump. He'd snuck up behind her with Lena. "Rufus and I could have been done already."

"We didn't. Other us did," Lucy whispered back as the movers looked to her for guidance on where to place the couch. "…uh, yeah, over there," she indicated, waving over to the area by the large front window. Smirking over her shoulder at Wyatt, she lowered her voice again, teasing, "Maybe other you is lazy."

Before Wyatt could reply, Lena interrupted, smacking Lucy on the shoulder as she leaned from Wyatt's embrace toward her, whining, "Ma…"

Lucy quickly reached for her; by now, such exchanges were coming with practiced ease, as if the two of them hadn't just first discovered the girl's existence a mere four days ago.

"Well, it's still driving this me nuts," Wyatt snarked, releasing his grip on Lena as Lucy took over. But Lena wasn't placated, wriggling herself right back around in Lucy's arms and trying to launch herself back toward Wyatt. "Da," she whimpered.

Lucy caught Wyatt's befuddled gaze as she passed Lena back to him. "Make up your mind, kid," he chuckled, sounding mildly amused.

Cringing at she caught sight of the movers now hitting a bookcase against the front door, Lucy turned to Wyatt with a thought. "Why don't you go in the yard with her or something? She's all antsy, you're going to punch one of those guys soon…" She nodded towards the sliding door in the kitchen that led to the deck off the back of the house. "You could go outside for a while?" Catching a glimpse of her watch, she added, "And give her lunch out there, she's probably hungry."

She followed Wyatt's gaze as he eyed the door to the yard and considered her idea. Then he looked down at Lena, asking, "You want to go outside, baby girl? Before we kill the movers?" He used the hand not clutching her to tickle her round tummy, earning a peal of giggles. Lucy had to smile herself as he grinned down at Lena, affirming his previous question, "Yeah, ok."

Their interaction tugged at Lucy's heartstrings, a dull ache in her chest as she watched Wyatt rifle through the cooler they'd yet to unpack, pulling a few plastic tubs out before heading to the yard. He was so good with Lena… Of course, Lucy would have loved for it all to be real, the three of them, but part of her almost wished he'd gone through with what he'd said had been Jessica's hopes, back when they'd been tied up in the 1700s. Jessica had wanted a little boy; she almost wished for Wyatt's sake that he'd gone through with it with her before she'd died. Would he have been worse or better off after Jessica's death if he'd had a tie to her in the form of her child?

Lucy was pulled from her musings by another bang by the front door. Lena's rocking chair this time. With a sigh, she shook away thoughts of Wyatt and dug out her no-nonsense professor voice,
heading over to give the movers a bit of a talking to.

Things did improve after that, if only marginally. The movers still seemed to require a whole lot of supervision and direction to ensure that neither the house nor their belongings got completely beat up. Still, given the limited amount of things that one could squeeze into a simple apartment meant that even with having to watch them like a hawk, the truck was soon fully unloaded and the movers on their way to smashing up some other client's furniture.

Lucy was just about to grab a sandwich and head out into the backyard when the doorbell rang.

When she pulled the door open, she was stunned to find a whole new truck out front, bearing a name that she knew to be a local furniture store. Apparently either she and Wyatt, in their other timeline, or her mother, had also come to the conclusion that an apartment's worth of furniture wasn't going to cut it in a full-sized three-bedroom home. Which meant no such luck on grabbing lunch and spending time in the yard. Not only did she have to direct the new team of movers on where to place the new furniture, she first had to figure out what it even was. At least she could blame her ignorance on her mother having ordered everything for them without her knowledge.

She was just in the midst of directing them into the spare bedroom upstairs with a dresser when she heard Wyatt call from somewhere. "Lucy, where are towels? And diapers?" he added. And after another beat, "And clothes?"

Rattling off a quick apology to the movers, she dashed down the stairs, trying to place where his voice had come from, "What?"

Lucy scanned the living room and kitchen. Not seeing them, she headed down the hall off the kitchen, calling out again, "Wyatt? What did y-"

Not seeing them in the dining room, she'd turned around in the small hallway, only to run smack into him as he exited the bathroom.

She braced herself against the impact with her hands. At least until she realized that all she was feeling under said hands was bare skin. Flustered, she backed up, wide-eyed as she took in the sight before her.

Wyatt was shirtless, with his jeans slung low and his boxers peeking out just above the waistband. In his arms was Lena, naked but for her diaper, and covered in some sort of purple streaks and what looked like mud. On second glance, Lucy could see the same mud all over Wyatt's arms as well.

"...towels," he repeated as Lucy blinked, nearly unhearing, at him.

She shook her head, forcing herself to focus.

At least he looked as startled and flustered as she felt, the tips of his ears pink as he explained awkwardly, "We, ah, turns out blueberries are super blue," he stammered. "And there's mud back there. She found it; got it all over both of us. I was gonna rinse her off," he added, gesturing back to where she could now make out the sound of a tub running and see a small pile of dirty clothes on the floor. "So we need towels. And clothes."

Still rattled by the visual of him half-dressed, Lucy barely managed to formulate a full sentence, blurtling out, "Um, she has extra clothes with the diapers in the bag, on the kitchen counter. Towels and your, uh, clothes, are upstairs, I think." Needing an escape, she hurriedly added, "I'll get them."

Pretty well dumbstruck, she ducked away from them, dodging the movers as she headed back upstairs with her heart racing. Sure, she'd seen him half-naked before, but she hadn't really known
him yet. At that point, he'd been (annoying, cocky) eye candy at best, but even that had been severely tempered by the fact that he'd been shot and in 1865, no less. Even later, when feelings had started to take root and he'd kissed her back in Arkansas, he'd mercifully at least kept an undershirt on when they'd been forced to share a bed.

Now? Holy crap. She'd never been up close and personal with the clichéd 'naked man and baby', but she sure as hell understood the draw now. Especially when you were already well on your way to falling head over heels for said (half-)naked man…

Lucy forced herself to take a slow, deep breath and focus for a second. Ignore naked man. Get towel for baby. Clothes for baby. Diaper. Check. Those she could do. Except those things wouldn't fix the fact that Wyatt was running around shirtless. Another deep breath.

She eyed the duffel bags they'd tossed into the corner of the master bedroom, knowing one held a smattering of his clothes. As quickly as she could, she unzipped it, fished around until she managed to grab a t-shirt, and that was that. Towels were in plastic bins in the hall by the linen closet; she grabbed two and headed back down to the kitchen to retrieve Lena's diaper bag.

With all the requested things procured, she stepped hesitantly over to where the bathroom's door now was closed over. Not needing another visual of an adorable baby and a half-naked Wyatt to fuel her racing thoughts, she cracked the door and tossed the lot in onto the floor with a short "Here" before slamming the door closed again.

Thankfully, she still had the furniture delivery guys bringing in a few more things to keep her momentarily distracted. Less thankfully, it really was only a few things – a couple armchairs brought to the family room in the basement, and a desk to the office – and then they were done, leaving Lucy alone with her thoughts once more.

Wyatt and Lena were still in the bathroom, and by the sound of the high-pitched squeals and splashes, it was pretty likely Wyatt was still shirtless.

If only she could get rid of the mental image now firmly imprinted in her vision…

In an effort to do something, anything, to keep her mind off him, Lucy headed for the kitchen, figuring the least she needed to do was get the rest of the food into the fridge, and that she could start unpacking dishes and the like.

Sure, it was productive enough, but it wasn't serving the mental purpose she'd hoped it would.

How was she supposed to keep living with him like this? When all she wanted was for the whole thing to be real, but all he wanted was for it to be with someone else? As things stood, there was no end in sight. Wyatt hadn't come any closer to figuring out how to get Jessica back, nor had there been any news on Amy. And as far as everyone save Mason, Christopher, Rufus, and whoever was researching Jessica knew, they were just a happy little family who just bought their first house. She'd be living the torture of half-naked run-ins, unsolicited half-asleep cuddling, and everything else that reeked of 'so close but yet so far' for who knows how long.

Unless she did something about it.

It seemed kind of ridiculous given that they'd just, literally just, moved into this house that barely made sense for three, never mind one or two, but, she admitted to herself reluctantly, maybe it would be better if she followed through with her initial instinct, before they even knew about Lena. And then again after they did know about her. She should go stay with her mother. Whatever these feelings were that she'd been feeling since that kiss in Arkansas were only going to get worse, which
seeing him shirtless had pretty well confirmed. Cutting her losses and getting out was the only thing that made sense; the further she fell, the more it would hurt when he finally figured out how to get Jessica back. Sure everyone thought it was a real marriage, but it's not like real marriages never ran into trouble; she and Wyatt had managed all sorts of roles throughout history now, including regular married couple even here in this timeline now. They could certainly handle 'amicably divorcing couple' too, right? Hell, that's already what Jiya had been thinking anyway.

A small movement in the hallway distracted her.

Lena, her wispy curls still damp, had clearly escaped from Wyatt's supervision, and was happily crawling her way towards the living room, albeit awkwardly, given that she was now clad a little dress that kept getting her knees caught up.

Lucy was just about to grab her and help her out when Lena suddenly stopped and shakily pulled herself up to stand, her bare little toes gripping the wood floor as she wobbled. Lucy followed where she seemed to be looking, a determined look on her little face. The ball, the silly little ball they'd been rolling around while waiting for the movers, still sat in the corner of the front foyer. And Lena was standing there, staring at it like she meant business.

Suddenly it hit Lucy what she was seeing, and she hissed down the hall, hopefully enough to get Wyatt's attention without distracting Lena. "Wyatt!"

"Shit," she heard him exclaim, then caught sight of him racing frantically out of the bathroom as he righted the hem of his new shirt, searching the floor for Lena. "She was just right th-

She stepped in front of him, bracing him with her arm to stop him, whispering a soft "Shhh" as she nodded towards Lena.

His eyes went wide. "Wait, is she-?"

"I don't know, maybe?" Lucy hedged with an unsure shrug.

She felt Wyatt nudge her in the back. "I freaked her out yesterday," he reminded her, insisting, "You try."

Obediently, Lucy chirped out a "Lena!"

It earned her a toothy smile as Lena turned her upper body toward them, but nothing else.

"She can't turn around," Wyatt observed, his breath hot on her neck as he whispered over her shoulder.

A shiver ran up her spine, but she shook it off, nodding. "Right, right." So she carefully hugged the wall, slipping past Lena to get in front of her by a few feet, where she lowered herself to sit on the floor. "Lena, you can do it," she coaxed gently, reaching for the ball to show her.

As she did, she could see Wyatt pull his phone out of his back pocket, holding it up, probably taking video, just in case. He, too, urged Lena on, "Lena, go see Lu-" His voice caught, and then he corrected himself, "Go see Mommy."

Lucy sucked in a sharp breath, her gaze darting up to him at the sound of that word, coming from him, in reference to her. Her mother had said it, and so had Lena, at least as a close an approximation as she could get. But they hadn't, not with respect to each other.

She didn't get to ponder any implications further, for that's when Lena decided to try out one
cautious, shaky step, then a second.

Lucy couldn't help but squeal herself, a yelp sneaking out of its own volition. "You're doing it! Keep going!" she cheered, clapping her hands in what she could only think had to be pride. Though she couldn't tear her eyes from the toddler, she could hear Wyatt laughing and cheering as well.

The encouragement was enough for Lena to build up a little momentum, managing another four or five steps in Lucy's direction before Lucy was forced to dive to catch her mid-faceplant. But she made in time so Lena was unscathed and giggling as Lucy pulled her onto her lap with a soft, "Yay!" for the little one's benefit.

But Lena wasn't done, wriggling and squirming on Lucy's lap. "You want to try more?" Lucy asked playfully, setting her back down to stand facing away from her. "Ok, go see-" She hesitated half a beat before spitting out, "Daddy."

Feeling her cheeks flame, she purposely didn't look up at Wyatt to see his reaction, but she could make out that he squatted down, still recording with phone. "C'mere kid, come on," he cajoled softly.

Clearly quite happy with her newfound skill, Lena let out a happy shriek and set off for Wyatt. She managed another few steps before her ambition exceeded her fledgling proficiency, and she wasn't yet close enough to Wyatt for him to cushion the fall. She tripped, hitting the wood floor hard with her knees and chin. The tearful wails were immediate, but so were Wyatt and Lucy's reactions.

She jumped up, but Wyatt beat her to Lena, and he scooped her up to whisper soothing words as he rubbed her back. "Hey, hey, hey, shhhh, you'll get better. We all needed practice at first."

Lucy reached them just in time to see him press a kiss to the top of Lena's head. If she'd thought he'd been tugging her heartstrings earlier, it was still no match for this…

Without thinking, she leaned her head against Wyatt's shoulder, reaching up to brush away the tears from Lena's cheeks.

Wyatt didn't seem to mind; he just beamed down at where she'd laid her head. "That was pretty cool," he admitted, grinning.

Lucy smiled back wistfully as Lena's whimpers subsided. How she wanted to freeze this moment… "Yeah," she agreed, "those were the first steps she'll ever take. We saw it. That is pretty cool."

Lena had calmed down within another minute or so, prompting Wyatt to try to elicit a happier mood by tickling her again, teasing her. "Now what, huh?"

His voice shaking her out of her contemplative state, Lucy lifted her head from his shoulder and realized the practical answer to his question, especially now that they were in a new house, with plenty of stairs. "Now I think we need a bunch of those baby gate things," she replied, despite the question not having been for her.

With a thoughtful nod, Wyatt agreed, "Yeah, true."

"There's also like no food here," Lucy added. "Should we go buy stuff?"

Wyatt snorted in response, "I'd be ok with not seeing these stupid boxes again for a while."

So that's what they did. For all her thinking about trying to avoid the perfect picture of family domesticity, Lucy found herself right in the middle of it, wandering the aisle of Target as Wyatt played the role of doting dad, pushing Lena in the cart and picking out new (unnecessary) toys for
her.

Of course, they weren't lucky enough to have the first place they went have enough gates in stock, so afternoon blurred into evening as they fought traffic to make their way across town to a second Target. They managed to get enough gates, only to find that they wouldn't all quite fit in Lucy's little sedan, at least with Lena's carseat in the middle seat. So that had led to a comical war between Wyatt and the seat. He eventually won, but Lena was getting restless, and given that Target #2 hadn't been one with groceries like the first one had, they were forced to stop and get dinner before going grocery shopping.

All of which led to more stupidly adorable moments that Lucy both loved and hated at the same time. Wyatt feeding Lena, Wyatt 'asking' Lena's opinion on breakfast cereals, Wyatt carrying a sleeping Lena around the second half of the grocery story instead of letting her slump over in the cart's seat, a pair of old ladies gushing over Wyatt doing said carrying…

Yeah, she was never going to survive much more of this, always knowing that for everything he was doing, Jessica was still his goal.

When they finally got back the house, Lena was still out like a light in the carseat, so rather than disturb her right away, Lucy and Wyatt tag-teamed the unloading of the car, getting all the gates and groceries in before Wyatt brought her in and upstairs to get her into her crib for the night.

While he did, Lucy set out to put away and organized the massive pile of food they'd managed to acquire. She shouldn't have been surprised that, despite Wyatt's moderate size, he could put away a lot; as she well knew from earlier in the day, a good portion of that moderate frame was solid, military muscle.

She was still working her way through the groceries when Wyatt came back down from Lena's room, and she was actually grateful when he offered to start organizing the stuff in the living room rather than helping her; a little space was welcome after the day they'd had.

But it wasn't long before cries filtered down the stairs from Lena's room.

Wyatt poked his head into the kitchen, looking confused. "Is that-?"

Lucy nodded, "Yeah, she just never cried at night before."

"Can she tell it's a new place?" he wondered aloud. "Can that be scary for a kid that little?"

She shrugged; she honestly didn't know. But talking wasn't going to calm the kid down, so Lucy headed for the stairs, telling Wyatt as she went, "I'll go."

She was already up the first couple of steps when she heard Wyatt clear his throat below. She paused.

"Uh," he stammered, his gaze darting around, "are there, uh, pillows and blankets somewhere?"

Confused, Lucy's brow furrowed. "All that stuff's up by the bed," she told him. "I was going to do that next, when the groceries are away."

Wyatt still wouldn't look at her, as he clarified, "Extras, I mean."

"Extras?" Lucy echoed, not understanding.

Wyatt shifted his stance uncomfortably, gesturing behind him to the living room. "The couch is…"
He shrugged. "Don't have to share anymore."

Oh.

The implication hit Lucy like a two-by-four in the face. She knew he wanted Jessica first and foremost, and she herself had been dead set on moving in with her mother as soon as possible. Still, when she'd pictured falling into bed later that night, she hadn't pictured anything but having him next to her.

She knew she'd been quiet too long, so she attempted to save face by playing it off casually. "Right, right," she nodded. "Uh, well you can still have pillows from there… Blankets? I uh…" She knew she'd seen them, but once again, those damned emotions were getting the best of her, and she couldn't for the life of her finish the sentence.

It was Lena who saved her, crying out even louder from upstairs, leading Wyatt to urge her upstairs instead, "I'll find one. Go get-"

"Right, I'm going…" Lucy scaled the rest of the stairs quickly, as much to get away from Wyatt as it was to get to Lena. Entering the pale blue bedroom, dimly lit by a nightlight, Lucy tried to calm her as she lifted her out of the crib. "Shhh, shhhh. Hi, sweet girl," she murmured, a tear slipping down her own cheek. "I know how you feel."

She sank down into the rocking chair in the corner, Lena still sniffling in her lap and a few tears more sliding down her own face. She was such an idiot; she should have just stayed with her mother from day one. If it could hurt this much to have him avoid her, and it had only been four days, how the hell would she make it through the days, weeks, however long they were stuck in this arrangement, this timeline?

Lena quieted after a few more moments of rocking, so Lucy carefully set her back in the crib and headed down the hall to the master bedroom. She wiped her cheeks, and set her jaw, determined to not let him get to her as she made up the bed for herself. When finished, she grabbed a pillow, bringing it downstairs.

Wyatt had found blankets somewhere; there was one spread out on the couch, and he was across the room, his back to her as he lined up books on a bookshelf. She tossed the pillow to the couch without a word and headed back to the kitchen to finish organizing the groceries.

Lucy had just barely finished up and was washing her hands when the sound of Lena crying once more.

When she headed for the stairs, she met Wyatt in the entryway; he'd obviously had the same intent as she had. But she headed him off, assuring him she'd take care of it. "She won't stay calm," she explained. "I'll just stay with her and then probably just go to bed," she added, feeling rather defeated by the day.

She was more than halfway up the stairs when she heard him call after her, "G'night, Lucy."

Well, no, it wasn't particularly good. So she muttered a soft, "Night," in response, though she wasn't even sure if he could hear her. Not that it mattered.

Entering Lena's room once more, seeing her still upset, Lucy made the split-second decision to just pull her out of the crib and bring her into the master bedroom. It's not like Wyatt would be using his half of the bed, and co-sleeping with babies was a thing, right?

She carefully set Lena down in the middle of the bed, watching to make sure she didn't crawl
anywhere near the edge while she shimmied out of her jeans. And rather than taking the time to dig for any real pajamas – again, it's not like Wyatt would be anywhere around – she pulled off her shirt, and slid out of her bra, leaving just the camisole she'd had on under the other shirt. Crawling into the bed, she laid on her side, curling herself protectively around Lena and resting a hand on her little chest.

Lucy just hoped sleep proved to be a respite for both of them.

TBC…
Chapter Notes

Ugh. Real life. Times a million. Sorry everyone, things really did just get crazy the past few weeks. I hope this still came out ok, because it was written in fits and starts when I managed to find a few minutes here and there. Normally I prefer to write longer chunks in one go. Here's hoping life stays (relatively) calm going forward!

Thank you all for your kind reviews, comments, and messages, even when it seemed like I'd fallen off the face of the earth :) As always, please excuse any historical inaccuracies.

Now back to our favorite angsty (sort-of) couple…

Wyatt shifted, flipping over and tugging up his blanket as he struggled to find a position that might allow him to fall back to sleep for a bit.

But the early morning sun streaming in the wide living room window, coupled with a not-so-comfortable couch, was rather unforgiving. Or so he tried to tell himself. It was easier to blame the couch for his fitful sleep when the alternative was simply that he missed having Lucy next to him.

It was better this way. Keep his distance. None of this getting too comfortable with Lucy. Focus on figuring out why he'd not only never married Jessica in this timeline, but why she'd ended up dead anyway. And then fix it.

Resolved to keep that line of thinking, Wyatt rolled over again and tried to arrange his pillow to somehow make up for the couch's shortcomings. But once the pillow's rustling ceased, he was alarmed to hear noise coming from outside the front door. He sat up straight at attention, even more alarmed when the clamor seemed to get more focused, sounding as if keys were being tried in the lock.

Tense, he cursed himself for not having his gun right there with him. Where the hell was it in the mess of the moving? Even with his immediate concern of the would-be intruder, it dawned on him that he was going to have to be a hell of a lot more careful with any weapons from now on, given that Lena was now a walker.

That split second of distraction, thinking about Lena, was enough to delay his reaction to the noise at the door, so he was still sitting on the couch, half under the blanket and just beginning to set his feet on the floor when Lucy's mother burst unceremoniously through the door.

Dumbfounded, Wyatt just froze.

It was another half a second before she looked up from the bags she was toting and noticed him. She started, "Oh! Wyatt. You scared me; I thought you'd all still be asleep."

Wyatt just stared back at her incredulously.
Luckily, Carol was unfazed by his reaction, laughing as she explained, "Lucy gave me a key as soon as you got them. I thought I'd surprise you with breakfast for your first morning here…" Her voice faded, and Wyatt could feel the scrutiny of her gaze as it very clearly hit her that she was seeing what she shouldn't have been seeing.

Stammering, Wyatt struggled to come up with any sort of plausible excuse for him having been on the couch. "Oh, I uh, fell asleep…" He glanced around as he trailed off; with unattached wires still dangling from the askew television, he couldn't even blame falling asleep watching a show or something. "…unpacking…" he finished lamely, belatedly realizing that it would still come off as a rather blatant lie; there'd have been no reason to have a pillow and a blanket had he merely accidentally fallen asleep there.

And Carol was very obviously unconvinced, looking rather skeptical as she inched her way towards the kitchen. "I just need to finish a few things here and get them in the oven for a few minutes."

"Yeah, uh, make yourself at home," Wyatt muttered, not really in a position to do anything else. "…I'll go see if Lucy and Lena are up," he added.

Once he was sure Carol was out of sight, Wyatt jumped off the couch, reaching for his jeans from the night before and hastily tugging them on. With a quick wary glance in the direction of the clatter now emanating from the kitchen, he turned and took the stairs two at a time; he was not about to sit around and make awkward small talk alone with a mother-in-law who wasn't even actually his, especially one who'd just caught him spending a night on the couch instead of in bed with her daughter, his wifé, who he was supposed to be happily married to. No, Lucy could deal with her mother.

At the top of the stairs, he hurried down the hall, hoping Lucy was already awake.

That sense of urgency was all but forgotten the instant he rounded the master bedroom's doorframe and caught sight of her. Or, to be more precise, caught sight of her bare legs. Bare all the way up to the skimpy striped underwear that barely covered her.

Not only was she not awake, she was barely dressed. (She also, for some reason, had Lena sleeping next to her, he noted, but that was hardly the most pressing issue at the moment.)

He told himself the rush of warmth he felt upon seeing her was just the fact that the room was warmer than downstairs. Obviously. Which is why she was (un)dressed like that in the first place. Obviously…

In his mind, she was supposed to be in some sort of shapeless pajamas, and buried under blankets to boot. Not in a flimsy tank top that was pushed halfway up her torso, with a strap already slipped off her shoulder and barely doing its job of holding the front of it in place.

This was why he was on the couch. This was the kind of thing didn't want to ever see. …But only because he actually did want to see it, which was the whole problem in the first place.

If someone held a gun to his head, yes, he would begrudgingly admit he'd stupidly allowed himself to become pretty solidly attracted to Lucy. How could he not? Even before this ridiculous marriage situation, they'd been thrown into this stupidly bizarre time travel fiasco and all the close-quarters and heightened emotions that came with it. She was smart, and sarcastic, and beautiful, and how could he help feeling something?

But that's as far as it could go. It really was too far already. He certainly couldn't let it go on any longer; even if he didn't owe it to Jessica to save her and get her back, he and Lucy were co-workers
and she deserved more than a smarmy colleague ogling her out of the corner of his eye all the time.

But even as he thought those words, he was pretty much doing exactly that. He willed himself not to, but he couldn't stop himself from shuffling a little closer, raking his gaze up and down her body.

Jess had been tiny, a petite little powerhouse with strong muscles from years of cheerleading in football-driven Texas, balanced by soft curves in all the right places. Exactly his type, if he was ever going to admit to having one.

But Wyatt was seriously beginning to doubt that self-assessment.

Because Lucy, lying there on the bed and looking every bit what Jessica hadn't been, was breathtaking.

Of course, anyone could tell the obvious – Lucy was taller than Jess, not much shorter that Wyatt himself when she had heels on; Rittenhouse himself had pointed out her slim build.

But seeing her like this… Where Jess had been cute and compact, Lucy was long. Thin. Elegant. Not a cheerleader, but a graceful dancer.

In spite of himself, Wyatt couldn't help but snort softly at that thought. She might have looked the part, but graceful wasn't exactly her M.O.

And neither her modern outfits nor the gaudy, awkward vintage clothes they were forced to wear truly did her justice. The slinky waitress outfit in Vegas and the silky slip she'd worn to bed in Arkansas, sure… They'd certainly elicited a little quickening of his pulse, but this?

Half of him wanted to run out of the room and go spend the morning with Carol while leaving Lucy to sleep, because uncomfortable as that might be, it still might actually be less awkward than walking in on this sight. The other half of him – the half Wyatt was currently cursing vehemently in his head – wanted nothing more than to stick Lena in her crib down the hall and slip into bed behind Lucy, press himself to her long, lithe form, and let his hands wander over all that smooth, pale, exposed skin.

Fuck. Sucking in a deep breath through his nose, Wyatt clenched his eyes shut and tried to will the jeans he'd just pulled back on to not get any tighter. He couldn't let himself think like that, he couldn't.

Summoning what resolve he could, he allowed his eyes to focus on her again and survey the scene objectively. She wasn't on top of the covers; she'd just shoved them off to the side. So he marched to the bed, snatched up the blankets and hastily tossed them over her still-sleeping form, being careful to avoid hitting Lena.

He froze momentarily when Lucy let out a soft sigh and shifted, but when she stilled again, he nudged her shoulder, now safely covered with about three layers of plush fabric. "Lucy…" he whispered.

But she just mumbled something and tried to bury her face further into the pillow. Which he did not find endearing at all, not even a little. Or so he told himself.

Wyatt nudged her again, a bit harder, sure that Carol was going to start wondering where they were. "Lucy," he hissed, louder this time.

Her eyes finally fluttered open, and he pretended not to notice when her eyes crinkled ever so slightly when she focused on his face with a sleepy smile and a soft, "Wyatt…"
Of course then reality seemed to set in, as it had a nasty habit of doing for both of them lately. Her face hardened with panic as she sat up quickly, her gaze darting over to Lena and back up at him. "What?" she asked hurriedly, "Flynn?"

He shook his head. "Your mother's here."

Panic gave way to confusion as Lucy clutched the blankets up against her chest. "What?"

"You ga-" Wyatt started to explain, before catching himself and amending, "other you gave her a key, I guess. She let herself in to make us breakfast for the first morning here and-

"-and she saw you on the couch…" Lucy finished as her shoulders slumped visibly.

He nodded in confirmation.

She grimaced in response, sighing, "If she's anything like my actual mother, I'm going to hear about that."

The silence that followed hung in the air between them, with Wyatt somehow not able to force himself to move, at the same time knowing that Lucy probably wasn't going to be going anywhere with him still hanging around, given what he knew to be her current attire.

Thankfully, Lena chose that moment to blink her eyes open and let out a tiny yawn, her little fists rubbing at her face as she stretched and rolled towards Lucy.

Wyatt couldn't help but smile at the sight, and in his peripheral vision, he could see Lucy do the same as she pulled Lena onto her lap.

The toddler was all giggles for a moment, but rather quickly, Lucy's embrace was not enough, and the giggles faded into angry, fussy wails and impatient squirming.

"Alright, uh…" Lucy started. Wyatt could see her gaze darting about as she wrestled with the wriggly Lena and tried to get her own bearings. Eventually she zeroed in on him. "Can you deal with the diaper?" she asked. "I-" she continued stiltedly, looking down at herself covered in blankets, "...need clothes."

Wyatt wasn't about to correct her apparent assumption that she'd been well-hidden under those covers since before he showed up in the room, so he remained silent as he obliged her request, and reached for Lena. He hurried her down the hall and made quick work of changing her and swapping out her pajamas for a new outfit, grateful for any sort of distraction to keep at bay the mental picture of Lucy, barely dressed, sprawled out on the bed.

With Lena ready, and the door to Lucy's – his? their? – room still tightly closed, he had no choice but to head back down to the kitchen, where breakfast and Lucy's mother were waiting. Carol was thankfully preoccupied with washing some dishes, so Wyatt slunk over to the breakfast bar silently, perching Lena on his lap as he sat on one of the tall stools. Lena herself did grab Carol's attention when she started smacking the counter with her hands, babbling loudly, but given that Carol was up to her elbows in soapy water, all she did was shoot them a smile over her shoulder.

She was just finishing up when Lucy made her appearance, rushing into the room, now clad in a hideous flower-patterned robe that reminded Wyatt of his grandmother's couch, with a high-necked t-shirt and loose, too-long pajama pants covering everything but her toes. Wyatt let out a little sigh of exasperation; where the hell had all that been ten minutes earlier?

As she practically skidded to a halt, Lucy shot him an indecipherable look before focusing her
attention on her mother. "Mom, hi," she stammered. "This is a surprise."

Carol eyed her with an amused expression. "Can't a mother make breakfast to celebrate her only daughter, granddaughter, and son-in-law's first morning in their first house?"

"Yes," Lucy sighed, and Wyatt caught the tiniest hint of a wince at the reference to 'only daughter'. "Sure. Thank you," she said haltingly, clearly not sure how to interact with her own mother, a fact that upset Wyatt more than he'd have thought it would. "It's really nice of you. Just... a surprise," she added carefully.

"It was supposed to be," Carol reminded her.

"Oh. Right," Lucy replied stiltedly. "So... do you like the house?"

Now Carol was looking at Lucy as if she had two heads. "I told you I did when we came to see it before you closed..." she drew out warily.

By then, Wyatt was feeling uncomfortable on Lucy's behalf, and even Lena had grown quiet on his lap as if she, too, could sense the awkwardness between her mother and grandmother.

Lucy nodded, looking trapped. "Yup... you did," she murmured, before looking desperately at Wyatt.

"Uh..." Wyatt froze, having felt badly about Lucy's position, but not really having any ideas on how to fix the conversation. It was only when Lena began wriggling in his lap again, kicking his thighs, did he realize something that would serve to distract Carol. "I, uh," he spoke up hesitantly, "think Lena might have something to show you... Grandma." The title tasted foreign on his tongue as he forced it out, though not nearly as much as what he'd had to call Lucy the day before.

"Yes!" Lucy yelped, immediately catching on to what he was referencing. "Mom, she walked yesterday!" She followed it up with a grateful smile shot in his direction, and an exaggeratedly mouthed 'Thank you'.

Any vestiges of confusion over Lucy's comments were out the window when Carol whirled around happily, exclaiming, "Oh that's wonderful!"

As he was still holding Lena in his lap, Wyatt took that as his cue. "Come'ere Lena, let's show off," he said, bouncing her on his hip as he slid off the stool.

He rounded the high counter, stepping into the more open space in the center of the kitchen before easing Lena down to the floor.

She immediately plopped down on her rear end.

Because if nothing else about the morning was going right, why would he expect a 13-month-old to cooperate?

"Come on, Lena," he coaxed, kneeling down and setting her on her feet again. "You know how to do this now."

With a giggle, she sat down yet again.

Wyatt tried once more, which just yielded the same result. He looked up at Lucy over his shoulder, shrugging helplessly.
She squatted next to him, placing Lena in a standing position once more, but her efforts were futile. Lena was having none of it, and the more they tried, the more she seemed to think it was some sort of game, letting out shrieks of laughter every time she fell down on her butt.

Carol was clearly disappointed. So Wyatt rifled in his jeans' pockets, realizing he could still show her. "Here, I got it on my phone," he told her, swiping to the video he'd taken and holding the screen up for her to see.

The short clip played, with his and Lucy's encouragement in the video echoing out in the otherwise quiet kitchen. Wyatt inadvertently caught Lucy's eye right as his voice called her 'Mommy'. He dropped his gaze.

With the video finished, Carol practically swooned, exclaiming, "Oh, make sure you send that to me!"

"Uh, sure," Wyatt replied obediently. But as he went to do so, flipping through the contacts on his phone, he quickly realized that she could be under any number of names in his phone from this timeline – Carol? Lucy's mom? Mom? Grandma? Something else? – and given that he wasn't seeing anything immediately obvious, he didn't want to raise any more red flags with her by sending it to the wrong number. He looked over at Lucy again, who'd picked Lena up from the floor, giving her a nearly imperceptible shrug as he pointedly looked down at his phone.

Turning her back to her mother, Lucy stared at him pointedly, gesturing to herself, then miming sending it to her mother. "We'll send it mom," she promised over her shoulder.

Wyatt's shoulders slumped in relief over a small crisis avoided. He scrolled back through the contacts, grateful that Lucy was easily located under her name and wasn't listed as some shmoopy term of endearment instead. The video was quickly attached to a message, but no sooner had had he sent it to her did the phone begin to buzz in his hand.

He groaned at the number that popped up. "It's work," he muttered. "I gotta..." He took the call, excusing himself to the living room. It was Agent Christopher, exactly as he'd suspected. He hung up quickly and headed back to the kitchen to break the news to Lucy.

She eyed him expectantly when he returned. Carol's back was turned to pull something from the oven, so he hurriedly mouthed 'Flynn' before announcing in a louder voice, "We have to go."

At that, Carol whirled around, now clutching a tray of muffins. "You're both just going to run off now?" she exclaimed, not even hiding her annoyance.

Wyatt could see Lucy wince at the admonishment, before quietly explaining, "Mom, you know we have to."

Carol wasn't appeased. "No, I don't know!" she cried, slamming the muffins down on the counter. "I don't even know what it is that you do on these calls, disappearing for days sometimes."

Lucy was practically cowering now, using Lena as a shield, and, in spite of himself and the fact that he really didn't want to be playing this husband role, Wyatt moved behind her and placed a supportive hand on her lower back. "You know it's confidential," he said plainly in Carol's direction. "We'd tell you if we could."

He may not have had much control over his own emotions or any of the insanity at Mason Industries, but at least Wyatt could be grateful he seemed to have some semblance of control with his fake mother-in-law. Carol stared him down for a second, before relenting with an exaggerated sigh.
"Just… at least take a muffin before you leave," she insisted.

Lucy shot him a grateful look before asking her mother, looking down at Lena in her arms. "You're ok taking her back with you? I'd say stay here, but…" She turned, gesturing around him to the mess of boxes visible nearly everywhere.

"Yes, yes, both of you go," Carol said, shooing them away as she took Lena from Lucy's arms. "We'll practice walking again."

They left Lena and Carol in the kitchen, and were halfway upstairs before Wyatt realized he was still guiding Lucy with his hand on her back. He jerked his arm away.

When they reached the master bedroom, Lucy went for the big plastic bins stacked in the corner, muttering, "I just need to find real clothes."

Still wearing yesterday's outfit, Wyatt did the same.

Amidst the digging through the bins, Lucy inquired offhandedly, "Where now?"

"New York again," he replied, yanking a shirt out.

"What?" Lucy asked, sounding confused.

"Different year," Wyatt explained. "1965." He pulled out a clean pair of jeans.

"The blackout?" she wondered aloud, "November?"

He discreetly grabbed boxers and shoved them into the jeans he'd grabbed; there'd been enough viewing of underwear that morning already. He started to correct her. "No, it's-"

"Beatles at Shea Stadium?" she interrupted.

That got Wyatt's attention. "Shit, that would be…" He trailed off, not for the first time wishing that they could use the stupid lifeboat for fun things instead of trailing Flynn all through time. "But," he sighed, looking over at her, "I'm guessing they weren't playing there on New Year's Eve?"

"Summer," Lucy confirmed, her own face falling. With a shrug, she nodded down to the wad of clothes she now clutched in her hand. "Lemme just…" And she stood, slipping away down the hall to the bathroom.

Wyatt watched after her for a moment, then shook his head, trying not to think about what he knew to be under the ghastly robe she'd be taking off.

Shutting the bedroom door behind her, he hastily switched out his own clothes and headed back downstairs.

Just a few moments later, they were both dressed, in the car with paper-towel-wrapped muffins courtesy of Carol, and on their way to Mason. Wyatt drove, focusing inordinately closely on the road, trying to force himself to come up with possible reasons for Jessica not having married him, even as memories of Lucy on the bed threatened from the corners of his mind.

Wyatt was jarred out of his warring thoughts when Lucy suddenly blurted out, "Oh, it's the strike!" He turned to her, eyeing her questioningly.

She looked up from where she'd been scrolling through pages on her phone, explaining. "It's actually '66. That's why I didn't- It's New Year's Day," she rephrased. "Flynn must be trying to stop it or
"What strike?" Wyatt asked, pulling her car into the Mason lot.

"The transit workers," she clarified. "A law gets passed because of it; it changes union negotiating rules. And really hurts the city economy for two weeks."

He turned off the car. "You think Rittenhouse bigwigs were part of the unions or something?"

"I have no idea," Lucy admitted, looking over at him. "It's not like it was a huge huge thing…"

Wyatt's brow furrowed as he got out of the car. "So why would Flynn want to mess with it?"

Lucy shrugged over the top of the car at him, nodding in the direction of the main Mason building. "I guess we'll find out?"

They made their way in, meeting first with Christopher, though she didn't know anything more than Lucy had already figured out in the car. So they were off to wardrobe, where Wyatt was at least appreciative that this would be their third trip to the 60s, and that suits were not hideously awful during that particular decade. (He might have also been appreciative of the short skirt and tight, knee-high boots Lucy had been outfitted in, but he wasn't letting himself think that way…)

If heading back to New York City so quickly after having been there in the 1890s was a bit odd, it at least afforded them a bit of familiarity, and they all soon found themselves crawling out of the lifeboat in the same northern Manhattan woods that they'd been in just a couple days earlier. At least by this time, there were paved paths through the trees. Wyatt was also grateful for the mostly modern transit system that had them there in the first place; this time, they were in midtown in only about twenty minutes. Not that they had much of a plan from there.

With almost no hope of randomly finding Flynn, they decided the best thing to do to ensure the strike went on as it should have would be to start at union headquarters. Lucy managed to get that information out of a telephone operator, and they'd headed off to Brooklyn.

But both the headquarters and the surrounding neighborhood seemed uncharacteristically quiet, especially for a Friday night in New York. Rufus exploited his 'invisibility' and to scope the place out, had simply walked in and pretended to be lost. He reported back to Wyatt and Lucy outside that it really was pretty much just a secretary inside and that the rest of the union membership must have been elsewhere if there was any planning going on.

Before Wyatt could come up with the next step, Lucy was already in motion and on her way inside. When she emerged, she triumphantly explained that she'd just played dumb, pretending that 'Frank' had taken her on a date, but she'd lost his number and knew that he was part of the union office. The secretary had bought it and now Lucy was armed with the information that much of the union's board and membership were having a New Year's party at a hotel near Times Square.

So back to Manhattan they went, to Hotel Astor, just off Times Square. The car wasn't able to let them off too close to the festivities given that it was nearing midnight, so they were able to spend a few blocks strategizing.

"I think there was a similar strike in only a couple years earlier," Lucy informed them hurriedly. "But longshoremen instead of transit. You could pretend you're one of them," she said, looking over at Wyatt hopefully, "offering advice? On how to get things started and keep it going?"

But Rufus shot that down. "Wouldn't they already have talked to them? New York is a port. They'd know those guys already."
"It was the whole northeast," Lucy corrected, "maybe even east coast."

Wyatt fully admitted he had no idea what good any of it was going to do in terms of finding Flynn, but he was willing to try it. They had nothing else. "So I'm from ... Boston?" he suggested tentatively.

Lucy nodded, even as she watched various patrons enter the hotel lobby down the block. "I think we are from Boston."

Wyatt snorted, rolling his eyes at her awful attempt at an accent, but followed her gaze. All couples. Of course they'd find themselves back in fake-couple territory.

Meanwhile, Rufus was less than enthused, taking note of the all-white crowd headed for the union party. "Let me guess? I wait outside?" he asked wryly.

Lucy's gaze darted between him and Rufus with a helpless shrug.

"You look for Flynn too," Wyatt offered, knowing even as he spoke the words that it was a weak consolation. "Maybe he's not in here."

Rufus narrowed his eyes at him. "Oh sure. I'll look for Flynn. At night," he continued, over-exaggerating. "In Times Square. On New Year's Eve." He finished with an exasperated glare. "You know that's like the worst game of 'Where's Waldo' ever, right? He's probably not even there."

Wyatt couldn't help it; he cracked up.

But Lucy remained somber. "What if he's right?" she wondered aloud. "Why would Flynn keep coming here, to New York?"

"Because he knows we can't find him in millions of people. It's not exactly as specific as the Hindenburg," Rufus pointed out.

Lucy shook her head. "But that's just it – I'm not sure he's actually doing anything here. What if he's just coming-"

"-here as a distraction," Wyatt finished seamlessly, catching on to her insinuation. "It's New York City. It's not like he couldn't leave the Mothership here and be anywhere from DC to Boston to Canada in a few hours."

With raised eyebrows, Rufus let out a whoosh of breath. "Man..."

Gritting his teeth at the possibility of Flynn wreaking havoc pretty much anywhere, Wyatt turned to Lucy. "Know anything else going on today somewhere else?"

"I don't know," she admitted sadly. "He could be doing anything behind the scenes, anywhere."

"So what do we do?" asked Rufus, likely more rhetorical than anything else.

With a deep breath, Wyatt calmly stated, "We make sure this strike still happens, just in case. Then we get out of dodge and back to Mason to figure this out."

Lucy and Rufus nodded silently.

"Better hope there's a cab," Rufus pointed out a beat later.

Both Wyatt and Lucy looked at him, confused and not catching on.
"The park is over 150 blocks north," Rufus stressed, wide-eyed at their lack of understanding. "We're making a transit strike happen."

"Rufus, we'll figure that out later," Lucy brushed him off, then turned to face Wyatt. "We should get inside. See what's going on."

Wyatt nodded. "Meet back here?" he asked Rufus, "Hour, hour and a half? 12:15?"

"Happy 1966," Rufus muttered before turning and heading off towards the massive crowd gathering at the base of the Allied Chemical tower.

Gritting his teeth as he watched Rufus get lost the masses, Wyatt begrudgingly offered Lucy his arm and led her into the crowd of couples entering the hotel. They managed to blend in well enough, just following other people they could hear dropping the name of the union party. It was only at the door to the ballroom that they were even questioned.

"I'm, uh, from the Boston longshoremen's union," Wyatt said haltingly, doing his best to sound convincing or in any way authoritative.

Thankfully, Lucy took over from there, even if it was in her awful attempts at a Boston accent. "They were so successful with their strike out there, he just thought he'd lend some advice and support to your effort here tomorrow," she cooed at the doorman, batting her eyes.

Wyatt had to fight not to roll his eyes at how quickly the guy folded, already moving to grant them access to the party room. They were nearly past him when he jumped out in front of them with a clipboard. "I didn't catch your name, sir?"

Cursing himself for not being prepared, Wyatt wracked his brain for any sort of name that sounded associated with Boston. Before he could even think, he heard himself spitting out the name of the only thing he could think of. "Sam Ad-"

He didn't even get through the full name of the beer when Lucy gave him a sharp elbow to the ribs, jumping in and correcting, "Affleck."

Their exchange earned them an odd glance, but still, the door man wrote the name down, allowing the two of them to pass.

"Sam Adams?" Lucy hissed once they were a bit into the crowd. "Be more obvious," she chastised.

"Like Affleck is any less obvious?" Wyatt snapped back under his breath, guiding her deeper into the crowd.

She paused to glare at him. "It's 1965; they don't know who he is yet. Sam Adams? That one they'd know."

He glared right back. "Just… look for Flynn."

They wove through the crowd for a while, both the middle and the edges, but there was no sign of Flynn.

After killing time on the fringes of the room, sipping club soda and surveying for a decent chunk of time, they'd just begun a second pass through the crowd when Wyatt felt a hand on his arm.

"Mr. Affleck? I hear your boys from Boston want to lend their support to our cause?"
Wyatt coughed, the sudden intrusion taking him by surprise. He looked the owner of the voice up and down, offering his hand to shake as he replied, "Uh, yeah. Anything you need, sir."

"Doug MacMahon, secretary of this fine union," the red-haired portly man explained, introducing himself. "Now look," he began, "we're all keen to hear what you have to say, and I wanted to introduce myself before all hell breaks loose here in a minute," he said, looking down at his watch. "So why don't you focus on your fine young lady here," he leered down at Lucy, "for the countdown with everyone else and we'll meet up again after things die down. Unless you don't want her; I'll be more than happy to take her off your hands."

With barely masked grimace, Lucy gripped Wyatt's arm, and he felt her slide closer to him at MacMahon's insinuation. "Uh, no, we're good," Wyatt assured him, slipping an arm protectively around her waist. "We can catch up later."

It was enough to deter MacMahon for the moment, so once he was gone, Wyatt released Lucy, wandering away to take in the countdown.

The crowd was really getting into it, a few TVs with antennae perched strategically around the room and broadcasting the live feed from just outside at Times Square.

He had to smile a little when, beside him, Lucy let herself get caught up in the festivities, counting along with the rest of the crowd.

And then it was 1966.

Wyatt looked around, scanning the celebratory crowd. The MacMahon guy hadn't been wrong; nearly every union member in the room had a wife, girlfriend, something with them, deep into the New Year's kiss. He caught the gaze of McMahon looking at him and Lucy oddly and starting to move in their direction.

Wyatt frowned; had he really meant he'd steal Lucy away for the kiss? As if he was about to let anyone get near her after what had happened last time in New York, and like hell was he letting their cover get blown on the off-chance Flynn actually was around.

So, like in Arkansas, he pulled her to him and pressed his lips to hers in an attempt to ward off any suspicion. Purely out of self-preservation. Can't have their cover blown, right?

He felt her stiffen in surprise.

After a beat, she relaxed a bit, when, seemingly of its own accord, his hand cupped her face, his thumb stroking her jaw. He could feel her arms tentatively slide over his chest, up to loop around his neck.

He should have pulled back.

Her soft lips moved over his, then half a breath between them before he closed the distance again.

He knew he should have pulled back. They'd kissed, just like everyone else, not drawing any extra attention to themselves. They'd done what was needed. He should have pulled back.

He didn't pull back.

Maybe it was the fact that he'd seen her in practically nothing that morning, maybe it was because he'd been jealous of Rufus getting to dance with her, touch her in L.A., maybe he just missed being able to do this with someone, anyone, but he didn't pull back.
He did pull Lucy closer, his other hand gently tugging on her hip as his lips parted slightly, instinctively, subconsciously coaxing her to do the same.

She obliged, opening her mouth to him, a soft sigh escaping from her as he teased her lower lip.

He still should have pulled back.

But he didn't.

The kiss grew deeper as Wyatt drank her in, their tongues dancing as his hands slipped around her back, inching lower, holding her tighter to him, for he didn't know how long. He could feel his body reacting to the curves of hers pressed up against him, but in that moment, he didn't care in the least.

"That's more like it, my friend! Now why don't you tell me more about what you boys pulled off in Boston a few years back."

MacMahon's voice, and ensuing proud slap on the back, was hell of a metaphorical cold shower.

Wyatt practically shoved Lucy away, his gaze darting between the union official's knowing grin and Lucy's frozen, dumbfounded expression.

Her face was flushed, but stunned, her kiss-swollen lips gaping in surprise.

All Wyatt could do was stand there dazed.

Shit.

Shit, shit, fuck.

TBC...
I'm back! This one didn't take quite as long as the last chapter, thankfully, but I know it's still been a while, so apologies for that. I do wish I could post more quickly, but it's just a matter of finding time to get ideas from the brain written into words. Just not enough hours in the day! (Ha, one might say I'm free-Time-less. Ba dum tsh.) Please excuse any typos or other weirdness - once I get that close to posting, I'm too impatient to do a super-thorough check. My bad!

As always, thank you to everyone who's reading, and especially to those leaving kind comments and reviews. I'm glad everyone seemed to like that Wyatt finally, even if he didn't really mean to, acted a little bit on his newfound feelings.

The second the Lifeboat's door opened, Lucy threw off her seatbelt, keeping her eyes downcast as she crawled out the door and slid down to the platform, not bothering to wait for Wyatt's, or anyone else's, help.

Mason and Christopher were hurrying to meet the three of them, but Lucy just mumbled something about needing the bathroom and marched right on by them; Rufus and Wyatt could fill them in. She just needed to get to the women's locker room before the tears that had been threatening for the last ten hours finally spilled over.

Wyatt had kissed her. Again. But not like with Bonnie and Clyde, just a relatively quick press of his lips to hers.

He'd kissed her.


It had felt so real.

But, of course, it wasn't. Not seconds after he'd pushed her away did he disappear to talk with the union leaders. 'Men's business', one of them had told her as they left her behind. And once Wyatt had returned, they were already overdue to meet Rufus, so he'd marched right past her, barely even acknowledging her as he mumbled something about getting back downstairs.

When they'd found Rufus, of course he had nothing to report; how was he really supposed to have found Flynn in Times Square? So all they had been able to do at that point was wait around to make sure the strike still went forward.

Which, unfortunately, hadn't been due to begin until the last subway train ran at about 8am. So they'd managed to find a 24-hour diner where they'd nursed coffee and picked at pancakes. Lucy wasn't sure if she'd been grateful that Wyatt had sat next to her or not; it had meant he could avoid looking at her, or even really addressing her directly at all. Not that they could have really talked about anything with Rufus right there.
And that's even if there had been something to talk about, which, given the fact that Wyatt continued to essentially ignore her even once they'd gotten confirmation that the strike was underway and they'd started the trek back to the Lifeboat, there wasn't. At least in Wyatt's mind, Lucy had realized with dismay.

With public transportation shut down, they'd tried to find a cab to get back to Northern Manhattan, but they'd quickly realized that when millions of religious New Yorkers were trying to get to New Year's church services in the absence of buses and trains, merely hailing a cab wasn't an easy thing to do.

Which had left Lucy with a roughly 160-block walk to work herself into an emotional frenzy over the fact that the kiss had seemed so real, that she wanted it to be real, but that Wyatt clearly thought so little of it that he didn't seem he'd ever address it at all. She hated herself for letting herself grow so attached to him, attracted to him, when she evidently really was just strictly a colleague.

They'd finally managed to find an empty cab leaving a church on the Upper West Side, saving them over 100 blocks of walking, but Lucy had still already had enough time to get pretty depressed, yet again, about the whole fake marriage situation and the way it was seriously messing with her.

At least once back in the Lifeboat, she'd been able to just lean back and close her eyes, avoiding even looking at Wyatt under the guise of being tired from a long night.

But, now, slipping into the women's locker room alone, she could feel her eyes well up almost instantaneously. Not even bothering to remove the stupid 1960s clothes, Lucy just sank down on one of the benches along the wall, the tears finally spilling over as she held her head in her hands.

How could she keep doing this?

Sure, she'd had unrequited feelings for guys before, but in most situations, you just manage to avoid him for however long it takes for the feelings to fade. You're not thrust into some sort of fake marriage, where you have to live together (with your shared child, by the way) and see each other 24/7, having to look to all the world as if those feelings were, well, requited.

It was hard enough after the Bonnie and Clyde incident, and that was when she could escape from Wyatt away from work. Now? At work and home? And if he was going to pull more stunts like the kiss in New York, which just made it all that much worse?

Lucy was starting to wonder if she was going to have to quit the job, never mind just move out.

But a knock at the door interrupted those thoughts, and she quickly wiped at her face lest it be Wyatt at the door. Like she needed him to see how broken up she was over all of this mess.

But when the door was cracked open, the face that peered in was Jiya's, not Wyatt's.

Without really looking at Lucy, Jiya smiled and ducked into the room, closing the door behind her. "Hey, I-" she started casually, only then really registering Lucy's still-tear-streaked face. Concern immediately washed over her face. "You okay?"

Lucy scoffed, forcing some semblance of cheerfulness into her voice. "Oh, yeah," she claimed, waving away Jiya's concern. "Just, long day, you know. ...I should change," she added. "Find Wyatt. Get Lena from my mom."

"Lucy," Jiya said seriously, ignoring Lucy's feeble attempts at keeping the mood light. "I know."

Lucy's head jerked up at the sound of that, alarmed and her mind racing. Her brain immediately
jumped back to last night, to the union party, to Wyatt's lips pressed to hers, his tongue sliding past those lips, his hands all over her – how could Jiya already know that? What had Wyatt said to who? She was about to just flat out deny it out of nothing other than instinct, but then it struck her. Why would it matter to Jiya anyway? As far as Jiya knew, she and Wyatt were the happily married couple of this timeline. Wyatt kissing her, his wife, wouldn't exactly be news. Now beyond confused, Lucy furrowed her brow, eyeing Jiya cautiously. "...what do you know?" she drew out slowly.

Jiya sat down next to her, unceremoniously announcing, "That you and Wyatt aren't actually married."

Lucy winced; despite knowing all too well the truth behind the statement, it didn't mean it was particularly nice to hear spoken aloud. Luckily, Jiya didn't seem to notice and kept going.

"I wasn't supposed to find out," Jiya rambled, explaining hurriedly, "but I was in the conference room and Connor came in with this guy and they were talking about him researching Wyatt's wife, Jessica, and I was like, what?" she emphasized, bugging her eyes out comically. "And they couldn't, you know," she shrugged, "un-say it, so they told me. Everything."

Lucy really had no idea how to respond to that, so she just gave a weak nod to acknowledge what Jiya had said.

"So you..." Jiya started, her hands flailing a little as she wrestled for the words. Finally she blurted out, "...have a baby. And have been pretending to be married? Even though you're-"

"Nothing," Lucy spat out, cutting Jiya off. "We're not anything." But the fact that she wasn't able to keep the tears fully at bay, her eyes welling up as she spoke the words, undermined what she'd said.

Which Jiya noticed, softly pointing out, "...sounds like you want to be though."

Lucy leaned her head back to the wall once more, trying in vain to keep her eyes from spilling over yet again, but all it accomplished was sending the new tears that slipped out towards her ears instead of her chin. Wiping at them, she looked over at Jiya with a tearful nod.

This time Jiya was the one to remain quiet; she just tilted her head sympathetically.

The silence proved to be too inviting for Lucy. Having had no one to talk to about anything for the full week since she'd been thrust into this reality was taking its toll, and a moment later, words just came tumbling out of her mouth as she fiddled with her hands. "I can't even really explain it, you know?" she admitted. "It's only been a few months, and he was kind of an ass at first," Lucy paused, rolling her eyes and smirking involuntarily at the memory of his stupid, cocky attitude back in the bar in New Jersey, him being flat-out defiant in Vegas but with all this craziness... But everything since? "We're a team," she said, shrugging as if it was as easy as that. "I trust him. I don't think I could do this without him," she confessed as she swiped at another stray tear, knowing it was true. "And then there was this mission, and we had to look like a couple," she rambled hurriedly, "so he kissed me, and..." She trailed off, the memories sending a shiver up her spine even now after having kissed him again.

"When you met Bonnie and Clyde?" Jiya asked a beat later, her voice breaking through Lucy's reminiscing.

Lucy's eyes went wide, inadvertently confirming Jiya's suspicions. "How did you know that?" She frowned; in their own timeline, Wyatt was obviously the only other person who knew anything had happened. Here, she hadn't even been sure their counterparts would have even gone on the same missions.
"You still went there in this timeline," Jiya explained. "Rufus told me that Wyatt let it slip that since you guys had to share a bed as a couple anyway, you guys, you know," she leaned in with a salacious grin, "fooled around while you were waiting for Bonnie and Clyde or something."

Lucy's jaw dropped, as Jiya's words unwittingly brought to mind memories of being squeezed into that tiny bed with him. …and how, in the days and weeks after that, before this timeline swap, she may or may not have spent a few nights imagining doing exactly what Jiya was insinuating their other selves had done. …and how last night's kiss in New York had just given her yet another taste of what it might be like to be with him.

She felt a warm flush spread across her cheeks, and she dodged Jiya's gaze. "We didn't-" she protested, "we only kissed, and now I'm…" Lucy trailed off, reminding herself that even if she'd fallen hard, Wyatt certainly had not, no matter how intense, and real, that New Year's kiss had seemed. "But he's so focused on figuring out how to get Jessica back," she finished with a sniffle, tears threatening for what seemed like the millionth time in the last ten minutes.

Jiya pulled her into a hug, before leaning back and regarding her sympathetically. "You don't think there's any way…?" she asked.

Lucy shook her head, pressing her lips together, biting back the newest round of tears. "Sometimes I think, 'maybe'…" she admitted, recalling those few moments when he'd pressed a kiss to her forehead in his apartment, when he'd been so worried for her in that brothel… Of course, those were all countered by the times when he'd all but told her he couldn't stand her once he'd found out Jessica had still existed in this timeline, when he'd spent a whole day at Mason trying to figure out how to get Jessica back… "It won't happen," she finished, shaking her head.

"Wait," Jiya said, wincing visibly, "if he does manage to fix things so Jessica's the one he married, what happens to Lena?"

More tears spilled over onto Lucy's cheeks at the sound of Jiya voicing one of her fears about the whole situation. She sniffled, admitting, "She just doesn't exist, I guess. So I'd get left alone. No husband, no kid."

She closed her eyes once she saw the look of pity Jiya was shooting her.

"I have to move out," Lucy resolved, opening her eyes and finally speaking aloud what she'd been thinking for the past couple of days. She snuck a glance at the surprise washing over Jiya's face, continuing, "I know it's dumb because here we just moved, together, but," she sighed, "we can't just play pretend forever. I can't."

Jiya's expression quickly went from surprised to concerned. "Uh," she stammered, "you might want to run that by Agent Christopher first."

Now Lucy was the one to look up in alarm. "What? Why?" Why would Denise get a say in whether or not she and Wyatt lived in the same place or not.

"She was super pissed that I even found out that your timeline had changed like that," Jiya said, looking skeptical.

"We can just… get divorced," Lucy suggested, "like everyone else. Nobody has to know."

Jiya shook her head, not looking convinced. "I still think you should talk to her. Everything here is still under the NDA, right?"

Lucy sighed. Right. Treason. "Alright," she agreed reluctantly, knowing Jiya was probably right. "I-
I just hate this, you know?"

Jiya pulled her in for another hug before offering, "For what it's worth, yeah, you guys seemed different recently, but not like nothing." Releasing Lucy, she looked her straight in the eye, insisting, "I think he does still really care about you."

Lucy's shoulders slumped as Jiya turned to leave the locker room. That was part of the problem, wasn't it? He did care about her, albeit in the same way he cared about Rufus. It would have been so much easier to avoid falling for him if he didn't, if he'd been a complete jerk. "It would probably be easier if he didn't," she pointed out aloud, though Jiya was gone by then.

With a sigh, Lucy stood. There was no point in hiding in the locker room any more than she already had. Even if Agent Christopher signed off on her moving back in with her mother, she was still going to have to suck it up and face Wyatt today.

So she reluctantly slipped out of the 1960s outfit, pulled her modern clothes from the locker, and tugged them on. A quick peek in the mirror revealed that her eyes weren't quite as red as she'd expected them to be given the volume of tears that had just escaped, so with just a couple minutes with the makeup she'd stashed in her locker, she looked almost presentable. Out of habit, she slid her wedding and engagement rings on her finger, and exited the room, headed upstairs to where Agent Christopher might be.

Peeking into the conference room a few minutes later and spotting Agent Christopher at her laptop on the far side of the conference table, Lucy knocked on the door tentatively. When Denise looked up, Lucy cleared her throat. "Do you have a minute?"

Denise raised her eyebrows at the unexpected intrusion, but nodded.

With a quick glance behind her to ensure that Wyatt hadn't seen her in the hallway, Lucy slipped into the room and shut the door behind her. She took a deep breath, then spat out bluntly, "I need to move out. Of the house."

Agent Christopher barely blinked an eye. "You can't," she replied, her voice no-nonsense.

"Why?" Lucy demanded immediately. She crossed the room in record time, yanking out the chair next to Denise to sit down. "I get that you don't want people to know how much we've been screwing up timelines," she acquiesced, "but it doesn't have to be anything to do with that. We can just… separate," she offered. "Divorce, whatever. Don't half of marriages end that way anyway?"

Denise spun her chair to face Lucy more directly, taking on that mildly patronizing tone that she loved way too much. "Lucy, I know it must be hard, living a life that doesn't feel like yours, that you don't want-"

Lucy didn't even try to stop the wry laugh that slipped out at Denise's misinterpretation. If only she didn't want it. If only.

"But this still comes down to Flynn," Denise finished, ignoring Lucy's outburst other than a questioning eyebrow raise.

"What?" That got Lucy's attention, considering how little sense it made.

"We don't know what he's up to. With the way your last few missions have turned out, especially now hearing about this one, it's looking like all of these locations are decoys," Denise explained. "We have no idea what he's actually doing in these years."
Lucy exhaled a long, shaky breath. Decoy locations. So they hadn't been wrong in their thinking in Times Square. "…we were starting to think the same thing in New York," she admitted.

Denise nodded. "So you know how precarious this all is. Maybe it's mind games. Some other strategy," she postulated. "We don't know who he has working with him in this timeline. He knows as well as we do that you and Wyatt weren't married to start, but anything that looks like the two of you not getting along?" She looked pointedly at Lucy and the rings that she'd just slipped back on without a second thought. "We can't let him get wind of any weaknesses or divisions within the team."

With a shaky sigh, Lucy ran a hand through her hair. Could Flynn have orchestrated whatever change had brought about this timeline that involved being married to Wyatt? Was it all some sort of a test for them? All of those possibilities suddenly brought a whole new level of insanity to this stupid fake relationship thing, but if it really came down to something involving Flynn, or Rittenhouse, or both, she was going to have to suck it up and deal with it. Suddenly the job was 24/7, not just when they were going back in time. Same as trudging through the bug-infested woods of 1754 Pittsburgh, she was somehow going to have to push aside the feelings and heartache that seemed to be ever-present lately, and just keep up the façade of a happy marriage.

Super.

With Lucy not saying anything, Denise continued, "We're working on figuring it out. In the meantime, make the best of it," she advised with a smile. "I know we don't have Amy back yet," she conceded apologetically. "And I know you never asked to be married to Wyatt. But you do have a beautiful baby girl, your mother is healthy, a lovely new home…" She smirked, adding, "And your 'husband' isn't bad to look at either."

Lucy had just been smiling at the mention of Lena, the one true bright spot in all of this mess, when the last comment finally registered. She looked up at Denise in confusion.

Denise smirked at her quizzical reaction. "I may not have married a man," she pointed out, "but I still have eyes. Now, like I said, go make the best of it," she added, nodding towards the door of the room.

With a sigh, Lucy nodded and obediently exited the room, leaning heavily against the wall of the hallway.

Normal mission to start? Check. Wyatt throwing her world off-axis yet again with a kiss? Check. Wyatt proceeding to ignore her as if it was nothing? Check. Plan to move out and just try to stop being tortured by mere proximity to Wyatt? Check. Plan thrown back in her face at the prospect of Flynn? Check.

Lucy let out a shaky breath. She could do this. She just had to try and keep everything all business. No feelings. Just a role. Exactly what Wyatt had said about the first kiss, just a role.

A role that included a 13-month-old child who had, once again, been forced to spend the night away from who she knew to be her parents. Lucy pulled her phone from her pocket, checking the time. Still afternoon. At least there was still time to get Lena and actually interact with her before her bedtime.

Quickly, Lucy typed out a text to her mother, letting her know that she and Wyatt were back from 'work' and could come pick Lena up. That done, she supposed she should find Wyatt. If nothing else, they were at least each other's ride, considering they'd come in her car.
She'd just set off down the hallway back towards the locker rooms when her phone buzzed in her hand. A groan escaped as soon as she saw her mother's reply; an early return may have been a good opportunity to spend time with Lena, but it was also apparently the perfect opportunity to be invited to have dinner as a family at her mother's house. Especially, as her mother pointed out, considering Lena was already there anyway and their new kitchen wasn't fully unpacked yet. Plus, as a second successive text informed her, Wyatt could watch the sharks and stars. Lucy sent back a quick noncommittal reply, trying to gauge how insistent her mother would be, while she absentely wondered if that meant Wyatt was a fan of bizarre nature documentaries or hockey, considering those were the only possible interpretations she could come up with for that cryptic part of the text chain.

Pretty insistent, she found, when the next text informed her, as she headed in the direction of the clothing area downstairs, that dinner was already started and of course they had to stay.

Lucy rolled her eyes, highly dubious about any dinner having been irrevocably started in the last thirty seconds, but tapped out a short 'fine' just as she caught a glimpse of Wyatt, headed towards her, out of the corner of her eye.

Just a role, she repeated in her head as she steeled herself for the first real interaction since the New Year's kiss. Just a role. Business.

Sticking to that business-only role, Lucy blew right past him, barely looking up as she asked tersely, "We going?"

Though her head was down, staring at her phone and watching for a new notification of a text from her mother, she could hear his footsteps as he hurried to catch up to her.

And then she felt his hand on her arm to stop her. She tried to convince herself that she didn't shiver in response to his touch.

He spoke hesitantly. "Lucy, that kiss-

"I know," Lucy replied, her voice clipped as she cut him off andwormed her arm out from beneath his hand. "Playing a role." She thought she caught a hint of what looked like disappointment on his face as she evaded his grip, but her phone buzzed yet again. "It's fine," she assured him absently as she opened the message and began walking again. "There's more of it coming," she added once she'd read the confirmation of their dinner plans.

It was only when Wyatt failed to come up with any semblance of a full word in response that Lucy realized what she'd said. She looked up at his surprised expression, and it was then that it hit her that it could have been interpreted that she'd meant more kissing. She blushed furiously, her cheeks hot as she stammered a correction. "Not that," she amended hurriedly, "the role. My mother insists we stay for dinner when we pick up Lena," she explained as she pushed the door to the parking lot open. "One big happy family," she added with a sigh. "And you can watch the stars and sharks on TV, whatever that means."

"Hockey?" Wyatt asked, sounding just as confused as she was.

Lucy shrugged as she pulled the car door open and climbing in. "I know the Sharks are. Amy and my dad used to watch together. She was the athlete, not me." After a moment, she added glumly, "Not that that would have happened in this timeline."

Wyatt slid into the driver's seat. "The Stars are from Texas. My grandpa took me to a game once for my birthday. Drove almost five hours just to get there."
She stole a glance at him as he backed out of the parking spot, the notion of 'just a role' and keeping emotional distance already slipping as she tried to picture a young Wyatt, dirt-poor by his own admission, getting to experience such a rare trip with the grandfather he idolized. As quickly as the image popped into her head, Lucy forced it back out, reminding herself repeatedly that she needed to keep things impersonal. Just a role. "Well, you must still watch them, if my mom brought it up," she stated flatly.

He gave a nod of confirmation as they exited the parking lot onto the street, but didn't say anything else.

Which was fine with Lucy; it was easier. The rest of the ride was silent.

Dinner proved to be nearly as quiet and awkward; Wyatt took it upon himself to sit with Lena, supervising her (messy) attempt at eating independently, while Lucy was left to bear the brunt of her mother's forced questions, most of while ended up being about how they planned to paint, furnish, and decorate the new house. Which, of course, Lucy had essentially no answers for. So she was incredibly grateful when the pattern was finally broken by her mother pointing out the time.

"Wyatt, your game is almost on," she hinted, nodding towards the den. "Why don't you clean Lena up and take her to watch with you?" To Lucy, she suggested as she picked up some plates, "Why don't you help me clear these and get dessert ready?"

"Sure," Lucy replied, jumping to her feet and obediently snatching up a few more dishes, just happy to have something else to do besides answer interior design questions and avoiding looking at Wyatt. Honestly, what she really wanted to do at that point was go home and go to bed; between the exhaustion from the lack of sleep in New York and the fact that at least sleep would get her mind off Wyatt and the kiss and Flynn and everything else, going to bed really was the best option for her right now.

Except once Wyatt and Lena had exited the kitchen, a whole new round of questions began.

It started out innocently enough, with her mother asking a simple, "How was work?" as Lucy deposited the first round of dishes next to the sink.

"Uh, fine," Lucy replied, heading back to gather up Lena's messy array of plastic dishes and utensils.

"That's good," came her mother's reply from where she was pulling ingredients from the refrigerator.

Lucy just shook her head, shrugging off the oddly bland question as she wiped up the table. But what she wouldn't have given for another bland question a moment later when her mother spoke again.

"Sweetie," she said gently, setting a baking dish on the counter, "is everything ok with you and Wyatt?"

Lucy's jaw dropped; at least she hadn't still been carrying dishes at that point, given that they would probably have dropped as well. She gripped the counter for support, smiling tightly as she forced herself to remember, playing a role, playing a role. "Yeah, mom, we're fine."

It did not appear she was convincing enough, given the skeptical glare it earned from her mother. "Lucy, you barely look at each other," she lectured, enhancing the intimidating effect with the fact she was wielding a sharp knife and slicing various fruits. "You barely interact at all unless it has to do with Lena." She paused, actually looking up at Lucy for emphasis. "Why was he sleeping on the couch when I got there that morning?"
Lucy looked down, expertly dodging her mother's gaze by reaching to layer the sliced fruit in the dish. "He just fell asleep there," she muttered.

"With a blanket and pillow?" her mother shot back knowingly.

"I put those there when I saw him sleeping," Lucy lied, realizing even as she said it that, while it made sense for the blanket, the pillow getting under his head was a little harder to explain.

So it followed that her mother clearly was having none of that excuse. "Lucy," she lamented, "you just haven't seemed like yourself lately; neither of you have," she clarified, stirring some things in a separate bowl, "and it's clearly affecting things between you."

Lucy sighed, protesting feebly, "We're fi-"

"Are you having problems getting pregnant?" her mother blurted out suddenly.

"What?!" Lucy gasped, caught off guard, "N-"

"Ok, ok," her mom relented, rephrasing more gently, "you had just said that you didn't think you'd wait too long after Lena, and well…" She nodded down, pointedly gesturing to Lucy's still-flat abdomen. "Those kinds of things can take a toll on a marriage…"

"Mom, no, that's-" Lucy clenched her eyes closed in attempt to somehow ward off the discomfort of the conversation, but all it actually ended up doing was summoning even more uncomfortable mental imagery of their kiss in New York and what it would have ended up like had they actually been trying to conceive… Her eyes flew open. "Wyatt and I are fine," she reiterated, trying to convince herself as much as her mother.

Her mother set down the dessert preparation and looked at her with concern. "Are you sure, honey? You two are so wonderful for each other, and I'd hate to see anything happen."

Lucy clenched her teeth. "Mom, it's- moving is stressful, that's all." That was a good excuse, right? Moving is stressful; she'd hated it even before this entire time travel mess. "We're good," she assured her mother, once again lying through her teeth.

"You promise?" her mom asked.

"Promise," Lucy nodded, not really trusting her voice with many more outright lies.

"You know, now that you're at least in the new place," her mother piped up, "maybe we could have you de-stress at that spa up near Sonoma that I'd wanted to try. What do you think? Mother-daughter spa day?"

A day away from Wyatt? And spas were quiet, right? So her mother couldn't torture her with probing questions about the status of her uterus? Especially since they'd have to take separate cars in case she got called back to the Lifeboat… Lucy decided she could be on board with that at some point, so she nodded. "Sure, mom."

"Great." With a smile, her mother slid over a dish of what had, somewhere during that conversation, become some sort of streusel for the fruit dessert. "Here, put this on there," she instructed, gesturing towards where Lucy had absently finished layering the fruit in the dish. "I'll get started on the dishes if you pop that in the oven when you're done. Fifteen minutes."

Lucy did as she was told, just happy to hear the water running rather than an incessant stream of interrogation. She placed the- whatever that dessert was in the oven and set the timer.
As much as she'd been trying to avoid Wyatt, she was looking forward to a little cozy baby time with Lena, so she tapped her mom on the arm, nodding in the direction of the den. "I'm gonna…"

Her mother nodded with a smile, so Lucy made her way out of kitchen, heading down the hall to where she could hear the faint sounds of sports announcers.

She slipped into the dimmed room; slumped on the couch, Wyatt had his gaze fixed on the television, where the hockey game flickered across the screen, and Lena lay sprawled on her stomach across his chest, her eyes closed and her thumb loosely in her mouth. Wyatt's hand was on her back, keeping her in place as she slept.

Lucy mentally cursed her mother as she took in the sight before her. As if it hadn't been enough to see a similar scene when he'd been giving Lena a bath the other day, her mother had to go and bring up babies and pregnancy and conception when this was right down the hall. She wasn't normally one to get overly emotional over babies, but between the power of suggestion and the sight of Lena and Wyatt together, if there was ever a moment that tugged at her ovaries, this was it.

*Just a role,* she reminded herself resolutely, just a role.

It was at that moment that Wyatt looked up over towards the door frame; she was almost afraid she'd actually said the words out loud. But his expression was unreadable. So she gestured down to the sleeping Lena, then nodded up to where the bedrooms were upstairs. "Should I-" she started to offer before Wyatt cut her off.

"Yeah," he confirmed, "she's out."

Lucy crossed the room and reached for Lena, gingerly lifting her off Wyatt and cradling her against her side. The little girl shifted and stretched, but luckily settled back down without ever truly waking. Lucy pressed a kiss to her head and made her way upstairs.

She hadn't been up there yet in this timeline; before they'd showed up to find wedding rings in their lockers, the three bedrooms that Lucy had grown up knowing as her parents', Amy's, and her own, had ended up as her mother's, an office, and her own, which thankfully had been similar to what it had been in the original timeline, with the exception of an upgrade from the childhood twin bed she'd been sleeping in for the duration of her mothers' illness. She figured it had morphed into a full to accommodate Noah if he'd ever stayed there with her; she had to assume it would be the same now for Wyatt, she just wasn't sure where it was that Lena slept.

Pushing open the door to her own room and flipping on the light, it looked pretty much as she'd suspected. And no crib. So she headed across the hall to what had been Amy's room, and then a bland office after that. She hit the lights and smiled when she saw the room outfitted for Lena's stays. A desk and bookcase that clearly weren't Lena's still sat on one side of the room, but the rest didn't look all that different from when she'd been an excited second-grader, anxiously awaiting the baby sister she'd been promised was coming.

Still smiling, Lucy peered down at Lena. Thankfully, they'd had the foresight to put her into pajamas before dinner, and she had mostly managed to keep the food smears to her own face and the bib she'd had on, so Lucy carefully set her straight into the crib. She let her hand linger, smoothing some of Lena's baby-fine hair with a wistful grin. But, not wanting to risk waking her, Lucy eventually backed away, flipping on the nightlight on the dresser, grabbing the baby monitor, and turning off the overhead lights.

Which meant she'd have to go back downstairs and face either her mother, Wyatt, or both. She grimaced at the prospect, but forced herself to trudge down the steps.
When she reached the kitchen, she eyed her mother and made the split-second decision that uncomfortable silence was preferred over uncomfortable questions, so she bypassed the turn around the counter and continued towards the den. She hadn't gotten more than a few steps before she heard her mother call out after her.

"Lucy, this is taking longer than the recipe said," she explained. "I'll be there in another five or ten minutes."

"'k," Lucy acknowledged, still moving in the direction of the den. And Wyatt.

Once she stepped into the den, however, she was faced with a dilemma. Her eyes darted amongst the seating options in the room. Her instinct was to sit as far away from him as possible, meaning the armchair on the opposite side of the room from the end of the couch he was on. The other end of the couch was also an option, but both her mother's and Agent Christopher's words echoed in her mind. They had no idea where this marriage timeline had come from, and they had no idea what could be hinging on making sure they put on a convincing act. Given everything her mother had just asked her in the kitchen, it was pretty clear they were doing a pretty awful job of making her believe things were normal. Sitting anywhere but practically on him probably wouldn't exactly help their case.

So with a deep breath, and before she could talk herself out of her decision, Lucy crept across the room to where Wyatt sat. Playing the role…

She didn't quite sit on him, but she did lower herself to sit right next to him. Right next to him. Close enough that she could feel him tense as she did so. So of course his body stiffened further when she leaned against him, pulling her knees up and tucking her feet beneath her.

Wyatt pretty much froze at the tiniest contact with his side, barely able to stammer out, "What are you-"

Lucy fought the wince that threatened when she realized that when he pulled the fake couple crap, the kissing, the cuddling, she was always pathetically more than willing to go along with whatever he threw in her direction. But when she so much as sat next to him, he was practically ready to crawl out of his own skin. Seriously, was it that awful having to deal with her? No wonder he'd escaped to sleep on the couch as soon as they were in the new place.

But none of that mattered at the moment if their job was to keep anyone and everyone convinced of their relationship status.

"My mother knows things are weird," Lucy hissed, watching the doorway like a hawk to make sure that said mother didn't hear any of the conversation. "Same as Jiya," she added, "and Christopher just said today we still have to… do this. Just…" she grabbed his arm instead of instructing, yanking it over her shoulder as she leaned further against him and snaked her arms around his torso, one across his chest, the other wedged behind his back against the couch cushion. "Just ignore me," she muttered, "watch the game."

What Lucy had neglected to think about before wrapping herself around Wyatt in the manner that she had was that, if she didn't want to end up with neck spasms the next day, her only option for head placement was to rest her head on his chest, her cheek pressed against his shirt. Well, she told herself, at least in doing so, it would mean she couldn't see whatever expression he might have been wearing that revealed how much he was hating the situation.

She tried to watch the stupid hockey game after that, she really did. But, role or not, almost immediately, the cozy closeness of their positions coupled with her utter exhaustion from the night-
long escapade in New York had her eyelids drooping.

The next thing Lucy knew, she was blinking into the darkness of the room as her mother placed a blanket over her.

"Sweetheart, I'm going up to bed," her mother whispered. "Your room is ready if you want to move up there, but don't go home this late."

Bleary-eyed and not even really sure where she was or what time it was, Lucy just sighed a "Mm hmm" and let her eyes close once more. She was warm, comfortable, and her pillow smelled really good, and why would she move anywhere else?

It was after another couple hours of sleep that she found herself awake again, still not quite sure about her surroundings. Until the surroundings underneath her let out a softly grunted snore and shifted ever so slightly.

Wyatt. Crap.

All Lucy remembered was wrapping herself around him as he sat there, to look convincing for her mother. How they'd gone from that position to both of them horizontal – him on his back while she was sort of somewhere between next to him and draped across him – she had no idea. But here they were. And Lucy figured she had three options: stay right where she was, somehow climb off him and go upstairs to be alone, or wake him up so that they could both go upstairs to sleep in her room. None was particularly appealing. Staying, though possibly a good option if she was into indulging her masochistic side, would only result in awkwardness when he woke up to find them tangled up in each other, which, based on his reactions when they'd woken up pretty much the same way back in his apartment, wouldn't go well. Bringing him up to her room, while probably the best option in terms of playing their stupid roles and also getting a decent, comfortable night's sleep, would just serve to bring about two super fun rounds of awkward waking up, both here and then in the morning upstairs. So Lucy was definitely leaning towards just trying to sneak out of there alone; there's no way her mother could hold it against her in terms of it looking like normal happy couple, right? She'd seen them fall asleep together, and Lucy could easily rationalize leaving him on the couch because she didn't want to disturb his sleep.

Or at least that's what she was going to go with. Lucy twisted a little, looking down and trying to gauge the degree to which they were entangled. Only as she moved did she really register the warmth against the skin of her back. Just as Wyatt had had his hand on Lena's back while she'd slept, so too had he done for her. Except in Lucy's case, he'd slipped his hand up beneath her shirt. And, Lucy realized as she shifted again, feeling the underwires of her bra cups slide up, he'd also somehow managed to undo her bra in his sleep. Probably dreaming about Jessica, she grimaced. Hardly how she would have preferred him getting her out of her bra for the first (well, second, really…) time.

And it was that line of thinking that she was supposed to be avoiding. Just a role, she told herself yet again.

Forcing herself to focus, Lucy took stock of their positions once more. Given that she was pretty well wedged between him and the back of the couch, the most obvious way to escape would result in her basically having to climb over him. Which would only end badly when she inevitably kneed him in the crotch or he woke up right at the moment she was essentially straddling him. Talk about awkward.

So, suddenly very much appreciating her mother's propensity for placing couches in the middle of
rooms rather than against walls, Lucy threw her leg over the back of the couch, using it to less-than-
gracefully haul the rest of her body up, but at least it meant she could sort of just lift herself up off
Wyatt rather than climb over him. She landed with a thud on the floor behind the couch. With a
wince, she stayed crouched down, hoping the sound hadn't woken Wyatt. But she didn't hear any
movement from him, so she cautiously stood, peering over the back of the couch. He was still asleep.

Lucy tiptoed around to where the blanket her mother had covered them with earlier had since slipped
to the floor. Picking it up, she stretched it back out over him, just barely resisting the urge to run her
hand over his cheek.

Just a role. Just a role.

With that, Lucy turned and headed up to her childhood room, dug out some old pajamas to thrown
on, and slipped into bed. All she could think at that point, as exhaustion set in once more, was that
she fervently hoped Wyatt at least stayed out of her dreams.

TBC…
Chapter 12

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the delay, sportsfans. Real life, unfortunately, must take precedent over this, even though this is more fun. Sorry also for the filler; I wanted the main scenes together here, in Wyatt's brain, but it meant some fill-in-the-blanks that made this part quite long, and I think it drags in places. But I don't know how to fix it. \(\text{P.S. – do NOT expect the next, or any other, chapter to be anywhere near this long!}\)

Either way, thank you, as always, for all the kind and encouraging comments/reviews. You guys are awesome. Seriously. I'm thrilled that people are still reading (and liking!) this story.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Wyatt blinked awake, bleary and unsure of both where he was and what had awoken him. He was certainly tired enough to have still been asleep. Only when he was able to zero in on Lucy, perched cautiously on the edge of the coffee table next to him and holding Lena in her lap, did the memories of falling asleep on the couch in her mother's house come rushing back.

She had fallen asleep first, almost immediately after she'd tucked herself against him on the couch. That had been the last thing he'd needed when he was still reeling from the guilt over having absolutely lost his mind and kissed Lucy like he had when Jess was still dead.

But of course, he'd only felt that much worse when he'd realized how quickly he'd grown accustomed to having Lucy close like that following the timeline change, only to have missed it over the past few days.

Even worse? She'd made it quite clear that she was only doing it because Agent Christopher had insisted upon it. Hell, he'd tried to bring up the kiss right away back at Mason and Lucy had shut that down, not letting him say a word, not even looking at him as she'd done so.

So there he was, the bumbling idiot trying to not have the feelings that he just couldn't seem to shake, and she cared so little that she couldn't be bothered listening to his explanation. Not that he really knew what he would have said anyway. He'd started to speak up without any sort of plan; he'd just figured, as he did last time, that he needed to say something. But 'Hey, Lucy, sorry for shoving my tongue down your throat; I like you and all, but I need us to forget about it because I have to get my wife back.' probably wouldn't have gone over very well.

But what could he do? If Christopher was insisting they keep up the charade, he knew there had to be a good reason. So he'd gone along with her lead. Played the doting husband, shushing and shooing away her mother when she'd come in bearing dessert so that Lucy could sleep. And rather than waking her, carefully eased them down to a more comfortable position, lying on the couch, letting her rest atop him.

Now awake, with both her and Lena dressed and ready, he was well aware she hadn't seen fit to stay there. Not that he wanted her to… It was good she'd gotten up at some point, leaving him there.

Rubbing his eyes groggily, Wyatt propped himself up on his elbow.
"Hey," Lucy said softly, her eyes darting about nervously as she shifted Lena in her lap.

"Hi..." Wyatt replied guardedly, wondering why she could possibly be acting so skittish. He did offer a weak smile to Lena, and reached to brush her cheek and give her a little tickle. She flashed him a gap-toothed smile in return, before she snuggled up closer to Lucy.

Lucy smiled down, smoothing Lena's hair absentely before she looked back up at him, her gaze shifting anxiously. "Um," she began hesitantly, "do you think you'll be ok if you have Lena by yourself all day?"

Wyatt frowned, pulling himself up to a sitting position. "What?" he asked, confused. Of all the things that Lucy could have been on edge about, that wasn't one of the possibilities he'd anticipated.

With a sigh, Lucy shifted Lena in her lap and explained, "My mother has it in her head that she and I need to go to some spa she heard about up in Sonoma for the day."

A soft snort escaped from Wyatt; of course the mother who waltzed into her daughter's house the morning after moving with no warning, who insisted on family dinner after a long work trip (as far as she knew), would be the mother who insisted on a spa day.

"It's just easier not to fight her on it," Lucy continued, sounding resigned. "But the babysitter she uses on the days she teaches isn't available today and I didn't know if you-"

Wyatt scoffed, cutting her off before she could imply he was somehow inept or uncomfortable because he was the father. (Not that he was the father, but still...) Like she'd had any more experience than him with parenting when they'd landed in this mess of a timeline. "You've been fine with her all day before."

She looked momentarily stunned for a second, but Wyatt could see that his unspoken commentary had registered. "Right," she said, shaking her head slightly before repeating with more resolve, "You're right. Sorry, I-" She winced, not bothering to finish that train of thought. "Is that ok though?" she asked instead. "Do you mind?"

Honestly, he didn't, really. He wasn't a fan of how much Carol seemed to insert herself into their lives, and a day at the spa sounded like a waste of time and money to him in the first place, but if it meant a day away from Lucy so he'd be less prone to complete and utter mental meltdowns that led to things like grabbing her and kissing the hell out of her at that stupid union event, he was ok with that.

So he stood, reaching for Lena and plucking her out of Lucy's arms, confirming, "We'll be fine." He hoisted Lena higher against his side, poking her tummy, asking, "Right, kid?" Having elicited a giggle from her, he turned back to Lucy. "Have fun?" he offered questioningly, given it certainly didn't look like she really wanted to go.

"Not likely," she sighed in response. "But at least we'll take two cars in case I have to come back for-" She lowered her voiced, glancing over her shoulder as if to ensure her mother wasn't right there, "-you know. I can be to Mason in an hour from there."

Wyatt nodded dumbly; made sense to him. But Lucy was eyeing him apprehensively again.

"My car has the car seat..." she reminded him, almost apologetically. "Do you mind if I take ... yours?"

He'd never thought about that; Jess was the last person aside from him to drive the clunker of a Jeep. It made total sense, given that he'd never trust that thing with Lena in it. He hadn't even really liked
Jess driving it, so Lucy probably shouldn't drive Wyatt squeezed his eyes shut for a split second; repeatedly equating Lucy and Jessica in his head was probably the worst thing he could do. The Jeep was fine. So he shrugged. "That's what we must do here, right? Yeah," he nodded. "It's fine." And, eyeing her outfit, which was clearly not what she'd fallen asleep in the night before, and the shoes she already wore, he surmised, "I guess you're going now?"

"My mom made appointments there already," she confirmed with a nod and a sigh.

Looking down, Wyatt located the shoes he'd kicked off the night before and began shoving his feet into them as she replied, "Let's go then."

"Oh," Lucy stammered, "My mom can-I'll just ride with her and run in to get your keys and go," she offered. "You could stay here longer, or-

He eyed her incredulously as he brushed past her and headed for the front door. "I don't really feel like hanging out in your mother's house all morning."

"Oh. Right," Lucy replied stiltedly from behind him. They made it a few more steps before she spoke up again. "You could unpack stuff at home?" she corrected herself.

Nearing the door, Wyatt grunted a non-committal response as he snagged Lena's diaper bag and toy bag from where someone had hung them from the end of the bannister. Like he really wanted to spend the day unpacking a house that didn't even feel like his.

He was just about out the front door when Lucy spoke again, quietly suggesting, "Or you could do more research on Jessica."

Wyatt froze, wincing. There it was again. Why the hell was he having to fight the stupid escalating feelings for her when she was so completely unaffected? Why was he struggling when she could so easily send him off to figure out Jess as if there was nothing between them?

But there wasn't anything between them, he reminded himself as he forced his feet to keep moving out the door. It was good that she didn't care. "Yeah. I should," he agreed darkly.

They made their way out of the house, Lucy pausing behind him to lock up. Wyatt was not at all surprised to see Carol already having pulled her car into the street where she waited impatiently. "I'll just go ahead with her," Lucy gestured awkwardly.

Wyatt shrugged. Fine with him. One less car ride's worth of time with her unaffected by his presence while he fought to tamp down the unwelcome feelings for her.

Lena was already reaching for her, so Lucy reached out and gave the chubby little hand a squeeze. "Bye, Lena," she said softly, grinning. The grin faded when her gaze shifted uncomfortably up to him. "Bye," she muttered. "I'll be back tonight."

And then she was gone, climbing into Carol's car and heading off to do whatever they were going to do at their stupid spa.

He hadn't even made it halfway to Lucy's car when it dawned on him that, with her gone all day, the bed back at the house would be conveniently unoccupied. All day. He could finally sleep, and somewhere that wasn't a couch.

Crossing the remainder of the lawn, he smiled as the idea of sleep, and looked down at Lena, inquiring, "Think we could swing a nap?"
But though she didn't articulate it just then, Lena's answer turned out to be a resounding 'No'. Once they got back to the house, Wyatt managed to get himself into clean clothes, but beyond that, Lena was in 'demanding' mode. Every time he set her in her crib or the playpen, she called out for him, and resorted to crying if he didn't go get her. He even tried Lucy's tactic of setting her next to him on the bed, but that merely resulted in her deciding that he made a good substitute for a climbing gym. It was just as well; the pillows smelled like Lucy.

After about an hour and a half, Wyatt was pretty well resigned to being awake for a while, so he figured he may as well pack Lena up and take her to Mason with him. Lucy told him to research Jess, after all. And for all he knew, Jiya was there and had some sort of baby magic that could get Lena to take a nap.

Another half an hour (and a Starbucks drive-thru stop for caffeine) later, Wyatt trudged through the door of Mason Industries, still exhausted and only barely caffeinated. And on top of that, they must have left the stroller that was normally in the car at Carol's house, necessitating a crash course for him in the baby carrier pouch thing. Given all Lena's toys and other junk, the only way he'd been able to get it all into the building was to strap her to his chest, coffee in one hand, his laptop case and all her bags of junk in the other.

Once he made it in, he made a beeline for the conference room, figuring that it was at least an enclosed space, so if she didn't nap at some point, it would at least give her a relatively safe area to practice walking in. Not to mention the walls would be beneficial if she got loud.

He'd barely made it into the room when he heard Rufus' concerned voice from the doorway behind him. "You ok, man?"

Wyatt dropped Lena's diaper bag and tote full of toys with a thud onto the armchair against the wall and turned to glower at Rufus. He was tired, Lena was being unforgiving with the nap situation, he was annoyed with himself for his stupid moment of weakness with Lucy, and now he was even more annoyed and frustrated by the fact that while he was sitting there struggling with competing feelings for her and Jess, Lucy was so unaffected by everything that she could just casually tell him to spend the day researching Jess while she lounged around some spa with her mother. He did not need to deal with Rufus and his snark on top of all that.

Rufus' eyebrows shot up and he eyed Wyatt warily. "Still feeling New Year's Eve?" he asked, referring to their all-nighter waiting for the strike.

Scoffing, Wyatt set down his coffee and the briefcase with his laptop on the conference table. "Yeah," he confirmed with a groan, "and the nights before and after it on shitty couches."

"Trouble in paradise?" Rufus smirked.

With a withering glare shot in at Rufus, Wyatt went about unclipping Lena's carrier. "You know we're not actually married, right?" Once she was free, he set her on the table momentarily to extricate himself from the remainder of the straps.

"Jiya knows too," Rufus informed him, changing the subject a bit. "She overheard Connor and whoever they've got researching Jessica," he explained. "At least you don't have to pretend anymore," he shrugged.

"Not for her, but for everyone else we do," Wyatt contradicted sullenly, not looking forward to more instances of Lucy sidling up next to him, completely unaffected while he sat there torn, both loving and hating every minute. "Christopher told Lucy again yesterday."
It was only then, at the direct mention of Lucy, that Rufus appeared to realize that she wasn't there, and Wyatt was wrangling Lena on his own. "Where is she?" he asked, brow furrowed.

Wyatt rolled his eyes. "At some spa with her mother." Making sure Lena was staying still on the table, he reached back to her bag of toys, snatching up a book and some random stuffed animal. He handed them to her as he explained further to Rufus, "The sitter was busy but I thought I could still work on figuring out what changed with Jess with her here."

He was surprised when Rufus winced visibly.

"Lucy's not going to like that, is she?" Rufus asked with a grimace.

Lena was less than amused with the book and toy, and had taken to entertaining herself with the noise her new walking sneakers made when she kicked them against the table. Wyatt tried to quiet her before replying to Rufus. "She told me to," Wyatt informed him, dubious, unsure of what had elicited that line of thinking.

Rufus just shook his head, contradicting matter-of-factly. "No way."

Wyatt was dumbfounded, having no idea what Rufus was implying. He'd heard it with his own ears; he wasn't so tired that he'd hallucinated what Lucy had said. She'd encouraged him to come and work on his research about Jess in the changed timeline. His brow furrowed as he turned away from Lena momentarily. Incredulously, he asked Rufus, "What are you-"

He was mid-sentence when Lena chose to let out a gleeful, ear-piercing shriek as she kicked her little shoes even harder against the table top, clapping her hands at the noise.

The brutal combination of exhaustion, self-loathing, annoyance, and utter confusion over what Rufus was implying was too much in combination with Lena's ruckus. Wyatt snapped at her, exasperated, "Would you stop? Stop it!"

Lena's face crump instantaneously and full-scale bawling followed in quick succession, as she was clearly not ok with having her father blow up at her.

Wyatt felt sick with guilt even before her first wail escaped; she probably never got yelled at and none of how messed up he was feeling was her fault in the slightest. "Shit," he breathed, scooping her up immediately. He pressed a kiss to her forehead, trying in vain to shush her, but she wouldn't be soothed. The screams continued. So he hurried over to the rest of her bag of toys, dumping it out on the chair, waving the array in front of her one after the other. Nothing; she kept wailing, tears running down her reddened cheeks as she turned her face away from every offering.

He looked around helplessly, hugging her to him, rubbing her back as if it would make even a little bit of difference. It didn't. He finally spotted the diaper bag tipped over beneath the pile of toys on the chair. Reaching in, he fished out the baggie of Cheerios he'd thrown in there earlier and dug one out, holding it in front of her mouth. The full-on wailing was just starting to lessen, but she still had no interest in the cup. Wyatt shifted her in his arms, trying to shush her again as he rummaged around in the bag. He finally located a bottle he'd tossed in at the last minute; even though Lena was handling a sippy cup with meals, Lucy had discovered the bottles were still her favorite for before naps.

It was only water, not juice, but with Lena's cries weakening only slightly, Wyatt was getting desperate. He held the bottle up for her and, thankfully, the bawling transitioned into mere hiccupping sobs as she regarded it warily. It took another few seconds, but she eventually reached for it and shoved it into her mouth. Her little body was still belatedly shuddering every once in a
while from the crying, but Wyatt was relieved when she nestled herself against his chest, the bottle still firmly lodged in her mouth. Crisis averted.

He was just thumbing away some of the stray tears still rolling down her pink, flushed cheeks when it finally registered that Rufus was still there. Wyatt looked up, only to find his friend with eyebrows up, looking some combination of bemused and amused.

Wyatt narrowed his eyes at Rufus, muttering, "Shut up," already anticipating some sort of snarky commentary.

Looking like he was barely containing his laughter now that Lena had quieted, Rufus teased, "I've seen this movie before. The big bad military guy playing Mr. Mom? Disney Channel, right?"

"I made her cry," Wyatt protested. "What was I supposed to do, ignore her?"

"Maybe. How would I know what you're supposed to do with a crying kid?" Rufus countered incredulously. "How do you?"

Wyatt shrugged. "She's my kid." He stopped short at the wide-eyed skeptical look Rufus was currently shooting him, and he realized exactly what he was saying. "Well, she doesn't know she's not," he grumbled, amending his original statement. "I'm sure the you from this timeline thought she was adorable, you know," he shot back, trying to save face.

Rufus chuckled. "Oh, she is. So are you," he added, laughing as he gestured to Wyatt's shirt. "Baby snot is a good look for you."

Wyatt followed Rufus' gaze down and groaned. The crying fit had apparently induced a runny nose, and Lena had decided that rubbing her face against his chest and using his shirt as a tissue was a good idea.

With a sigh, he yanked out a pack of baby wipes from the diaper bag and did his best to wipe his shirt off with one hand while still cuddling Lena against his side with the other.

Once that was done, with Lena still calm, Wyatt turned back to Rufus with his original interrogation. "So what the hell were you talking about?"

"Lucy?" Rufus clarified. "No way she wants you to figure out Jessica," he insisted. "She's going to be crushed if you get-"

Wyatt's gaze shot up from where he'd just looked down to steal a glance at Lena, and he eyed Rufus with a glare of unspoken warning.

"-when you get her back," Rufus corrected. "Plus," he added, gesturing to Lena, still clinging tightly to both the bottle and Wyatt, "she doesn't exist then, right?"

Wyatt blinked dumbly. His mind had already started swimming at the mention of Lucy somehow being crushed were he to actually succeed in bringing Jessica back; she had just been the one to encourage him to work on doing exactly that. But he barely had time to register that when he was completely blindsided by the notion of Lena not existing. It had never dawned on him.

In his single-minded (ok, double-minded, if you counted also trying to tamp down the burgeoning feelings for Lucy) focus on righting the original timeline and preventing Jess from getting killed in the first place, Wyatt had managed to somehow never really picture what life going forward would actually look like. He supposed he'd vaguely assumed some sort of shared custody with Lucy, but, he also suddenly realized, that would take a whole lot of messy explaining to Jess… But Lena wasn't
going to exist anyway?

Given that he was still cradling said future non-existent child in his arms, the whole conversation was beginning to get rather unsettling for Wyatt. He tried not to think about it, brushing off Rufus' specific comment, protesting more generally, "I-" He shrugged helplessly. "I can't not fix things with Jess. This? Now?" He waved his arm emphatically at the Lifeboat in the bay below, at Lena's pile of toys and gear in the chair next to him. "This whole thing with Lucy already feels like I'm cheating on her." But even as the words poured out, he was already chastising himself for slipping up and admitting aloud that there was anything that could even be nebulously defined as a thing with Lucy.

It didn't go unnoticed by Rufus, who shot him a quizzical look and lifted his hands as if to back away in surrender. "Ok, not going to touch whatever you guys have been doing that is anywhere near the vicinity of what would constitute cheating on Jessica," he said, side-eyeing Wyatt before continuing, "but shit happens on these stupid trips. That's why you're in this position with Lucy in the first place! I get it," he reasoned, "you want the wife, the kids, the dog, the picket fence, but at what cost when it has to be Jessica? Getting all that doesn't have to mean her," he pointed out. "You have it with Lucy now."

Wyatt balked, denying immediately, "It's not the sa-"

"I know she's not Jessica," Rufus cut in, "and I know you don't have a dog, but is it worth the risk of fucking things up even worse?"

Rufus was pushing too far, especially considering Wyatt's lack of sleep and ensuing agitation level. "Lucy is not Jess," he snapped defiantly. ...Never mind that he'd thought exactly that – that she was Jess – that first day they'd woken up together in this timeline. It didn't matter; he was getting Jessica back. Lucy herself had told him to that very morning.

Only then did Wyatt absently realize that if Lucy was pushing for him to get Jess back, she either hadn't realized what would happen to Lena, or she had and didn't care. Though he was pushing for the very thing that would be Lena's undoing, the thought that Lucy was actively pushing for it too… Did she not want a life with Lena? Because if he could somehow manage to get Jess back but preserve Lena, Wyatt knew he'd do it in a heartbeat. He'd thought Lucy said she'd wanted kids, back tied up in 1754 – was it not true? Or did she just not want his kid? She'd rather send him off to Jess and start over with her own life and family with anyone else?

It wasn't logical; he was trying to have his own life with someone else too, but the realization stung. It shouldn't have stung, but it did.

Continuing, Rufus jarred Wyatt from that line of thinking. "Ok, you're not actually married," he acquiesced, "she's not Jessica, whatever. But you still care about Lucy, right?"

Wyatt's response was reflexive and immediate. "Of course I care." And he did. Possibly too much.

"My two cents?" Rufus offered. "If you think even this fake thing with Lucy feels like cheating on Jessica, who's not actually here," he emphasized, "and wasn't even still here in the real timeline, by the way, what's it going to feel like you're doing to Lucy, who is here, if you're actually with Jessica?"

Wyatt felt his jaw go slack as he tried to come up with any sort of response; he couldn't. And Rufus just kept going anyway.

"This isn't Utah; sister wives isn't going to fly," he reminded Wyatt with a glare. "You really think you'll be ok with leaving Lucy in the dust after all this and jumping right back into things with
Jessica? With Lucy's kid erased and her sister still gone while you rub your happy ending in her face?" Rufus paused, toning down his rant to point out, "I know you're not really married to her, man, but you're not nothing."

"W-" Wyatt didn't even manage to articulate a full syllable of protest before Rufus cut him off.

"Nuh uh," he admonished, "You're not nothing. I have eyes too. Just sayin'." And with that, he exited the room before Wyatt could say anything.

Wyatt stared after Rufus.

The only life he knew with Jess didn't have anything to do with Mason or the people he'd met because of this ridiculous time travel gig. He tried to mentally picture some random social setting like trivia night with Rufus and Jiya. And with Jess. But Lucy was there too, inserting herself into the visual in his mind. And that juxtaposition of the two of them potentially in the same place? It made his head hurt.

Lena had started to doze in his arms by that point, so Wyatt pushed those thoughts from his mind and spread out one of her little blankets on the floor, setting her down on it gingerly to sleep.

It didn't last. Lena was just as restless and unsettled as Wyatt was. He couldn't focus on his computer to make even a smidge of progress, haunted as he was by the mental image of Lucy and Jessica together, and Lena wouldn't be placated, whining and whimpering unless he picked her up and held her on his lap. And not only was it physically awkward to try typing on a laptop while reaching over and around a fussy 13-month-old, Wyatt felt uneasy trying to pursue his research on the Jessica of this timeline with Lena right there when it was the remediing of that timeline that would just end up causing her to essentially be erased from existence.

He tried finding Jiya so she could give him a break, but it proved useless as she was wrapped up in some massive coding project. He also tried giving Lena the lunch he'd packed, tried changing her diaper, tried taking off her new shoes, but she wouldn't rest, and there was no way he'd get anything done with her like that, even if he could get over the mental hurdle.

So he packed them up to head back to the house by mid-afternoon. And of course she fell asleep in the car. And of course she woke up when he tried to bring her, still asleep, into the house to set in her crib.

As such, Wyatt spent the rest of the afternoon trying in vain to get her to nap. And, it turned out, if you ignored the lack of sleep for them both, he was actually kind of grateful for the toddler-level mental distractions. Apparently keys and the noise they made when shaken was the most interesting thing in the world, and she spent a good twenty minutes with his, jangling them, throwing them around the living room, and crawling after them. When bored of the keys, she turned her attention to a bin of Duplo blocks, though she clearly didn't quite have the dexterity or strength to do much with them yet, which led to Wyatt doing more block stacking that he'd done in decades. Books were also a big hit, though she was in no mood to be on his lap and be read to; she was intent on sitting alone, flipping through pages, and whispering sounds to herself as if she was reading. At one point, her 'reading' was interrupted by the chime of some random sports notification on his phone, and she perked up inquisitively at the noise. So he turned on music for her, just to see, and ended up laughing out loud at the awkward, one-armed little wriggle of a dance she tried each time any song played.

By the time 5:30 rolled around, Wyatt had given up any hope of her taking a nap and just switched into nighttime mode. He made the two of them a quick dinner, scarfed down his own, and made sure that more of hers made it in her mouth than on the floor. A fair amount did end up in her hair, so after dinner, he gave her a bath and swapped her clothes out for pajamas. With Lucy still not back at that
point, he headed down to the living room, where he'd managed to hook up the TV and cable amidst Lena's 'reading' earlier in the afternoon.

Only then was Lena finally starting to fade, so he flipped on the TV (to the History Channel – damn it all if Lucy and all the stupid missions hadn't gotten him more curious about historical events…) and laid back to watch with Lena resting on his chest.

The next thing Wyatt knew, he was startled awake as his grip on Lena tightened protectively.

"Wyatt, it's me," came Lucy's quiet whisper, breaking through his foggy consciousness. "I've got her."

Wyatt blinked, finally able to focus on Lucy as she leaned over him, carefully lifting Lena off him. It may have just been the lighting, the dim flickering of the TV across the room, but he wondered what she might have had done at the spa – she looked younger somehow, softer and pretty.

"Uh, thanks," she stammered, quickly leaning away from him. "Probably just some peel scrub thing they did…"

Squeezing his eyes closed, Wyatt grimaced. He had not realized he'd somehow managed to articulate any of those words he'd only intended to think. Hell, he hadn't even wanted to think them, never mind speak them aloud so she could hear. At least her complete indifference to him meant that she just headed upstairs to Lena's room without addressing it further, unfazed as she was.

Once she was gone, he rolled to face the back of the couch, wanting no part of any sort of conversation with her were she to come back downstairs. So, resigned to yet another night on the couch, he tried to will himself back to sleep.

He'd nearly succeeded when he heard Lucy creep back downstairs. He stayed still as he heard her footsteps approach the couch; thankfully she said nothing, but he did feel the soft weight of a blanket being stretched out over him. The footsteps retreated, and he let out a breath he hadn't even realized he'd been holding.

It was barely five hours later when he woke again, disoriented in the dark as his phone blinked 'Mason Industries' at him. He plucked it off the coffee table. 3:08 am. "You've got to be kidding me,"
he groaned into the empty room.

But no one was kidding. Just a few hours after that, with Lena having been dropped back off at Lucy's mother's house, they'd sped to Mason, thrown on formal wear from 1949, let Rufus zap themselves to April 4th in Washington, D.C., where they'd managed – with the help of some forged IDs from Agent Christopher – to work their way into the grand state dinner being held, with Rufus as a waiter, himself as a low-ranking member of some Canadian diplomat's entourage, and his wife.

Lucy had been in a panic since hearing the date – heads of state and diplomats from eleven other countries were in D.C. to sign the North Atlantic Treaty, which had established NATO. With that many foreign dignitaries in the city, anything Flynn did could have spelled disaster for the history of any or all of the countries involved, not to mention NATO itself. But as had been the case for the past few missions, there was no sign of Flynn, and nothing had seemed amiss through all the ceremony and fanfare before the meal, or during the meal itself. (Nor had any of the Canadian contingent noticed that he and Lucy were definitively lacking a Canadian accent.)

Which meant that it was time for the dancing that would close out the evening. Which meant that the dance floor would have the best vantage point if anything did happen. Which meant that Wyatt had to dance with Lucy. Slowly. Closely.
He didn't dance. Sure, Grandpa Sherwin had taught him, which had served him well for his own wedding and the handful of other weddings and military balls that he and Jess had gone to, but… He didn't dance. Not since Jess.

But there he was, swaying to a string quartet amongst all sorts of powerful international politicians, not the least of which was freaking President Truman, half-focused on scanning the crowd for Flynn and his team, half-focused on the feel of Lucy in his arms, half-focused on how it reminded him of those dances with Jess and how he missed her so damn much, and yes, that was more halves than you could have, but he was hardly worried about the math when he was struggling through the ramifications of the messy situation with Jess, and Lucy, and Lena.

For as much as he wanted to pull Lucy even closer, he needed to save Jess and get her back. For her sake, but also his own, because it was his fault she was dead in the first place, and because he couldn't take much more of the feelings he was having for Lucy. And he still hated himself for allowing such feelings to take hold when Jess was still out there, in some timeline, just waiting for him to fix everything. Especially given that Lucy had no such feelings; why was he so affected by her, and she not? Why would she push him to save Jess when it would probably erase Lena from existence? And why did she have to look so damn beautiful with her hair swept up, in the off-the-shoulder, calf-length, deep green dress with its froofy skirt, and the white satiny gloves up to her elbows? He was doing his damnedest to ignore all of that, but he was failing miserably.

He had never been more grateful than at that moment to see Rufus catch his eye from across the room and tilt his head off to the side of the room. Wyatt's gaze darted in that direction immediately, but not seeing Flynn, he realized he was just meant to reconvene with Rufus there. He told Lucy as much, then ushered her off the dance floor. By the time they reached Rufus at the edge of the room, Wyatt could already tell it wasn't good news. And he was right; after a few hours with no sign of Flynn at the state dinner, Rufus had slipped out the back of the kitchen to head back to the lifeboat only to find that Flynn had already left 1949 and headed back to the present.

And while, under normal circumstances, or at least as normal as this time travel thing had ever been, Wyatt would have been concerned with the increasing number of missions that had led to a whole lot of nothing and been trying to figure out what that could possibly mean in terms of Flynn's doings and goals, this time around he was just grateful to not have to be up there on the dance floor with Lucy anymore.

So they exited the event, headed back to the lifeboat after meeting up with Rufus outside, and then, there they were back in 2017.

Wyatt had yet to fully grasp the almost-but-not-quite linearity of the time jumps and groaned when he checked his phone once back in the men's locker room. Mid-afternoon. He hoped like hell that it wouldn't mean Lucy's mother wrangling them into yet another stiff, strained dinner at her house when they went to pick up Lena. He braced himself for exactly that news when he exited to the hallway to find Lucy right there waiting for him.

"Don't tell me we have to go have dinner with your mother again," he sighed, brushing past her on the way to the parking lot door.

"No. Well, yes," she corrected hesitantly. "I think."

Wyatt halted, turned around, and glared somewhat incredulously. "Which is it?"

"I don't know," Lucy stammered hurriedly. "She's being really cryptic."

Really just wanting to go back to the house to sleep away his jumbled feelings, even if he did have to
do it on the couch, Wyatt raised a questioning eyebrow, waiting for her to continue.

Lucy frowned at her phone, skimming the screen again before relaying, "She says we should go home and change. Apparently she already picked out our clothes."

Wyatt rolled his eyes. Of course she had. "If I ever meet the version of you that gave your mother the key to the house, there's going to be a conversation," he declared in annoyance, only half-joking.

It earned him a look of mild warning from Lucy, but she continued reading the instructions on her phone. "And then we're supposed to meet her at some restaurant at five-thirty."

"And what was she going to do if we were stuck in '49 longer?" he wondered aloud, even as he was already resigning himself to the fact that there was no way they were getting out of this dinner any more than they'd gotten out of the previous one.

Lucy just shrugged in response, obviously having no better idea what her mother's plans were than he did. So all they could do was follow the directions and head back to the house.

Wyatt was grateful that conversation on the ride home ended up being restricted to speculation about what on earth Flynn could possibly be up to with successive missions that appeared to amount to nothing. The best they could come up with was that, given they'd been in D.C., was the same thing they'd come up with in New York – that he was landing in one place as a decoy, and then using the urban density of the northeast to head somewhere else. But to do what, they still had no idea, nor had Christopher or Mason when they'd quickly been debriefed. Either way, that sort of detached, strategic thinking he could deal with, especially when it was keeping him distracted from all things emotional, be they Lucy, Jess, or Lena.

The distraction didn't last very long once they reached the house. Carol hadn't been bluffing; hanging in the master bedroom was a dress bag for Lucy and pants, shirt, and jacket for him. At least there wasn't a tie.

Seeing no way around the dinner, he snatched up his clothes and headed for the downstairs bathroom, leaving Lucy to do whatever it was she needed to do to get ready upstairs. Of course, once upon a time with Jess, such getting ready to go out would have consisted of both of them running around only half-dressed, squeezing into the same tiny bathroom, him with a razor, her with a hair dryer or curling iron or one of those eyelash torture contraptions.

Half-dressed was hardly an option with Lucy.

So because he didn't see the behind-the-scenes process, Wyatt was hit full force with the effect when she finally emerged from the upstairs bathroom and descended the stairs to meet him in the living room.

If he'd begrudgingly allowed himself to think she was stunning in her 1949 state dinner look, it was nothing compared to how she looked now.

The dress her mother had selected almost looked like it was a similar style to the one she'd just worn in '49. Off the shoulder, froofy skirt, although only down to her knees this time. But where the other dress had just been a simple green, this was a pretty white, low-cut and strapless, but with some sort of blue lacy pattern that made sleeves and covered the more revealing white part.

She looked stunning in it, of course, but what really made the difference was her. Instead of some old-fashioned, old-lady hairstyle and stark, bold makeup, her hair was down in soft waves, and she looked natural, softer and prettier than the vintage looks, like she had when she'd come back from the
She just looked more like his Lucy, instead of playing some role. Except not his Lucy, Wyatt corrected, catching himself. Definitely not his. Jess was, and would be, when he figured out how to get her back, his.

So he turned away from her, willing himself to ignore those sorts of thoughts. And despite it being the last thing he wanted to do – and he suspected Lucy wasn't thrilled about it either – they headed out the door and climbed back into her car for the short drive to the restaurant that Lucy's mother had indicated in her text. It wasn't a place Wyatt recognized, but then again, he wasn't exactly in the habit of frequenting upscale places by himself. Who knows, maybe they went there all the time in this timeline.

Once they parked, made their way in, and indicated that they were meant to meet a Carol Preston, they were quickly escorted past the bulk of the dining area, which befuddled him a bit, but again, what did he know about swanky places like this?

But that mild confusion was nothing compared to the utterly bewildering feeling of being escorted through the closed doors of a small private function room to a chorus of 'Happy Anniversary!'s. What in the actual fuck?

Wyatt was stunned; a feeling which only increased further when he spotted a handful of his cousins, one of his aunts – when was the last time he'd even seen those family members? – and even Bambam, with presumably his date, among the thirty or so people in the room. Not to mention, he realized upon scanning the crowd further, Rufus and Jiya, who now suddenly had a lot of explaining to do. Carol, of course, was seemingly presiding over the whole thing, and had Lena in her arms. (That sight, at least, he could smile at – Lena practically looked like a little doll in a lacy party dress, tiny tights, shiny little dress shoes, and a bow in her hair.)

It was only when Carol headed over to them that Wyatt even registered Lucy's reaction. She looked just as dumbfounded as he felt as her mother shoved Lena into her arms. Lucy took her obediently, finally catching his gaze and looking very deer-in-the-headlights. All he could do was shrug helplessly in response. Did people actually do this? An anniversary party for only a fifth anniversary? It would never have crossed his mind to do such a thing with Jess. Fiftieth, sure. But only five years? And a surprise to boot?

He barely registered that Carol was speaking to the guests until apparently something she said was worthy of clapping, and suddenly they were being stared at expectantly.

"Uh," he stammered, trying desperately to figure out what he might be reasonably expected to say in this situation. "What a surprise," he declared lamely. "Thank you all so much for coming." And uncomfortably wrapping his arm around Lucy's waist to tug her closer, he forced a smile, adding, "We really appreciate it."

"Yes, thank you," Lucy echoed hollowly, after a pause just long enough to be awkward, still clearly just as jarred by the whole thing as he was.

Perhaps everyone there had already been drinking well in advance of his and Lucy's arrival because not only did they seemingly fail to register how out of place they both felt, they also seemed to deem his generic, bumbling words of gratitude just as applause-worthy as whatever it was that Carol had said.

And because the situation wasn't already uncomfortable enough to make Wyatt to wish he could literally just disappear, his obnoxious jackass of a cousin started clinking something against his glass. Of course, though it wasn't a wedding reception, everyone else caught on, following suit.
Wyatt looked over at Lucy; both of them had been to enough weddings in their time to know exactly what the expectation was. He wouldn't have thought it possible, but her eyes seemed to somehow widen even further, skittish and panicky. Still, the guests wouldn't shut up.

So he leaned down, pressing a brief peck to her lips, backing away again before she could even react.

His jackass of a cousin had the nerve to boo.

A few others joined in, and Wyatt swore to any and all deities, if Rufus was one of them, he was a dead man.

Still trying to force a smile and play along, Wyatt gestured to Lena, still perched on Lucy's hip, and offered an over-exaggerated shrug. A poor little impressionable child. That was a reasonable enough excuse to keep any and all interactions in her proximity G-rated, wasn't it?

But that just encouraged his aunt, mother of the obnoxious jackass of a cousin, to scurry up to them and snatch Lena out of Lucy's grasp with a knowing grin.

So much for that excuse. He cringed inwardly. *Fuck.*

He looked over at Lucy again, who was now looking less panicked, and more resigned to their fate. She gave a nearly imperceptible shrug; they both very clearly knew there was no way out of this one. So, his arm at her waist, he tugged her closer, pulling her in and swiftly capturing her lips in a manner not dissimilar to the show they'd put on for Bonnie and Clyde. Enough to convince the outlaw pair – and this crowd, apparently – of their 'love', but chaste enough that all potentially involved tongues stayed firmly planted in their own mouths. He'd learned his lesson at that damned party in New York; he could *not* let any stupid show kiss get out of hand again.

That resolve had little bearing on the shiver that ran up his spine when his mouth met hers, again not dissimilar to back in Arkansas... Wyatt forced himself to ignore that fact, especially given that Lucy barely seemed to respond to his touch.

The applause that earned by the time they parted was clearly lukewarm, but enough to placate everyone for the moment, as a low din of conversation swelled and the focus, at least temporarily, seemed to be off the two of them.

Accordingly, Wyatt led Lucy somewhat roughly by the arm to the edge of the room, hissing as discreetly as possible, "What the hell?"

Lucy just shook her head, incredulous as she gazed out over the room instead of at him. "I have no idea," she admitted.

"Fifth anniversary?" Wyatt demanded, releasing her arm. "And a surprise party? Who *does* that crap?"

That got Lucy to look at him, with a roll of her eyes. "My mother, apparently."

"Your mother is nuts," he scoffed.

"She's not nuts," Lucy sighed. "She just..." She paused, trailing off before looking at him, almost apologetically. "That second night?" she said, reminding him of those early days, "After the Lincoln? It was my engagement party with... Noah."

Wyatt jaw tightened; he'd known they were engaged, but it hadn't sat right with him even then.
Now? He hated the idea of Lucy with Noah. With anyone, really, but given that his goal was to get his own wife back, he had no right to the unsettled feeling in his gut at the mention of the guy's name.

"Like this, basically, but at the house," Lucy continued. "She always did dinner parties..." She scanned the room once again, helpless. "I don't know why this, though..."

Exasperated with Carol and her stupid party, and himself and his stupid feelings, Wyatt frowned. "So now we just have to-"

He was cut off as Lucy's elbow met his ribcage; her way of warning him that her mother was approaching "-deal with it," she finished quietly, then shushing him.

And then Carol was there, hugging him, hugging Lucy. Once she released Lucy from her embrace, she still held her shoulders, keeping her at arm's length. "Now do you see why I had to make sure everything was ok the other night?" she chastised Lucy.

Wyatt figured Carol was referring to whatever they'd talked about that had prompted Lucy to practically crawl into his lap, and he wondered what exactly it was that Carol had brought up, given the pink tinge beginning to color Lucy's cheeks.

Carol continued, "I would have had to cancel otherwise." And glance over at him, then back to Lucy, she reiterated warily, "You two are ok, right?"

"No!" Lucy snapped, springing to life and surprising both him and her mother. "Yes," she corrected herself, then whispering angrily, "we're fine, but this party? Was this really necessary, mom?"

"Well, you two were in such a rush to get married that we never got to do anything like this," Carol chastised them. "You came back from that vacation, suddenly you're already married. I just thought it might be nice to finally have some sort of celebration with your friends and family, especially now that you have Lena."

Wyatt's eyebrows shot up at her words. Vacation? They'd what, eloped? They'd been that wrapped up in each other that they'd just gotten married, spur of the moment? Even he and Jess, for as much as they'd been looking forward to being married, went along with a more customary build-up and planning to a traditional ceremony and reception.

A quick glance over at Lucy and her confused frown told him she was probably just as taken aback by that revelation as he was.

But neither of them had a chance to dwell on it, as Carol continued, instructing, "Now why don't you two gets yourself drinks, and go say hello to your guests, some of whom have traveled from well out of town to see you."

With a slight grimace, Wyatt gave a nod of acknowledgement. Lucy's mother wasn't wrong about that; the jackass cousin had moved out to Los Angeles a few years back, but his aunt and his other cousins had made the trek all the way from back home in Texas. Even Bambam probably would have had to go out of his way to get permission to be there. So, fair enough, he should go say hello. But that still didn't mean he was pleased about the stupid party.

Meeting Lucy's gaze, he could see she was feeling rather contrite herself, so with a nod and a shrug, the wordlessly agreed to go along with Carol's suggestion.

Wyatt made sure to make a stop at the small bar tucked in the corner of the room first; either he or Lucy was eventually going to have to drive back to the house, but he was pretty sure they were
going to be stuck at the party for at least a couple of hours, meaning there was still time for some indulgence. He requested wine for Lucy, whiskey for himself. He downed his first right there at the bar and waved for a second before heading back to Lucy to make the rounds.

The next hour or so was an endless stream of mindless, generic mingling with an extra dash of awkwardness given that, in this timeline, both he and Lucy would have already been acquainted with each other's relatives and friends. He'd be able to laugh more about it later, but in the moment, the extreme discomfort of not knowing everyone you were supposed to know and having it be fairly obvious wasn't exactly making the evening any more enjoyable. Nor were the sporadic rounds of silverware clinking on glasses, necessitating each time another stiff, forced kiss with Lucy – that he kind of wanted to do, but didn't want to want to do, and definitely shouldn't be doing, not to mention that Lucy clearly didn't want to be doing.

When Lena's regular babysitter came by to bring her home for bedtime, Wyatt was seriously wishing he could just go with them.

But he was pretty sure that would be frowned upon given that the party was half his, so instead he headed back to the bar as soon as Lucy excused herself to the restroom.

Refreshed whiskey in hand, and Lucy still in the bathroom, it was at that point that Wyatt finally was free enough of relatives and able to wander over to Rufus. Glaring at him, Wyatt asked accusingly, "Didn't think to mention this to us?"

To his credit, Rufus managed to look slightly apologetic. "The invitation said 'surprise'?' he winced sheepishly. "But really, Jiya totally forgot," he admitted. "We had gotten it before we even showed up in this timeline, apparently. And then once we did show up in this one, she still didn't know about you and Lucy," he reminded. "And once she found out, she'd already forgotten the invitation. It didn't click until this afternoon, but she had already RSVP-ed, and felt bad bailing on Lucy's mom. And," he added defensively, "you guys had already left by the time I knew anything today. So here we are," he finished. With an innocent shrug, he waved his beer at Wyatt gamely, "Free booze?"

It was at that moment that Lucy came storming back from the bathroom, suddenly dragging a guilty-looking Jiya with her. In a huff, she scolded Rufus, her line of thinking much in the same vein as Wyatt's, "Seriously? Both of you? Couldn't manage a quick text to let us know we were headed for the Spanish Inquisition tonight?"

Rufus opened his mouth to reiterate his defense, but didn't have the chance to get it out.

Almost immediately, Wyatt heard his stupid ass of a cousin, who must have noticed Lucy re-enter the room, clanking away on his glass again.

And, of course, a shit-eating grin crept up on Rufus' face as he reached to the nearest table to grab a knife and join in by tapping his own glass. The withering glare Wyatt shot in his direction did nothing to assuage the smirk.

But with the rest of the party still clinking expectantly, Wyatt had no choice but to lean down and press his lips to Lucy's once more.

She'd gotten more wine; he could taste the tinge of it on her mouth, and when he backed away could see the faint purple beginning to color her lips. Not that it had made the kiss seem like any less of a chore for her. He sighed, backing up further.

Cue his fucking jackass of a cousin again, who took it upon himself to drunkenly start chanting 'Speech, speech!'. And of course, the echoes took off, and apparently Carol thought it was a brilliant
idea, because a split second later, she had them both by the arms and was dragging them to an open area at the front of the room.

Both he and Lucy attempted to protest, but, as with so many other things, he was learning, Carol was not to be deterred. "Come on, don't you want to say a few words about each other?" she coaxed. "Five years and nothing to say?"

Pretty well trapped, Wyatt stole a glance down at Lucy beside him. He’d seen panic on her face enough times now on all their stupid trips that he certainly recognized it. And panic was exactly what he was seeing in her wide-eyes. So it would be up to him to get them out of this sticky situation.

All eyes were on them, so, clearing his throat, he dutifully slipped his arm around her waist, pulling her to his side, and prepared to stumble his way through some generic praise of Lucy that would be enough to appease all these people who knew them to be an actual couple.

The notion that maybe he could wax poetic about Jess instead, as he'd done back in Arkansas, flitted through his mind, but before he could latch onto that idea, he found himself with words already slipping from his mouth. "Lucy is… the smartest person I've ever met," he admitted honestly. "Always makes me wonder why someone like her would ever be with someone like me," he added, a tad self-deprecating given that she had been making it quite clear lately that she really did have no interest in someone like him. "And not only that, she's so beautiful – look at her," he said, though he himself was afraid to actually do so at the moment given how not amused she was likely to be by this sudden display of… whatever it was. But the words kept coming. "More than that, though," he continued, "she's so brave, and caring, no matter what situation we end up in, and such a wonderful mother to Lena." He smirked to himself as the next words formed, "And for some reason she puts up with me, even when I'm being an idiot. Which is pretty often." That earned some chuckles from the crowd, though he still couldn't gauge any sort of reaction from Lucy. As such, he figured this particular moment probably counted as 'being an idiot', so he hurried to wrap up his monologue. "It was dumb luck that brought us together as partners at work, and I'm even luckier to have her as partner in life too."

There was a bit of a pause, as if the guests were expecting something more, but in the end, what he'd said proved to be enough to placate them; a mix of applause, hoots, and the ever-present glass-clinking swelled soon after.

Still resigned to the role, Wyatt once again turned more fully toward Lucy, his arm still looped around her waist, and pressed his lips to her once more.

He was caught a little off-guard when one of her hands slid up to rest on his chest.

He was caught a lot off-guard when he felt her tongue tentatively trace along his lower lip. So much so that he wasn't even sure it had really happened, until she did it again, the barest whisper against his mouth.

Wyatt knew it may well eventually be among his finest 'being an idiot' moments, but with a few whiskeys coursing through his veins and Lucy's soft curves pressed against him, he wasn't about to not react to that. Tugging her closer, he followed her lead, opening his mouth to hers, sighing softly against her as their tongues met and the kiss deepened.

TBC…

Chapter End Notes
I had friends who had a similar party sprung on them and they were not exactly pleased. Lucy’s mother seemed pretty invested in the engagement party with Noah, so it seemed like a surprise party for only a 5th anniversary might be right up her alley.

Also, 1950’s (or close to it) DC was actually in the outline for this story even before the finale – pure coincidence there.

God dammit, you guys. Fuck.

I have never been so upset over the cancellation of a show. Not Gilmore Girls, not ER, not Friends, not Dawson's Creek back in the day, not Once Upon a Time currently dying a slow, painful death… Nothing. I should have known better than to get so invested in a bubble show.

I apologize for this not being an update, but the next one wasn't ready yet and I needed a bit of a rant, and I don't have a tumblr or anything else within the fandom. I figured you guys would be sympathetic ears. It's probably breaking rules and I actually HATE when authors do exactly what I'm doing, but that's just how much the loss of Timeless has thrown me :*(

I hate that so many boring, near-clones-of-each-other, random action/kidnapping/crime shows and so many idiotic 'reality' shows thrive and get renewals when things that are actually thought-provoking, unique, and even educational, like Timeless (and Pitch), get screwed over.

And I hate that we won't get to see Lucy and Wyatt evolve into something more on our screens :*(

I figure the fanbase here will now start dying off even quicker than it already was, and as much as I LOVE the Lucy and Wyatt in my head, it's going to be hard to justify devoting so much time and energy to turning their adventures into text if no one is around to read them.

So here's the plan. I'm finishing Timing regardless. I just hope readers stick around to the bitter end with me. I freely admit to leaving a massive, and well-loved, Gilmore Girls fic unfinished, and I still feel bad about it (not to mention two big Dawson's Creek fics forever ago). This one is finishable, and I love it too much to leave it hanging. I've had the whole thing outlined for a while, and unless something gets out of hand length-wise, there will be 17 chapters total (not including this rant, but including epilogue, I think). Chapter 13 will, fingers-crossed, be up this weekend. I also have a handful of one-shot ideas that I'd been saving for when my teaching semester ends (today! I so wanted better news about renewal to start my summer…), so I may still intersperse some of those between Timing chapters, depending how easy they prove to write and whether there's still anyone out there reading.

Ugh. You guys, I'm SO sad :(.

(PS - I wish AO3 had a private messaging feature. If it does, I haven't found it yet. Either way, if anyone wants to rant/vent/commiserate, you could always shoot me a PM on ffnet.)

Edit 5/13/17: HOLY CRAP, YOU GUYS. NBC REVERSED ITS DECISION. TIMELESS IS BACK!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
Chapter Notes

As someone wise (or maybe just hotheaded) said, "I just know I'm not really ready to say goodbye yet." …and it turns out no one was really ready to say goodbye!

YOU GUYS, IT'S UN-CANCELLED! (Just in case any of you had crawled in a hole away from the world to cry alone after the initial cancellation news.)

I didn't even know that could be a thing, but IT IS! TEN MORE EPISODES! Thank you, TV gods! And thank you to everyone who sent me a message or comment to make sure I'd heard the good news – you guys are the best :)

Anyway, I'll just leave this here…

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Lucy pulled away, wide-eyed and panicky, from Wyatt to the sound of cheers and whistles.

Mortified, she couldn't bear to look at him. She never should have done that, never should have let herself really kiss him…

But she'd had wine, they'd been having to kiss and be close all night, he'd just said so many nice things about her in his speech… She couldn't help it. She just wanted it, wanted him, wanted it all to be real, just for a second, and she'd stupidly taken the kiss too far.

And because of what? Some vague praise that was actually incredibly generic, if you thought about it even a little. She kicked herself mentally. He'd called her what, pretty and smart? People had been praising her as smart for her whole life, and she'd managed to never attack any of them with her tongue.

Not that he hadn't responded, which, hey, at least that was a step up from trying to crawl away from her on the couch at her mother's house. However, she didn't have much time to dwell any further on her slipup, given that everyone was now staring at her expectantly, waiting for her to reciprocate with some sort of similar speech about her wonderful husband.

Lucy coughed, swallowing hard and trying not to think about the lingering taste of his whiskey-tinged kiss. "Uh," she stammered, wracking her brain for something she could say that wouldn't either be a big fat lie or that wouldn't straight up reveal to him exactly what she was feeling. "I'm definitely not as smart as he says I am," she quipped shakily, given that that was 100% the truth right now. And with a defeated sigh, and against her better judgement, her next words tumbled out of her mouth, unfiltered. "But what I do know is that if you're lucky enough to marry Wyatt, you're the luckiest woman out there."

Whether Wyatt picked up on the wistfully envious nod to Jessica or not was moot; as a chorus of 'aww's reverberated through the crowd of guests, the clinking of glasses also returned in full force, so there was still going to have to be at least one more lip-lock for the audience regardless. Lucy steeled herself, turning back to him and keeping her eyes downcast lest she catch a glimpse of… well, anything really, written on his face. Resolved to keep her wits about her and hold back this time, she
leaned against him, up on her toes to press the requisite kiss to his mouth.

While Lucy may have been resolved to revert back to the chaste, quick, purely-for-show kisses of earlier in the night, it quickly became abundantly clear to her that Wyatt had no such intent. Before she could pull away and leave it a simple peck against his closed mouth, he took to tightening his arms around her, hands splayed over her back, mouth sucking softly on her lower lip, then tugging on it with his teeth, coaxing her to open up to him.

Her willpower had apparently gone the way of her zero-level blood alcohol content, because she couldn't help but part her lips for him, letting out the softest of whimpers into his mouth when his tongue slid over hers again. She gripped at his shoulders as they swayed slightly, losing themselves in each other momentarily, until more whoops and whistles from their guests forced their way into their little bubble of an embrace.

Once again, Lucy backed away from Wyatt wide-eyed, but this time she met his gaze, his look of stunned confusion probably pretty well mirroring her own surprise. Her mind raced – he'd pulled a one-off kiss like that back in New York, but he'd decisively avoided any and all acknowledgement that it had happened, not to mention pretty well decisively avoiding any and all things having to do with her at all, since then. At least until this stupid party forced their hands. So when her emotions had gotten the better of her with that kiss after his speech, she'd figured he'd go back into that retreat mode.

But he'd done the exact opposite, again taking the kiss well past what had proved necessary to appease the glass-clinking demands of the party guests. Was it just another level of acting the part for the guests? Or, she wondered fervently, was this just something they happened to mutually be ok with doing tonight?

For her, well, the motivation was obvious – she wanted this life, wanted him. Him? Had he caught her allusion to Jessica and just been, at least mentally, kissing his wife, his *real* wife? Which didn't explain the New York kiss, but…

Lucy blinked hard, shaking herself from her confused daze. It's not like she could just stop everything and ask him. Even if that wouldn't be a painfully awkward conversation, they were pretty much still on the clock, still having to play the stupidly happy couple on their anniversary. And as such, with her mother and Wyatt's cousin now appeased by their speeches, it was back to making the rounds together amongst the guests.

She might have been imagining it, but it almost seemed after that that he actually was more inclined to touch her, pull her close to him, hold her hand, let his own hand drift a bit lower on her then the platonic safe zone of her waist… Not that she was really complaining; it just didn't make a whole lot of sense.

And if she'd still had any doubts about all bets now being off for the party, they flew out the window the first time the guests prompted another kiss, the first since the speeches. Once again, Wyatt's tongue snaked into her mouth, teasing, coaxing her into deepening the kiss with him.

Yes, she was a little tipsy, so maybe her judgment skills weren't at their best, and maybe she'd regret it once they were thrust back into real life, away from the cocoon of the anniversary party, but she wasn't so drunk that she didn't recall Agent Christopher's advice. Make the best of it.

Forget reminding herself that it was just a role; in that moment, 'make the best of it' felt a whole lot like embracing that role and seizing the opportunity to kiss Wyatt, hold him, touch him without remorse, at least for the next hour or so. Especially considering he was suddenly seeming more than amenable to that idea himself.
So she did. Embrace the role, as it were. Which also meant embracing Wyatt. Which she did, on and off for the rest of the party. She still wasn't quite so bold as to initiate any kissing unprompted, but she was most certainly a willing participant every time the now-welcome sound of silverware on crystal rang out through the room. As was Wyatt, even going so far as to press a kiss to her bare shoulder from behind when one such round of clinking rang out while she was in the middle of getting a new glass of wine at the bar.

By the time the party began winding down, with guests – Rufus, Jiya, her local cousins, her mother's colleagues – filtering out slowly, saying goodbyes and offering congratulations as they went, the kissing prompts were growing few and far between. Lucy couldn't help but feel a little glum about that aspect of the evening coming to a close. After that taste of what it would be like to really be more of a couple with him, she wasn't exactly relishing the thought of going back to the house only to have him back on the couch. She also must have been sobering up a bit, despite the half-downed glass of chardonnay in her hand, because that mortifying embarrassment that had reigned immediately following that first time she'd initiated a deeper kiss was starting to creep back in. She should have known this part was coming. Buzzed and at a party where they were supposed to be all over each other was one thing. In the harsh light of day tomorrow? What the hell were they supposed to say to each other? Hell, what were they supposed to say to each other even once they left this room tonight? In the car? At the house?

Lucy was pretty sure that, whatever awkwardness happened between her and Wyatt once they left, she was pretty likely to be an emotional trainwreck all over again once the alcohol completely wore off and she started thinking too hard about everything. Snuggling in bed with Lena might well be in order yet again.

Lena.

Bringing the little girl to mind just served to remind Lucy that she had gone home with a sitter, who would have to be relieved at some point, probably soon. And, she realized, looking again down at the glass in her hand, she wasn't exactly in the right shape to just be jumping into the car and driving to do said relieving of said sitter.

Scanning the room, she managed to locate her mother, over by the table the cake was on, looking like she was dealing with leftovers with a few of the remaining guests. She made her way across the room, inquiring once she got there, "Mom, how late is Kathryn staying?"

Her mother shot her a smile over her shoulder as she gathered up some of the cards and small gifts that guests had left on the same table. "Oh, I think I told her eleven," she replied, "Why?"

"Well, I just want to make sure we get there in time," Lucy frowned, figuring her rationale should have been pretty obvious. "We should probably get a ride though," she added as she glanced across the room to the bar, where she could see Wyatt laughing with his friend from the military – Dave? – and both of them toasting with new tumblers of whiskey. He wasn't in any better shape than she was in terms of driving. Turning back to her mother, she continued, "Do you mind? Or should we get a cab or something?"

It was then that her mom turned around with a gently patronizing smile. "Oh honey, you don't need a ride."

"But," Lucy stammered, confused, "I shouldn't drive and he-" She was cut off before she could gesture over to Wyatt and Dave at the bar.

"Lucy," her mother chastised, "do you really think I'd let you just go home to a messy, half-unpacked house on your anniversary night? With a baby to take care of?" She smiled, continuing her
explanation. "Kathryn didn't take Lena to your house; I've got her tonight. You have a room here."

Lucy felt her jaw go slack. Hotel. She'd been to this restaurant with her mother before; how could she not have remembered that there was a hotel in the same complex? She barely managed to stammer the beginning of a dumbfounded "Wh-" when her mother cut her off again.

"I already checked you in," she explained, "and I packed a bag of clothes for the two of you for tomorrow, with toothbrushes, deodorant, things like that. I put it in the room already."

Feeling the panic rise in her for not the first time that night, Lucy shot a glance at Wyatt, catching his eyes momentarily across the room. She must have looked just as alarmed – or horrified, or terrified, or something – as she felt because she was barely halfway through her protest of "Mom, thank you, but I don't think-" to her mother – when he was suddenly by her side, rubbing his hand up and down her back.

"What?" he asked, sounding worried.

Lucy plastered a wide, over-exuberant smile onto her face, and not trusting her own voice, gestured to her mother to share the news.

Her mother waved her off, laughing modestly. "Oh, it's nothing," she insisted. "I just wanted to give you two a night off."

A quick side glance at Wyatt told Lucy that he hadn't gotten the gist of what her mother was implying, so with false enthusiasm, she forced herself to chirp out, "We have a room. In the hotel. Tonight."

She felt his hand still on her back as a hint of something unreadable flickered across his face.

But, just as she'd done, he managed to force himself to speak, also protesting to her mother. "Oh that's not-" he started, shooting a cautious glance down at her before looking back up to continue. "You already do so much for us with Lena," he insisted, "plus the party. You don't have to-"

"It's already done," her mother cut in yet again, with a smile. "And you know I'm more than happy to help you with my grandbaby," she gushed, going on to warn them, "Just don't let me forget to get you the room keys from my purse before I leave."

His hand fell away from her back. "Oh. Well, thank you," he stammered. "We appreciate it."

"Yes, thank you," Lucy heard herself parrot numbly. "I, um, I'm going to run to the bathroom…"

She did actually have to pee – thank you, open bar – but mostly it was just an opportune time to dodge Wyatt and have a small meltdown somewhere private. Her mind raced as she locked herself in the stall. As great as their indulgent little charade had been, and as much as part of her hated the thought of him relegated to the couch again, the other practically schizophrenic part of her had still really been looking forward to having him down on the couch so she could escape alone to the bedroom at the house so she wouldn't have to face him after having gone a little bit nuts with the kissing.

But she could hardly stay in the bathroom forever, so she reluctantly headed back to what was left of the party a few moments later. Everything was pretty much cleared out by then, with just her mother, Wyatt, and a few of his extended family members from Texas still remaining. With it now nearing that babysitter deadline they'd already discussed, her mother quickly gave them hugs, handed Wyatt his long since abandoned blazer as well as Lucy's own purse, then pressed the little paper folder containing two room keys into her hand before disappearing.
Lucy stared down, looking at the keys helplessly. At least the room would have to have a bigger bed than they'd shared in Arkansas, right? Maybe it would even be a big enough room to have a couch; she could offer to take it instead of him since he'd been on couches enough lately.

She was jarred from her thoughts, her gaze dragged up, by laughter from Wyatt's family as they headed off toward the elevator, waving for her and Wyatt to tag along. Of course they'd be staying here too, necessitating that they play the loving couple to the bitter end when they all stepped off the elevator on the same floor. Although when she glanced down at the room number on the small key holder her mother had handed her, and they headed in a different direction from his cousins and lost their audience, his jacket- and purse-free hand still never left the small of her back.

They were both silent as they made their way to the designated room. Biting at her lower lip, uneasy, Lucy slid the key card into the door, pushing it open and stepping inside.

Giving the room a quick scan from the small hallway by the bathroom, she could see the luggage her mother had mentioned packing, and thankfully, there was a couch to the far sid-

She froze when, just as the door slammed shut behind them, she felt Wyatt wrap his arms around her waist from behind and press a kiss to her collarbone at the base of her neck.

Ignoring the shiver that ran down her spine, she twisted around in his embrace to face him, speechless. Before she could even form the words to question him, he took advantage of her surprise and pressed his lips to hers.

Lucy gasped into the kiss, clinging instinctively to his shoulders as he hauled her closer. His tongue slid over hers, teasing, caressing, picking right up where they'd left off downstairs. At least until a modicum of sense was able to take over in Lucy's brain, reminding her that not everyt}hing was the same as downstairs.

Pulling away, her knees a little wobbly, Lucy slid her hands down to grip Wyatt's forearms, anchoring herself while still keeping a bit of distance between her body and his. Or as much distance as she could when the hands attached to those forearms still rested on her hips, thumbs rubbing circles over the lace of her dress. She fought to catch her breath, slow her racing pulse, as she stared blankly at Wyatt's chest, not really seeing anything as she tried in vain to process what had just happened.

They were …alone. That had never… Not when they were... It was just… Why would he…

Finding no answers in the depths of her own chaotic brain, Lucy, tentative, lifted her gaze to meet Wyatt's, searching wordlessly for any sort of explanation.

But his stunned expression was otherwise unreadable, offering no clues as to whether it was the kind of stunned that might have him diving in for another kiss if she didn't say something quickly, or if it was the kind of stunned that might see him backing away like a skittish puppy any second.

Somehow, Lucy managed, amidst the confusion and arousal currently battling for top spot in her mind, to summon enough of a voice to breathily ask, "…what was that for?"

His voice was soft, and a little husky, when he admitted simply, "I wanted to."

She sucked in a sharp breath. Her heart began pounding again, her mind in a tizzy. He wanted to? …to kiss…her? And not for show?

Lucy may well have had a Ph.D., but she still didn't know what to do; she had no idea how to process that information, not with Wyatt.
She did know some things. She knew that she herself was probably still well into the realm of what one might call tipsy. She knew just as surely that Wyatt was also some level of buzzed. And she knew that they were alone, in a hotel room, with a massive bed, and she knew exactly what moderately drunken kissing alone in a hotel room with a massive bed could lead to. And she knew that that was probably a bad idea.

Because she also knew that not a single thing about their situation had changed; they were still in a timeline, a world, that wasn't theirs, that he wasn't really hers…

But she knew she wasn't so drunk that she'd imagined what he said. He'd just confessed that he'd wanted to kiss her. Not because it was forced, not because of some role they had to play, but because he'd just wanted to, and how long had she been wishing against all odds for that to be the case?

If all the stupid time travel had taught her anything at all, it was that you can't always think your way out of messy situations. Sometimes you had to act on the fly. Just do. Just be. Consequences be damned.

And in that moment, thinking about consequences wasn't high on Lucy's priority list.

Make the best of it.

As it had downstairs, making the best of it right now was looking a whole lot like seizing the moment and kissing him back.

So she did.

Releasing her steadying grip on his arms, Lucy instead reached up to cradle Wyatt's face, pulling him to her and gently brushing her lips over his.

It wasn't gentle for long; he quickly deepened the kiss, his mouth and hands unrelenting, not that Lucy was about to complain. She gave as good as she got, nipping at his lip, sucking his tongue into her mouth, tugging his shirt from his waist band and raking her nails over the skin of his lower back.

She felt herself let out a shaky sigh as he backed her up against the wall of the room's small foyer, his focus drifting lower, his mouth trailing hot, wet kisses down her neck, along her bare collarbone.

Lucy let her head fall back against the wall, let her eyes flutter shut as she allowed herself to just take in the feel of everything he was doing to her.

By the time Wyatt captured her lips in another searing kiss, it was his hand, rather than his mouth, that was drifting lower. His one arm was still wrapped around her waist, holding them together, but the other reached down, pushing away the hem of her dress, his hand trailing up the bare skin of her thigh.

She didn't exactly need further encouragement to lift up her leg, hooking it around his as that hand ventured still higher. A gasp escaped into his mouth when he finally gave her ass a squeeze, and when his fingers danced along under the edge of the elastic of her bikini underwear, inching dangerously close to where they grew increasingly damp, she tore her mouth from his with a ragged sigh, needing to catch her breath. He just took that as an invitation to assault her neck again, to which Lucy had no objection.

She did object a moment later, in the form of a breathy, pleading 'Wyatt…' when he took his sweet time, teasing, too-slowly making his way back to her mouth.

It was as if that one barely uttered word was all it took to escalate things even further. A split-second
later, his lips were on hers again, her leg was hiked higher, and he pressed his hips to hers.

A whimper escaped, unbidden; Lucy could feel him, firm and insistent, against her. She pressed right back, pulling him to her as best she could while still up against the unforgiving wall.

The next thing she knew, he whirled them around, never breaking the kiss as he began walking her toward the bed. She felt it hit her calves and she tumbled backwards, less than graceful. Not that her clumsiness mattered in the least; he was crawling up over her a second later as she shimmied further back, kicking her heels off as she went.

One of his knees nudged her legs apart, a request to which Lucy complied willingly as she reached up to cradle his jaw and pull him down to her for another kiss.

While Wyatt hovered above her at first, he eventually lowered himself down, save for leaning on one elbow, to press his body flush against her, one leg still between her thighs. And if Lucy had thought she'd been on edge thus far, it was nothing compared to the rush of anticipation that built as she felt his hard length trapped against her hip. His tongue continued working its magic against hers, and his free hand skimmed up the length of her torso, dancing over her ribcage until he brushed a cautious thumb over her breast before cupping it with a soft squeeze.

Lucy hissed against his mouth, her back arching involuntarily up against his hand.

The muffled noise must have served to encourage him; he massaged a bit rougher, pulling his lips from hers. Lucy writhed beneath him when he began to trail kisses down her neck, across her collarbone, then against her chest, through the sheer lace of her dress. She raked her nails through his hair, silently urging him to continue.

But the dress, which she'd actually quite liked when she'd unzipped the dress bag back at the house, was proving to be a rather unforgiving barrier. Wyatt had focused his mouth on her neck once more as his hand wandered higher to tug the lacy neckline down, but to no avail. His fingers dipped beneath the fabric, but on the whole, it wasn't sliding any further down.

"Unzip it," Lucy suddenly heard herself whisper.

Those first uttered words since the initial kisses by the door could well have served to break the spell they were seemingly under, and for a second, she was afraid they had. Instead of eagerly snaking his hand around to the zipper tracing the length of her spine, Wyatt stilled, pulling his mouth from her neck and leaning up away from her to regard her with a curious, searching gaze.

Willing it to not be over before it even started, she slid a hand up to run a thumb over his jaw, beseeching him with a soft "Just unzip it."

Wyatt blinked, as if not quite believing what he was hearing. "We don't have to…" he started, his voice thick and low. "I can…" he tried again, stammering. "Tell me to stop if-"

"Don't stop," Lucy implored.

The hesitation faded, at least temporarily, and he leaned back into her for a kiss before easing her up gently to a half-sitting position.

She felt his hands reach around her, making quick work of the small fastener at the top of her back, followed by the slow, torturous drag of the zipper down, further down… The thin fabric of the dress bodice fell away from her, pooling around her waist, leaving her upper body exposed but for the simple nude-colored strapless bra she'd hastily thrown on earlier.
It didn't appear that Wyatt particularly minded the lack of seductive lingerie; he pulled her appreciatively to him for another kiss half a breath later.

Still, even as she sighed against his mouth, Lucy was left feeling at a bit of a disadvantage, so she cautiously let her fingers venture to the buttons of his shirt, deftly undoing them one by one. The last one free, she pushed the garment from his shoulders, down his upper arms, to reveal his smooth, bare chest.

Wyatt broke the kiss just long enough to tug his wrists free of the sleeves, flinging the shirt somewhere behind him as he leaned back over her, his weight pressing her to the mattress again as their lips met once more. Lucy took the opportunity to run her hands over his chest, down his back, back up his stomach. She'd deny it if asked, but she'd been wanting to do this since that second trip, at least once it had been clear he'd be ok after getting shot.

She was just hitching her leg around the back of his thigh, her body's attempt to pull him even closer, when she felt his hand freeze at the clasp of her bra, trapped between her back and the soft duvet covering the bed.

He pulled away from her lips and leaned his forehead against hers with a dismayed sigh. Then he leaned back further, his eyes closed and disappointment etched across his features, visible to Lucy even in the dim light barely filtering in from the moon outside.

Panic started to creep into her mind the longer he stayed upright, away from her. She couldn't have this dangled in front of her only to have it taken away now…

Propping herself up, Lucy rolled slightly onto her side to better face where he'd sat back to and eyed him questioningly.

With another low sigh, he let out a soft, dry chuckle. "What are the odds your mother put condoms in that bag?" he asked, nodding over to where the small overnight bag still rested on the desk by the TV.

Oh. Right. Condoms. They should probably use one.

Lucy winced; had it really been *that* long since she'd done this that such a thing could slip her mind?

Then, despite it being possibly the absolute worst situation to laugh in, Lucy couldn't help but let out a wry snort as she recalled the absurd conversation she'd just had a couple days ago with her mother as they'd thrown together dessert in the kitchen. "Probably zero," she conceded, her eyes falling closed in defeat. It couldn't just end like that, could it?

"…I don't have anything with me," he admitted after hesitating, his tone reluctant.

Well, of course he didn't. It's not like he'd have been planning to end up like *this*.

Lucy flopped back onto the bed, her dress bunched around her waist. It was just as well that she wasn't looking at him; he could practically feel him growing more and more hesitant, sliding away from her ever so slightly.

She swallowed hard, biting back the tears that would surely be coming as the reality of the situation began to set in.

Except…

She'd gotten used to it so quickly; she'd almost forgotten about it. And its actual purpose. She'd
certainly never imagined it proving useful in this particular situation any time soon, especially with this particular person.

All it had taken was one trip to the bathroom in 1865 D.C., replete with stupid hoop skirts and petticoats. She knew right then and there that if they were going to continue those stupid time jumps, she would not be dealing with tampons on top of those stupid costumes. Never mind whatever abhorrent alternatives historical times had to offer.

She'd never been much for hormones; hell, during grad school and tenure prep, she'd barely been much for relationships that might have benefited from them, but as soon as they'd gotten back from 1865, she'd marched right to her gynecologist's office and requested something, anything, that would keep her periods at bay for a while. Toting around daily pills to remember barely made more sense than toting around a pack of Tampax; longer-term options could make some people bleed more, which was certainly not the outcome she'd been looking for.

In the end, she'd gone with Nuvaring; she just had to pop a new one in every four weeks and that was that.

And in it currently was, conveniently preventing not only that annoying monthly challenge, but also most everything else she was in need of preventing at that very moment.

Before Wyatt could slink any further away from her, she squeezed her eyes tighter, took a deep breath, and announced rather unceremoniously before she could talk herself out of it, "...I'm on birth control."

When he didn't respond in any sort of obvious way, she propped herself back up to regard him warily.

Wyatt was regarding her just as warily, his brow slightly furrowed.

A beat later, Lucy's eyes widened with understanding. Was he possibly wavering because, though they had certainly never even come close to this before, he might be the slightest bit upset over the idea of her needing such things for someone else?

She sat up further, tugging the top of her dress a bit higher. "...it's just so I don't have to deal with my period on the jumps," she assured him, suddenly feeling shy as her cheeks grew warm. "Not because of ...Noah, or anyone..."

If she wasn't mistaken, a flicker of something that looked like relief washed over his face, followed by a bashful expression of his own. "So we could..." he paused, faltering a bit and scratching at the back of his neck. "I mean, it's... been a while," he admitted, adding haltingly, "I'm clean..."

Lucy tried not to think about whether 'a while' meant Jessica or not, given that neither option was something she particularly wanted to dwell on at the moment. So instead, she sat up fully, reaching for him, pulling him back to her as the dress fell away from her chest once more. Just before capturing his lips with hers, she echoed his admission with a "...me too."

The implication was clear in that next kiss – it was going to happen. And any last few persisting doubts Lucy may have had were erased when Wyatt grasped at the bunched-up tulle of her dress, tugging the whole thing up and over her head. With still another kiss, he made quick work of the clasp of her bra, and that too went the way of the dress, flung haphazardly off into the distance somewhere.

And then she was flat on her back again, a murmured "beautiful" pressed to the skin of her neck as
he ghosted a whisper of a caress over her bare breast for the first time. She ran her hands through his hair helplessly as he worked his mouth down achingly slow, the first touch of his tongue to her nipple not coming nearly fast enough for her liking. But when Wyatt finally closed his mouth over her, swirling his tongue, teasing lightly with his teeth, she practically melted, arching her back up to him, her hips bucking of their own accord against the knee still lodged between her legs.

Before long, running her hands, haphazard and desperate, through his hair wasn't enough. Not content to let him have all the fun, Lucy trailed her hands down his chest as he continued to lavish attention on hers. She could have stopped their descent when she reached his belt, but she slid one lower, raking her nails over his still-covered hard length, giving him an exploratory gentle squeeze.

Wyatt let out a loud hiss, dropping his head to rest on her shoulder as he pressed himself roughly into her hand.

Somewhere in the back of her mind, as he captured her lips yet again, the barest hint of whiskey still evident on his tongue, Lucy tried to convince herself that this was not a bad idea, that they weren't that drunk, that the hardness still in her grip was a testament to that fact.

Bad idea or not, she slid his belt out of the buckle, unbuttoned and unzipped the fly of his pants, and slipped her hand into his boxers, seeking out the warm, silky skin.

A strangled, "Fuck… Lucy…", was breathed against her lips when she finally closed her hand around him. She couldn't help but smile at the reaction, even more pleased by the throaty growl that followed when she slid her hand along the length, sweeping her thumb over the slick, slippery tip.

And then, without warning, her hand was empty again as he pulled away. Though thankfully only far enough for him to stand upright at the side of the bed, hastily shoving the remainder of his clothes down his legs, shoes and socks kicked away too. As much as she would have liked to, Lucy barely had time to take in the view and appreciate the sight of his near-perfect form; seconds later, Wyatt was back, curled against her, his hard length jutting out against her thigh. He kissed her yet again and his hand slid down to the damp fabric between her legs, the last scrap of clothing separating them. Lucy was ever so grateful that he seemed just as impatient as she was; rather than wasting time teasing, he simply hooked his thumb through the waistband and tugged downward, working the tiny garment to her ankles, at which point she could kick it away herself. Before she knew it, where that damp fabric had just been, now were his fingers, coaxing her legs apart, slipping inside her with ease.

She bucked against his hand and whimpered against his mouth, the feel of him working her somehow too much and not enough at the same time; she needed more. They'd had centuries of foreplay already. "Wyatt," she whimpered again breathily, begging, imploring him, for that more.

As horrible as their communication skills had been since landing in this timeline, that one whispered utterance was enough. Shifting his weight, Wyatt pushed himself over her leg, finally landing between her thighs. A shuddery breath slipped out as Lucy felt his warm, solid hardness brush against her.

He looked down at her, his gaze seeking out hers in the dim light as he hovered above her on his elbows, as if offering one last chance to back out.

Lucy was certainly not going to need that chance; she reached down to grasp him once more as confirmation. Skimming her other hand up his neck to pull him down for a kiss, she guided him to her.

And then he sank down, oh-so-slowly, into her. She sucked in a quick breath, her eyes fluttering
closed, basking in that sweet, aching stretch that came with the feeling of this being so right, after nothing for so long.

Only when fully buried inside her did any sort of coherent words come from Wyatt's mouth, and even then, it was just a muffled "God, Lucy… fuck…" breathed against her shoulder.

Lucy couldn't help it; she kissed him desperately, clinging to him and hooking her legs around him, holding him there, deep in her, still not moving otherwise because she never wanted him to leave.

But raw instinct would not be denied. Her hips rocked experimentally against his of their own volition. Wyatt groaned against her mouth, matching her motions, retreating partially before somehow sliding even deeper than before. A few more slow, sensual strokes into her followed, his tongue probing against hers, one of his hands massaging her breast, before that primal urge to go faster, faster took over for both of them.

Wyatt leaned on his elbows above her, one hand framing her face, both breathing heavier while Lucy met him thrust for thrust as she ran her hands over his chest, earning extra shudders from him when she brushed lightly over his nipples.

It was good, so good, but she knew herself well enough to know that the release bubbling just beneath the surface needed more. She tightened her legs' hold on his waist, digging her heels in, whimpering as she tried fervently to find that elusive extra friction, that little bit of extra sensation she needed to push her over the edge.

As if they'd been doing this for years rather than this one, single time, Wyatt picked up on that one little change, that one little difference, taking it as his cue to sneak his hand between them.

His thumb – pressing, rubbing, circling – was exactly what Lucy had needed, frissons of electricity shooting through her, even her toes tingling, at each touch. Still, though she rocked against him, part of her seeking that release, another part of her fought it, aching to prolong what could be her only chance with Wyatt. She clung to him, still meeting his strokes as the warm pressure built within, threatening to send her over the edge even as she willed it to last longer.

But it was Wyatt; there would be no denying the effect that having him in her, on her, around her had. Lucy stilled for a fleeting second, her legs tightening, fingers digging into his skin, and then she fell. She felt herself unraveling, tumbling over the edge beneath him with a soft sound somewhere between a strangled sob and a breathy moan of his name. The waves washed over her, filling her, flooding through her, the sensations almost too much to bear when he persisted in his relentless rhythm, each further caress of his thumb sending her into another writhing, fitful tremor.

Her pulse still racing, Lucy didn't even have time to catch her breath before she was caught off guard, swallowing a muffled squeak when Wyatt fused his mouth back to hers with urgency. Echoes of her release still fluttered through her as he sped up his hips, frantically seeking his own.

Compelled more than ever to get him to come apart, she sucked hard on his tongue, raking her nails roughly over his back. She tightened around him, squeezing him deep within her, her body willing his to let go.

Without warning, Wyatt tore his lips from hers with a choked, gasping cry. He managed a few more erratic thrusts before his body stiffened, and then Lucy felt the warm heat of him pulsing inside her. Her eyes fell closed and she wrapped her arms around him, pulling him down against her chest, both of them slick with sweat. She could feel his heart pounding; she wanted to freeze this moment, capture it and keep it forever.
Lucy had no idea how long they actually stayed like that, her legs still locked around him, his head resting on her shoulder, his hot breath against her neck. But, as happens, heart rates slowed, heat dissipated, and that sheen of sweat turned uncomfortably chilly. And Wyatt softened, eventually slipping out, though still pressed to her amid the messy trickle that escaped.

Grimacing at both the sensation and the unequivocal end of the moment, or whatever else that everything since coming into the room could be called, Lucy reluctantly let her legs drop away from him, her gaze automatically sweeping the room, seeking a box of tissues, something.

But she was distracted when Wyatt lifted his head from her and brushed a chaste kiss over her lips. "Stay here," he murmured. "I got it." He slid off her, slid off the bed, and headed in the direction of the bathroom.

The coolness of the air was even more pronounced with him gone, as were the racing thoughts now fast repopulating Lucy's brain against the faint backdrop of water running.

She let her knees fall closed, her head lolling back onto the mattress as she rubbed a hand over her eyes. Such a bad idea… Such a bad idea. Now she knew exactly what she'd been missing out on, and yet she still managed to have no idea what this new turn of events could mean considering she could practically count on one hand the number of words they'd actually spoken in the time they'd take to go from zero to horizontal.

Before Lucy could work herself into any more of a worried tizzy, she felt the bed dip next to her. Her eyes flew open, zeroing in on a still-nude Wyatt sitting sideways next to her, clutching what appeared to be a crumpled up washcloth from the bathroom. She bit her lip, trying to muster the poise to just take it from him and clean herself up with as little awkwardness as possible. But when she did reach for it, Wyatt just deflected her hand away, instead leaning on his elbow next to her. He captured her lips in another kiss, using his hand to ease her legs apart as he did so.

Lucy shivered, not from the touch of the damp cloth guided by his hand, but at the unexpectedly tender gesture. But before she could stop it, the notion that he probably used to do this for Jessica flickered across her mind. She recoiled reflexively, backing away from the kiss that suddenly, to her mind, felt like it should have been for Jessica.

If Wyatt noticed her reaction, he didn't let on, instead simply tossing the used washcloth to the floor and yanking the bedding down from one corner of the bed. He managed to maneuver himself beneath them, then reached out for her, pulling her body tightly to his and covering them both with the covers. She didn't fight him on it, torn between wanting so badly for it to be real, and hating herself for being so weak to have let this all happen when he was probably thinking of Jessica the whole time.

Lying there, cuddled up next to him, suddenly uneasy about pretty much everything, Lucy knew she should speak up, say something, to address whatever it was that had just happened. But after a whirlwind few days, sleep (and the escape from uncomfortable situation that it would provide) proved to be too tempting.

It was still dark when Lucy blinked awake a couple of hours later, not immediately sure where she was with only moonlight to brighten the room. But she was reminded all too quickly of what had happened when she felt Wyatt behind her, shifting against her as he stretched sleepily. Their legs were entangled, his arm was thrown over her waist, his warm breath tickled the back of her neck… and his erection was pressed firmly against the back of her thigh.

Lucy sucked in a sharp breath at that realization, arching back against him instinctively before she could stop herself. But even as she winced, squeezing her eyes shut and cursing her body's reaction,
Wyatt was already humming his half-asleep approval in her ear, his hips pushing against her in response, his hand sneaking up from her stomach to palm her breast, his fingers deftly giving her nipple a little tweak. She knew she should stop him; he was probably in the middle of a dream about Jessica, but his hand slid lower, back to her stomach, then lower still. And as his fingers dipped between her legs to the slick arousal building there once more, it wasn't Jessica's name that slipped from between his lips with reverence, it was hers, a shuddery "Jesus, Lucy..." murmured against her neck as he probed deeper into the slippery heat.

She barely moved – barely had to, just leaning forward ever so slightly – and then he was sheathed in her once again as she let out a trembling "Wyatt..."

But, for as good as he felt curled around her, and as thick as he felt inside her, the position – that slow rocking against each other – mostly ended up serving to increase the mutual frustration rather than relieve it. With disappointment, Lucy felt Wyatt pull out, rolling away behind her. She peered back over her shoulder at him. He was on his back, spread out rather shamelessly; between that and the smirk on his face, there was no question about the fact that he wasn't done with her yet. He tilted his head, nodding for her to come closer, giving her arm a slight tug at the same time.

Any thoughts of Jessica still flitting around Lucy's mind were pretty well banished by the sight of him like that, want and arousal taking over as she gave in and crawled over him. She shot him a smile, somewhere between truly shy and coy, as she kneeled above him, but when she reached for him, guiding him in as she slowly sank down on his length, her jaw dropped and her eyes fluttered closed, any pretense of teasing giving way to pure, primal reactions to the sensations he was eliciting in her.

Only when she stilled, with him fully seated in her, her full weight resting on him, could she muster up the strength to open her eyes and look at him. He didn't seem to be faring any better than she was, appearing just as affected by the new position as she was. Lucy tightened her muscles, giving him an experimental squeeze. She was rewarded with a full-body convulsion and guttural groan from Wyatt, his eyes rolling back when he pressed his head hard onto his pillow. Lifting slowly off him, and sliding back down even slower, earned her another similar groan as he bit his own lip in a futile attempt to stifle the noise. From that point on, Lucy vowed to herself, in case this never happened again, that she would go torturously slow, making it all about him and mentally cataloguing and committing to memory each and every reaction she could get.

So she did exactly that, savoring every little grunt, moan, and squirm she got from him as she rode, circled her hips, angled her pelvis this way and that, raked her nails over his chest, and gripped his thighs behind her.

She was so focused on him that she almost lost track of herself; she was pretty sure from the increasingly spastic thrusts up into her that he was getting close, but she was caught entirely off guard when he reached down to her, thumbing her roughly and sending her over the edge first. Lucy barely managed a hiccupped "Oh!" of surprise, waves of electric sensation overtaking her, when Wyatt followed right after, writhing under her and throbbing inside her with a muffled "Oh, fuck, Lucy..." as he turned to bury his face in the nearest pillow. She clenched down on him, trying to prolong it all as best she could.

Once they finally stilled, Lucy slumped weakly down onto Wyatt's chest, spent and sated. She let him pull her face to his for a slow, languorous kiss, but beyond that, she couldn't muster the energy to do or think much of anything. At some point, she felt him tug the covers back over them, and then she faded back to sleep.

The next time she woke, it wasn't to Wyatt pressed against her. He wasn't lying next to her at all.
With early dawn light filtering in through the sheer curtains, Lucy could see him clearly, sitting up further down the bed. His back was to her, the sheets covering his lap, but little else.

And he was leaning over, head in hands.

Tendrils of dread snaked up Lucy's spine as she pulled herself up to a sitting position.

She knew.

He regretted it.

He regretted it already. She still had the evidence of their night together seeping out between her thighs, she realized, wincing at the feel, and he regretted it already.

But she still couldn't stop herself from speaking her hushed, "...Wyatt?" ringing out in the otherwise silent room as she pulled the sheets up to cover her chest.

Even in the dim light, she could see how much of a mess he was as soon as he turned to her. The weak smile he was able to force was no match for the red-rimmed eyes and harried expression. Nor was the weak quip he attempted, accompanied by a tinny laugh, "Some anniversary party, huh?"

If it hadn't already been breaking for herself, knowing that he regretted it, her heart would have broken for him in that moment. As much as she'd wanted it, she hated herself for playing a role in him doing something he so clearly now wished he hadn't done. "I'm so sorry, Wyatt" she choked out, her eyes welling up with tears. "We were drinking and I shouldn't have let this-

But Wyatt shook his head, stopping her mid-apology. "It wasn't-" He stopped, his voice catching. "It wasn't the drinks," he admitted, his voice barely audible as he stared down at his hands on his lap. "I wanted to. I wanted- want you," he corrected, drawing his gaze back up to meet hers.

Lucy's jaw dropped, but he continued before she could even begin to formulate a coherent response. "Luce, I- I... have feelings for you. I do," he confessed. "I just- I still love Jess," he amended, his voice cracking. "I don't know what to do," he sniffled, tears now visibly slipping from his eyes, the tracks shiny on his cheeks. "I don't want to hurt you, but how can I not still try to get her back?"

Completely and utterly flummoxed, Lucy had no idea how to answer that. The selfish side of her was relieved to hear that she hadn't been pining away, unrequited, since Arkansas. That it hadn't actually just been fueled by booze. Even if he was so clearly conflicted, it made her feel a little better. Still, she could only feel so much better when he was completely broken up about it; it couldn't have been easy for him, neither to be dealing with it in the first place, nor coming out and admitting it. She'd never really been in love like that, not like what he had with Jessica, never mind having that on top of new feelings for a second person. It was hard enough for her dealing with feeling anything for him, just one person. And what could she offer now? Tell him to forget Jessica and live happily ever after with her? Hardly.

So Lucy did all she could think to do, as much as the thought pained her – reassure him that he should do what he'd always intended to do. "You should. Try," she clarified. "Get her back. I won't stop you from trying. Ever."

She did not expect the vitriol she got in response. "It's that easy for you? Just send me back to Jess after this?" Wyatt shot back, glaring at her accusingly. "Were you just drunk?"

"No!" Lucy yelped, her posture defensive as she clutched the sheet tighter to her chest. "I-" she stammered. "How could you."
Wyatt just cut her off yet again, with another head shake, chastising himself. "Shit," he muttered, rubbing his temples. "Sorry-"

At that point, Lucy decided it was her turn to butt in. With a deep breath, she conceded, "I wasn't that drunk, not really. I wanted-" She paused, wringing her hands together, hesitating. Finally she forced herself to look him directly in the eye. "Wyatt, sometimes I want this life with you so much it hurts. And I know it's not real-"

This time she was cut off by Wyatt's lips pressed to hers in a desperate kiss. "It is," he insisted breathlessly when he pulled away. "What I feel is."

"It's real for me too," Lucy promised, her thumb stroking over Wyatt's tear-streaked jawline. "But," she reminded him, a tear slipping down her own cheek, "so is Jessica."

His face fell at her blunt words, and with an anguished sigh, he collapsed next to her on the bed, curling up and resting his head on her sheet-covered thigh.

More tears slid down Lucy's face as she took to running her fingers through his hair, smoothing out the disarray that some combination of her and the pillows had brought about. "And I know as soon as you can make it happen, she's it," she acknowledged, sniffing. "You get her back, and that's it. I know."

"But I don't know when that's ever going to happen," Wyatt spat back bitterly, facing her knee. "Tomorrow? In ten years? Fifty? What, do I just ignore you, this, us, until then?"

Lucy shrugged helplessly despite him not being able to see it. "I can't tell you want to do," she replied simply. "You could ignore me or we could do this every day – when you change things to get her back," she whispered, blinking back further tears, "I won't remember anyway."

And, she realized sadly, not for the first time, that she wouldn't remember Lena either. But she kept quiet on that front, not feeling quite right bringing up the little girl in a conversation that was, on some level, about her parents' drunken one night stand. The preposterous nature of that thought was almost enough to elicit a wan smile on Lucy's face, but there was still more to be said to Wyatt.

Clearing her throat once more, she continued, "So if you want to still do… this, or… something," she hesitated, stumbling over her wording, "as us, now, that's your call. You'll know," she reiterated, "I won't."

Further realization dawned on her, and she amended, "Actually, if Rufus takes someone else to go back to change things, you won't remember either. Won't matter what we do now," she murmured distantly. "You'll have Jessica. We'll be nothing."

Reaching up to still her hand in his hair, and threading his fingers through hers, Wyatt spoke defiantly, "I don't want to be nothing."

A near-hysterical laugh bubbled up from Lucy's throat at the absurdity of his assertion. "Now or then? Because even if I did remember this, I'm still pretty sure we have to be nothing then."

"Both," he declared, even as he grimaced against her leg. Then he pulled himself right back up to where he'd started, his back to her, his head in his hands. "Fuck."

Not knowing what else she could possibly say, Lucy just slid closer to him on the bed, leaning to rest her head on the back of his shoulder. She brushed a kiss over the bare skin there, and attempted some form of physical comfort by gently rubbing his back.

He didn't really react, but then, she didn't really expect him to given the sense of melancholy that had settled in the room. There was just no good solution here.
A few moments later, a yawn threatening, she murmured against his skin, "We should probably sleep more. Take advantage of no crying baby."

There was still no response from Wyatt, so with a sigh, Lucy peeled herself away from him, slinking back towards her pillow. Whatever the two of them were to each other, Lena still existed for now, and was a force to be reckoned with when she woke up early. She'd been serious when bringing up getting extra sleep.

She'd just settled back down, curled up on her side and facing away from Wyatt, when he finally spoke up again, his voice gravelly. "...I don't want to be nothing." He paused a beat before clarifying, "...now."

*That* got Lucy's attention. She shot back up to a sitting position. "...meaning?" she ventured cautiously, the calm in her voice belying the racing of her heart.

Wyatt turned around to face her. "I don't know," he admitted. "What do you want?"

"I want you," she blurted out, blushing at her own forwardness. "But it's not up to me, Wyatt," she insisted. "It makes me sound pretty pathetic- well," she corrected, "I mean, I guess I *am* pretty pathetic for saying this, but I'll take whatever I can get." She shrugged, her voice sadly wistful as she added, "I won't remember anyway."

He ran his hand through his hair, but said nothing in response.

Given the continued silence, Lucy piped up again, pointing out the one benefit that could happen regardless. "If nothing else, at least we don't have to hide the fact that we have feelings for each other anymore," she reasoned. And, studying him, still sitting there, distress written all over his face and the sheet barely covering anything at this point, she added, "...but I think maybe, for you, the, uh, sex... was too much, too fast?"

Wyatt looked up with a smirk, chuckling at her less than eloquent wording. But he sobered soon after, agreeing begrudgingly, "Yeah, maybe. This is all kind of making my head hurt." He rubbed at the bridge of his nose, then snorted a laugh. "Could just be a hangover though."

Lucy felt a giggle escape in spite of everything. When that faded, she tilted her head at him, her voice soft as she prompted, "So maybe we at least take a step back from that?"

With a nod, he acquiesced. "Probably."

"Ok," Lucy echoed, though still not one-hundred percent sure of what exactly she was agreeing to.

"...so no sex," Wyatt reiterated. "But," he looked up, his expression hopeful, "together?"

Given what she now knew of Wyatt's skills in bed, Lucy was well aware that she probably shouldn't have been quite so enticed by the prospect of a celibate relationship as she was. And maybe she'd come to regret agreeing to that particular facet of their situation. But given what she'd been dealing with until the day before, as she'd told him, she'd take whatever she could get. "If you want," she confirmed.

She'd barely gotten the words out when Wyatt shot back an eager "Yes."

Realizing what the terms they'd just negotiated were pretty much akin to, Lucy barely stifled a snicker, pointing out, "So we're dating in middle school?"

He rolled his eyes at her, smirking as he nodded, "Yes."
Laughing once again, Lucy gripped the sheet tighter against her, pointing out, "Which means we should probably have clothes on…"

And because, even amidst everything that had just happened, he was still Wyatt, he smirked once again, and gave her a mock salute as he stood, brazen as the sheet fell away from his body. "Yes, ma'am."

Lucy bit her lip, watching his naked form appreciatively, already wishing she could re-think their arrangement. She didn't even bother trying to hide her interest, watching him pull on his long since abandoned boxers. He then plucked her own underwear from where they'd landed at the foot of the bed, and, exploiting their elasticity, he launched them, slingshot-style, into her lap. He dug something else from the bag her mother had packed, and then he disappeared into the bathroom.

She couldn't help but grin after him, shaking her head weakly, bemused and muttering to herself, "…middle school." She dawdled a bit longer, not quite able to process the events of the last eight hours, but, hearing the flush of the toilet, she sprang into action since she was the one who had suggested putting clothes on in the first place. Standing up, she stepped into her panties, the lingering evidence of what they'd done still more than noticeable when she tugged them on. Definitely not middle school…

Regardless, that still left her only half dressed, so she darted over to the bag on the desk. But it became quickly apparent that her mother had gone with a rather Spartan packing style; all she could see for herself was some dress and cardigan, plus another bra and underwear. No pajamas. Even for Wyatt, there was just boxers, jeans, and a casual button-down shirt, and she didn't want to steal his clean clothes.

But, Lucy realized, she could steal his dirty clothes. She peered around to his side of the bed, spotting the shirt he'd worn to the party still crumpled up on the floor. It was hardly commonplace for her to end up half naked in a partner's shirt, especially for the past few years, but it always gave her a wanton feel, an illicit little thrill. And, considering she had no other option anyway, not to mention that they wouldn't be sleeping together again, she figured she could indulge just this once with Wyatt's shirt. She snatched it up, pulling it on, and if she happened to inhale that intrinsically Wyatt scent on it as she did, well, who cared?

She was barely halfway up the column of buttons when she heard Wyatt emerge from the bathroom. But the footsteps stopped short.

Lucy paused her buttoning and looked up in curiosity, only to find him staring at her with a heated gaze.

"That," he gestured, nodding up and down her body, his voice husky again, "is not encouraging me to keep it middle school-rated."

Her breath caught in her throat at his words, and she was half tempted to launch herself at him and peel his clothes off again. But she refrained, re-focusing on the buttons, her fingers flying as she hurried to finish securing the shirt up to just shy of the collar. "I don't have anything else to wear," she explained, hoping her face wasn't flushing too red. "It's not like my mother figured we'd be needing pajamas. Just…" she waved at bed, flustered, instructing, "sleep."

She was thankful that he went along with her request without any other insinuations or innuendos; it was going to be weird enough to stick to their arrangement even with him on his best behavior. But, she reminded herself as they got the covers resituated on the bed, it was for the best. Especially for him. It was one thing to have the weight of unrequited feelings finally lifted from her shoulders; she didn't want to just replace it with that other crushing weight she'd felt at the sight of him crying, half
broken because sleeping with her was too much for him to handle when the prospect of getting Jessica back was still out there. And she knew, as much as it would hurt, she'd back off even more if even this whole silly 'middle school' thing proved to be more than he could deal with. She'd just have to keep reminding herself of what she'd told him earlier; for better or for worse, she wasn't going to remember any of this in the long run regardless.

Lucy held back a bitter laugh as she slipped back under the covers; did it still count as being 'the other woman' when the actual wife was dead, and you're actually the legal wife? Especially if no one would remember anything in the end anyway?

She curled up on her side of the bed, facing him, and he did the same, though keeping a sizeable gap between them. Fighting the urge to slide closer to him, she forced herself to recall her actual middle school days, when a four- or five-year-old Amy would sneak into her bed after any and every nightmare, the two of them in pretty much the same positions as she and Wyatt were now.

Of course, he had to stay at arm's length for more reasons than just being the kick-y sleeper Amy had been.

With a wan smile in his direction, Lucy was just letting her eyes slide closed, hoping for another two or three hours of sleep, when Wyatt's voice, curious, crept into the space between them. "You really went on the pill just for the trips?"

Smirking, she opened her eyes to regard him as she corrected, "Not the pill, but yeah." Wrinkling her nose, she elaborated, "I have no desire to use the 1754 version of pads and tampons."

She could practically see the gears turning in his head, so she jumped in, cutting off his "Wh-?" before he could even get the question out. "Basically dirty rags, if anything at all."

A laugh bubbled up from her throat at the disgusted grimace that information earned.

But when that look faded, he reached for her hand, lacing their fingers together, asking, "You're ok with this?"

Sighing, Lucy squeezed her eyes closed and shook her head against the pillow. "I haven't been ok with my life since the Hindenburg. Well before that, really," she acknowledged. "Is it great knowing I'm basically Jessica's placeholder?" she posited. "N-"

Wyatt pulled her closer, tugging on their clasped hands, he maintained, "You're no-"

Lucy quieted him with a tight squeeze of his hand. "Wyatt, I am," she insisted. "I'm not blaming you; it is what it is." Rolling onto her back, she eyed the ceiling, wondering aloud about useless hypotheticals, "If Jessica never existed, would we be different? More? I don't know," she admitted, her tone wistful. "But she does- did," she corrected, not sure which tense made the most sense. "And will," she finished, turning back to face him. "So we can't know. At least I'm not driving myself crazy thinking everything here was totally one-sided," she pointed out with half a smile. "So it's not perfect, but better, I guess?" She shrugged, "I'll take middle school."

He didn't look entirely convinced, but pressed a kiss to her hand nonetheless and settled back onto his pillow. Lucy did the same, leaning back and not quite convinced of her own words either. It was better than nothing, right? She knew she wasn't going to figure out the answer to that question in the near future, so she closed her eyes, trying once more for those extra couple hours of sleep.

When she woke next, Lucy found herself once again hopelessly entangled with Wyatt, her head on his shoulder, arms and legs wrapped around each other. One leg in particular was wedged firmly
against the obvious bulge in his boxers that she now couldn't do anything about if they were going to
stick with the boundaries of their new agreement. And, she realized, glancing up at Wyatt's face to
find him also awake, he was well aware of their current position.

She dropped her gaze from his and slid away from him, taking care not to touch …anything that she
shouldn't be touching.

As soon as she was back on her side of the bed, Wyatt shot up to a sitting position, his back to her.
"I'm gonna… take a shower," he mumbled. "You need to get in there first?"

"No, go ahead," she stammered, willing her brain not to think of exactly what he'd probably be
doing in there. But it was too late, visions of him naked, ducking into a frigid spray — or not, instead
just taking things into his own hands — already racing through her mind.

Lucy had just managed to quell that heated mental imagery when Wyatt reappeared from the
bathroom, shirtless, dripping wet and clutching a towel around his waist. That wasn't helping.

"Sorry – clothes are over there," he muttered, gesturing toward the bag on the desk.

Lucy just nodded dumbly, not able to tear her eyes from him as he rifled through the bag.

Once he disappeared into the bathroom again, she shook her head to pull herself out of the Wyatt-
induced daze and hurried over to the same bag, collecting her clothes and shower necessities. The
last thing she needed would be to end up the next one running around in only a towel. Not when
they'd just agreed that sex was off the table.

But even thinking that just brought to mind the thought of sex on a table, which regretfully, they
would not be getting to do. Lucy scolded herself, muttering that she needed to calm the hell down.

So she opted to focus on something more mundane, packing up the small bag to prepare for check-
out. She tossed a new pair of socks in the direction of where Wyatt's shoes lay abandoned near the
bed and picked up his dirty ones, along with his discarded pants and her bra from the night before.
Those shoved back in the bag, she reached for her dress from the party, which had somehow made it
all the way over to the couch.

Turning it right-side out, Lucy was smoothing it out against her body when something her mother
had said the night before echoed in the back of her mind. Married on vacation? Had she and Wyatt
really eloped in this timeline? She looked down at the simple, but elegant, and mostly-white dress;
could this be her actual wedding dress then? Since showing up in this life, she'd avoided as best she
could any pictures and mementos of their wedding, so she had no idea. Not that it really mattered if it
was, but it didn't stop her from feeling a little emotional about it, a warm tug in her chest. Taking a
little more care than she might have otherwise, she folded up the dress and set it in the bag just as
Wyatt reemerged from the bathroom.

With him now clad in jeans, a t-shirt, and another shirt over that, Lucy was left feeling rather
exposed, still in just his shirt from the night before, her legs bare, so she quickly snatched up her pile
of stuff and slipped past him into towards the shower.

Finally locked away with no chance of Wyatt waltzing in half-naked, Lucy gripped the counter, her
head swimming with all of the physical and emotional events of last twelve hours. Considering just
yesterday they'd been back at that dinner in 1940's DC, barely speaking to each other, it was kind of
a lot to process.

Pulling Wyatt's shirt off, she took stock of the evidence that they done a hell of a lot more than
speaking since then; the pale pink of beard burn from his stubble tingeing her neck, along her collarbone, and down her chest, not to mention the faint hickey marring the top of one breast. Not that she didn't like the look of them – she did, knowing Wyatt had been the one to put them there, but it was bittersweet knowing that it wasn't going to happen again.

Or would it, she wondered, stepping into the hot spray of the shower. They'd said 'middle school' and no sex, but what did that actually entail? Hand holding? A few kisses here and there? What kind of kissing? Was she supposed to initiate anything? Just him? Were they just status quo until further notice? Was there any expectation of progressing back to more, sex-wise, ever again? Or was he just going to sleep on couch and get himself off in the shower until whenever it ended up being that he could get Jessica back, even if it did end up being fifty years down the road?

Lucy hadn't been lying when she'd told him that it really was better this way; it was better, knowing that he at least felt something for her. But, she was quickly realizing, it was going to prove more of a struggle that she'd anticipated, never really sure where they stood, always waiting for that other shoe to drop with Jessica.

She ducked her head under the water, letting it wash down her face while her hands over the sides of her head, trying to will away the headache that was already threatening. Regardless, she told herself, nothing would be accomplished one way or the other with her just stalling in the shower. They still had to deal with Lena, they still had a house to unpack, they still had to figure out and stop Flynn…

So she finished washing, hurrying to dry off and throw on the outfit her mother had selected. A little frizz-control product for the hair, but otherwise she let it do its own thing to dry, and she kept the makeup light, just enough that all the lost hours of sleep lately didn't show too much.

And then there was nothing left to do but for Lucy to head out of the bathroom, though she really had no idea what to expect from Wyatt at this point now that they were headed back to real life. Or as real as it could be given the timeline they were still caught in.

He was sitting on the bed, scrolling around on his phone when she rounded the corner from the hallway. But as soon as he heard her, he looked up with a smile. "You look nice."

"So, uh," Wyatt spoke up again, plucking a pamphlet from on the bed next to him, "it's pretty much check-out time now, but this thing," he waved the brochure at her, "says this was some package your mom got that includes brunch."

"Includes champagne," Wyatt added, his voice teasing. "Which I happen to know you're a fan of…"

In spite of herself, Lucy cracked a grin at that. "Ok, fine," she agreed.

That decided, Wyatt grabbed their duffel bag and her purse from where they'd been sitting on the bed, and, after giving the rest of the room a quick scan, he headed over to her near the door and leaned down to press a soft kiss to her lips.

The butterflies surged back and Lucy swayed against him.

He backed away ever so slightly. "This ok?"
She nodded wordlessly. It hadn't been ok, just five minutes earlier in the bathroom, but it was hard to think of those not-ok aspects of things when his mouth was on hers.

With another brush of his lips over hers, he murmured, "Good," the pulled the door open, ushering her out into the hallway.

Lucy tried to reach for her purse so he didn't have to bother carrying it, but he just grasped her hand instead, threading his fingers through hers.

It was all so very surreal for her, and it didn't get any less so as the day progressed. Brunch was actually kind of nice, and they managed to not even approach the issue of them. Instead, they swapped stories about some of the relatives that had attended the party the night before, Wyatt relayed some of his recent discoveries about Lena (Lucy was already dying to try playing music for her to see the awkward little dance he mentioned), and they spent a little while tossing around speculation about what Flynn could possibly be up to lately.

But as nice as it all was, it was somehow both better and worse for Lucy at the same time. Without having to hide behind her feelings, she felt lighter, that weight off her shoulders, but the bittersweet ache of knowing that it still wasn't quite real. Not that she'd ever begrudge him getting Jessica back, but she just wished things could be different knowing even more so what she would be missing out on when Jessica resurfaced.

They headed to her mother's after brunch, thanking her again for the party and the hotel room as they gathered up Lena and her things. The plan had just been to head back to the house, but when they passed a playground on the drive, Lucy pointed out that it was a nice day, maybe they could stop. What she left unspoken was that she wanted to spend time with their would-be daughter given that she wouldn't exist at all once Wyatt managed to get Jessica back. If Wyatt picked up on it, he didn't mention it.

So they spent a couple hours indulging Lena, first setting her in the sandbox, which lasted until she started hoarding toys that she'd snagged from the other kids. There were tears when Wyatt had to snatch her up away from the sand, but they turned to squeals of glee when he brought her down the slide in his lap over and over. Equally as big a hit was when the three of them climbed on the teeter-totter, Wyatt on one end, Lucy and Lena on the other. Lucy was less than amused when he used his weight advantage to leave them suspended up in the air, only lowering them down a foot or so before popping them back up, but it was hard to stay annoyed when Lena shrieked happily each time he did it.

By the time Wyatt carried Lena over to the baby swings, setting her in one and giving her a gentle push from the front, Lucy almost couldn't take how wonderful he was with the little girl. Emboldened by the sudden surge of emotion, she leaned against him and wrapped her arms around his waist in a sideways hug. He kept pushing Lena with one arm, but pulled Lucy closer with the other, pressing a kiss to the top of her head. She would have stayed that way if Lena hadn't started fussing at some point. Wyatt pulled her from the swing and led Lucy by the hand over to a pair of regular swings, sitting down and swaying gently to try to calm Lena. Lucy sat on the swing next to him, watching quietly until Lena grew quiet herself. When she was pretty sure Lena had actually fallen asleep, she nudged Wyatt's leg with her toe, sending his swinging off course, and pointing out that when they'd agreed on 'middle school' she hadn't realized that it would actually involve playgrounds. Of course, he just smirked back in return.

They took advantage of Lena's impromptu nap to head back to the house, managing to get some unpacking done before she woke back up. Once she was up, they let her toddle around the kitchen as they threw together dinner.
It was only later, when Wyatt had taken Lena upstairs for a post-dinner, pre-bedtime bath, did reality start to finally descend back in on Lucy.

She stood at the sink, absently scrubbing a few pots and pans, wondering exactly what would happen once their buffer of Lena was out of the picture for the night. After their time in the hotel, she hated the thought of Wyatt sleeping alone, downstairs on the couch again, but sharing a bed was hardly conducive to keeping things non-sexual, at least if that morning was any indication.

The shrill ring of her phone jarred her from that particular contemplation. She peered over to where it rested on the counter.

Mason Industries.

Lucy sighed. Well, at least they wouldn't have to have the awkward conversation about sleeping arrangements just yet.

TBC…

Chapter End Notes

So that happened.

(It's still pretty much exactly as planned, but if this chapter seems all over the map at all, blame it on me being excited to write this development, then going through all the various stages of grief over the cancellation, then being stupidly happy at the un-cancellation.)

Apologies to anyone caught off-guard or offended by the rating change. I mentioned when I first posted that it could happen; this turn of events was always planned, though I didn't know how detailed it would get. Either way, I couldn't address it at the start of this chapter lest I give away exactly what was going to happen. (I think the rating warning probably gave most of it away as it is. Oh well.) I hope it wasn't too stilted/instruction-manual-style and/or porny; I never feel like I get smut quite right. But I didn't want to gloss over it, given that I think it's a rather important event and that the associated emotions are pretty crucial to the big picture.

Thanks, as always, to all readers/reviewers/commenters. I know how this story ends already; it gets written down and posted for you guys. :)

Thanks also to LivingInSmilesIsBetter for the impromptu beta of part of the smut. She tried valiantly(!) to curb my (over)use of adverbs, but I think the ones she cut just ended up finding homes in the sections she didn't edit. Oops.

One last thing in this endless author's note – apologies again about the rant that was posted as the previous 'chapter'. Then again, judging by all the responses, maybe it was something that needed to be posted for all of us to be able to commiserate. I'm SO, SO thrilled it all turned out to be moot! Timeless lives! And, with such a long wait until the new season, I'll do my best to help fill the gap with fics when I can :D
Chapter 14

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the delay, everyone. I hope you're still with me! I had some long-ish term real life things to attend to, which involved little to no internet access. I'd meant to get this up before I left, but it wasn't ready and travel prep had to be the priority.

Thank you all so much for the wonderful comments on the last chapter – I'm really glad that so many readers appreciated that they managed to resolve, and also at the same time not resolve, some things together.

And kudos once more to LivingInSmilesIsBetter for a beta. But she only read part of this, so any errors are probably in the other part and are all me.

After detouring back to Carol's to drop off Lena – again, and not without some significant guilt over the fact that the kid barely spent any nights in her own room – Wyatt hurried into Mason Industries after Lucy. His hand made its way to the small of her back of its own accord, though he itched to take it further and lace his fingers through hers as they darted through the building. But for as many people there were running around that assumed they were married, there were a crucial few who knew they were not, and while they had covered a fair bit of ground, he and Lucy hadn't really made it to the part of the discussion in which they figured out whether to let on to Mason, Christopher, Rufus, and Jiya that something was …different.

Then again, as much as he'd have liked to have license to touch Lucy whenever and wherever, Wyatt realized that it was probably for the best that they not look too involved. He still needed Mason's team to be 100% invested in not only resetting his timeline to include Jessica, but retroactively preventing her murder. Which he was. 100%. Being any level of involved with Lucy would likely not be looked upon kindly if he was still demanding his wife's rescue.

At that thought, he went the step further and dropped his hand from her back completely as they skidded into the conference room.

"January 15, 1919. Boston," Agent Christopher declared stoically, Rufus and Jiya already seated around the table in the room.

Lucy let out a sigh, informing them, "The Great Molasses Flood."

Wyatt snorted, and he and Rufus exchanged incredulous glances.

"The what now?" Rufus asked, eyebrows high.

"It's real," Lucy chastised, rolling her eyes at them. "It was used for making rum and ethanol. A two million gallon tank burst after a crazy temperature swing overnight. Carbon dioxide from the fermentation expanded, and the tank was already weak from structural problems." She glanced around earnestly, trying to dissuade their bemused expressions. "It was a twenty-foot-high tsunami of the stuff, going almost 40 miles an hour. It knocked down buildings, derailed a train, sent trucks into the harbor… Twenty-one people died," she exclaimed with gravity.
It was Rufus' turn to snort. "I call bullshit," he declared. "Why would Flynn care about twenty random people drowning in goo?"

But Wyatt wasn't laughing anymore; things were clicking into place. Boston… "Boston has trains though, right?" he blurted out. "To the rest of the east coast. Isn't this what we've been saying?" he reminded them hurriedly. "What else happened that day? Or the next day?"

Lucy's eyes went wide as she wracked her brain for related events in the area and finally hit on one. "The eighteenth amendment was ratified the next day," she supplied, her brow furrowed. "DC?"

"What's the 18th amendment?" Wyatt asked, drawing a blank when trying to recall any smidge of constitutional history from high school.

A blank at which Lucy frowned disapprovingly before informing, "Prohibition."

"You think Flynn wants to stop the Prohibition?" Rufus questioned in disbelief.

Wyatt snickered. "I say let him," he teased Lucy with a smirk.

She just glared a warning at him. Well, that was one thing that the shift in their relationship hadn't managed to change, Wyatt chuckled to himself.

But Lucy still wasn't amused, and she turned back to answer Rufus with a nervous timber to her voice. "I don't know," she admitted. "I don't know what he'd want with either of those things. But it's the best we've got, I guess."

Rufus scrunched up his face skeptically. "So we look for Flynn in Boston while trying not to die a sticky death, then what, just hop an Amtrak to DC?"

Lucy shrugged helplessly. "Or at least ask at the train station to see if that's what he did?"

Not that Wyatt was having any easier of a time coming up with an alternative plan; that's what they'd have to do. A sentiment that apparently Agent Christopher had also arrived at. "Go get changed," she ordered, sounding weary. "And all three of you, bring extra clothes if you think this will turn into a few days. Practical and less suspicious on the train."

So Lucy scurried off with Jiya, he and Rufus had yet another time period's suits shoved at them, and less than an hour later, they were standing in the North End of Boston staring at the gooey aftermath of the flood.

"That looks…" Rufus trailed off with an expression of disgust and horror.

Lucy agreed silently with a nod. "It looks exactly the same as any account I can remember reading," she told them, her eyes darting around to study the scene. "I don't think Flynn did anything."

"He could have saved, or killed, someone in it," Wyatt pointed out. "That could have changed."

"But why go through the trouble of killing them like this?" Lucy countered. "And if he saved someone," she added, "we won't know until the papers publish news on it in a day or two anyway."

Rufus sighed. "So, train? If we have a couple days before we know if he saved anyone, we might as well go see if anyone saw him going anywhere else."

Wyatt wasn't looking forward to traipsing first through Boston, then up and down the east coast, but it was their only option if their hunch that Flynn's locations were mere decoys was true.
A stop at North Station, not far from where they already were for the molasses, was less than fruitful. The small photos of Flynn they each carried were not recognized by anyone they asked there. So they trudged back out into the winter chill towards South Station.

There, Wyatt was just about to punch a wall in frustration after getting yet another quizzical look from one of the men at the ticket counters when Lucy scurried over to him, breathless and dragging Rufus with her. "The Yankee Clipper," she panted. "It just left an hour ago at 1. He took it to New York, and he bought a transfer to the Washingtonian. The guy over there recognized him, and knew he had an accent."

"So we get on the next Yankee Clipper and follow him," Wyatt declared, already purposefully marching back toward the ticket windows.

Lucy grabbed at his arm. "It's a luxury train. Only one a day," she relayed to him. "We have to get another line."

But once looking at a schedule of the other options, Wyatt was back to wanting to punch a wall in frustration. Each schedule had a different train name, and each train seemed to take a slightly different route through some combination of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut on the way to New York. "What if he got off at some random stop that's not even on the train we get?" he hissed, scowling.

With a sidelong glance at him, Lucy then focused on Rufus. "He's right," she admitted. "Rufus, can you ask around for which lines take the exact same route as Flynn's train did?" They all well knew that it was a cover to get rid of Rufus for a second; of the three of them, Wyatt had the best shot at getting a reasonable response from people of the time. But Rufus obliged them with a curious nod anyway.

Still on edge, Wyatt watched her questioningly as she darted her gaze around the station. But then she slid her gloved hand up to his cheek and leaned in, pressing a furtive kiss to his mouth.

She was good, he realized, almost breaking into a smile against her lips in spite of himself. She had a new weapon to use against him, and she knew it.

He pulled back a moment later, trying to suppress a smirk. "You can't just do that all the time now to shut me up," he warned. "Plus, Rufus could see. Plus, I'm betting that wasn't exactly proper for in public in 1919."

Despite the stress of everything, a laugh bubbled up from her, and her eyes sparkled mischievously. "It was necessary," she declared. "You need to calm down."

Wyatt protested, "But-"

Lucy just shook her head, cutting him off. "This sucks. I know," she insisted, gripping his hand. "I hate that we have no idea what he's doing and we're chasing him and he might not even be where we're going and the whole thing is a big waste of time. But what else can we do?"

He sighed, resigned, knowing she was right. They had to at least try. He nodded over to where Rufus was heading back in their direction and reluctantly released her hand as they went to meet him.

It turned out that another luxury train, the Merchant's Limited, followed the same route as the train Flynn had taken and would leave in just under three hours. Once in New York, all the trains to Washington followed the same route and they could just transfer to any number of patriotically-
named lines, like the Colonial or the Senator. And thankfully, northern trains weren't segregated as trains down south were, so acquiring a ticket and seat for Rufus went more smoothly than Wyatt would have expected, especially given that it was a luxury, parlor-car-only train.

But nevertheless, just a few hours later, they were all aboard and headed to New York. It was decided that they'd rotate at each stop, one of them holding their seats while the other two raced around the platform, asking anyone and everyone in the few moments they had before the train's departure if they'd seen Flynn.

Of course, nothing. Not in Providence, not in New Haven, not at any of the small town stops in between.

And then they were in New York, wading through the surprisingly dense late-night crowd at Penn Station. There, they managed to get some of the last available tickets on an overnight train, the Federal, down to DC, where they'd arrive by about 6 in the morning, although the sleeper cars were sold out and they'd be relegated to regular coaches.

Not that Wyatt cared one bit about that when, once seated, Lucy let out a soft yawn next to him and leaned against him with her eyes fluttering closed. She was out cold before they left Penn Station, and Rufus, in the row in front of them, nodded off by Secaucus. It was of no matter; there wasn't a whole lot of foot traffic to interrogate at 11 pm in suburban New Jersey anyway. He eased himself away from Lucy, quickly darted around the platform to speak with the few porters and ticket merchants, and then re-boarded. The other two were both still asleep, so he slid back into his seat next to Lucy and carefully wrapped his arms back around her, pulling her against his chest, 1919 propriety be damned.

He buried his face in her hair and took a deep breath.

They had sex. Twice.

And for the now roughly twenty-four hours since then, sleep, then Lena, then this stupid mission hadn't really allowed for him to mentally or emotionally process that fact.

Which was probably actually a good thing. As long as he wasn't thinking too hard about things, it was that much easier to ignore the fact that every thing he did with Lucy, every feeling he had towards her, everything, was basically cheating on Jessica, his wife. When he managed to temporarily push Jess from his mind, things were good. Really good. All the stress and angst of feeling like he was attracted to Lucy with no reciprocation? That was clearly out the window after last night. Despite the complicated issue of Jessica still being out there, in some timeline, it was a relief to know that whatever he was feeling about Lucy was mutual. And if he was being bluntly, shallowly honest with himself, he had sex. For the first time in years. And with someone he cared about for the first time since Jessica. (And it was amazing. Not that that mattered.)

Jess. Fuck. There it was again, the crushing guilt that crept in as soon as her name resurfaced in his mind. He'd been fine all day, playing with Lena, doting on her, doing mundane unpacking with Lucy while she played ridiculous 80's music on her phone. But right now? What, five minutes along with his brain and he was getting eaten up inside.

And it wasn't just guilt over Jessica. This stupid middle school crap? He was using Lucy, and he hated it. He knew it and he hated it, and there he was doing it anyway. Because when he was with her, holding her hand, kissing her, everything else fell away. He got to be with her, even if they had agreed to hold back on some things, but then he'd still just walk away from her the second Mason said he'd figured out how to get Jess back? It wasn't fair to her and he hated it, but if she had feelings for him, wasn't it also unfair to expect her – or him – for that matter – to ignore those feelings,
especially when it wasn't even guaranteed that he would actually be able to get Jessica back? Shouldn't they have some semblance of happiness if they were going to be kept together by time, by fate, by whatever for who knows how long? And Lena – if they were going to be in a timeline with her, didn't she deserve to grow up with parents who cared about each other and weren't walking on eggshells around each other indefinitely?

At the very least, he tried to reassure himself as he slid away from Lucy once more, the train rolling into Newark, when he went on whatever the mission would be to rescue Jessica, Lucy would remain behind and have no memories of this – of them – whatsoever. And with Jessica back, he'd get over whatever this was in no time. It would be fine.

Or so he tried to tell himself when he returned to the train and pulled the still-sleeping Lucy into his arms again.

And so the rest of the ride went. No Flynn sightings anywhere, by anyone, and Wyatt wrapped around Lucy in the interim between stops.

By Trenton, Rufus had woken up and told Wyatt to take a break and try to sleep the rest of the way. He managed it for a bit, but he startled awake in Baltimore to the sight of a petite woman with dirty-blonde hair making her way down the aisle of the train. His sleepy brain told him it was Jessica, and though it clearly wasn't, the guilt weighed heavily and he couldn't catch his breath for a few minutes. He pushed Lucy away from his side for the remainder of the ride.

They arrived in DC early in the morning, but at a loss as to what to do next. No one at Union Station had seen Flynn, and it's not like the ratification of the Prohibition was a big public event for an audience. In the end, Lucy's best guess was to head to the office of the Secretary of State, considering he would be the one to certify the whole thing following ratification.

But that was a dead end too, just like much of their past few trips. They waited things out until nightfall, but with no obvious changes to anything that Lucy could tell, they gave up and made their way back to the train station. The overnight trains to Boston were booked solid, leaving them with tickets for late the next morning. Wyatt and Lucy posed as a married couple to get a hotel room (but was it really posing, Wyatt wondered), and they managed to sneak Rufus up a back stairway.

On the train ride back, because the universe hated him, Wyatt was forced to stare at the back of a woman's head the entire trip, with that same shade of dirty blonde; she'd sat down next to Rufus at the last minute. And because that wasn't enough, the seat next to him and Lucy was vacated in Philadelphia, only to be re-occupied by a slim, dark-haired woman and her young dark-haired daughter, maybe four or five years old. He couldn't help but wonder what Lena would look like at that age, if they were still in that timeline.

And all this with Lucy right next to him. At that point, he just pulled his hat over his eyes and tried to will his brain into shutting down.

By the time they finally reached Boston again, Wyatt was tired and dirty and mentally drained and he just wanted to go home. Except that wouldn't even be much of a respite considering it would be with Lucy, with Lena, in a home that didn't feel like his.

He barely cared about Flynn at that point, but he obediently stood by with Rufus in downtown Boston while Lucy hunted down a newspaper account of the molasses flood deaths. Still 21 people; no difference that she could tell.

And then they had the trek to the 1919 equivalent of the suburbs, where they'd hidden the Lifeboat in a densely wooded area near some half-restored Colonial era iron works site.
Hours later, Wyatt was ever so relieved for the familiar nausea of the time jump back to the future. Even more so when Rufus pulled the lever to open the door of the godforsaken machine they were in.

They usually had at least a couple people – Mason, Agent Christopher, Jiya, any number of medics and techs – waiting for them, eager to hear what had happened, but they’d never opened the hatch to find anyone right there on the lifeboat.

Yet, this time, the round door jerked open to reveal Jiya just a few feet from them.

Her eyes darted between Lucy and him. She was hurried, but solemn, when she spoke. "Your mom had to take Lena to the emergency room yesterday mor-"

He’d been leaning forward to help Lucy out of this god-forsaken machine, but Wyatt felt back into his chair, stunned. He reached for Lucy automatically, a sickening feeling seizing his stomach. Their hands met just as a harsh "What?" slipped from his mouth in concert with Lucy's shaky "Oh my God…"

"It's ok!" Jiya blurted out, cutting off their terrified trains of thought. "She had a seizure. She's fine, I swear," she assured them, before adding, "but she's still there. Stanford Children's."

Wyatt felt like vomiting, and for once it wasn't the time jump. He didn't even want to think about anything being wrong with Lena. If this was being a parent, this part sucked. A quick glance over at Lucy confirmed that she appeared just as shaken as he felt.

Once their eyes met, hers shiny with unshed tears, she managed to stammer a hollow, "We should-" before Wyatt sprang into action, tugging her up by the arm to hurry her out of the lifeboat. "Go, go…"

All he was initially able to focus on was getting to the car keys in his locker; thankfully Jiya had the wits about her to call after them as they raced away, "You have to change first!" Fair enough, Wyatt conceded mentally as he sprinted across the warehouse. They didn't need the added hassle of explaining why they looked like they'd just waltzed off a period movie set.

Without a word, Wyatt pushed Lucy towards the women's locker room before racing to the men's. He threw off the historical outfit in record time, leaving it in a heap on the floor. Shoes on, though not tied, he snatched up his wallet and keys and flew back to the women's locker room. He didn't bother knocking and just slipped inside.

Lucy stood in front of her locker, in only jeans and a bra, barefoot and staring at her phone with red-rimmed eyes. The sight of her half-naked on literally any other day might have stopped him in his tracks, but now barely fazed him; he'd seen a whole lot more very recently and he was more worried about news of Lena than Lucy's state of (un)dress.

"Anything?" he asked, crossing the room to her and reach out to lay a comforting hand on her bare lower back.

"It's just voicemails from my mom," Lucy sniffled in response, "but she doesn't really give any details beyond what Jiya said about a seizure." She turned to face him, wiping at a stray tear while letting her hand holding the phone fall listlessly to her side. "I tried calling her, but it goes right to voicemail."

"Her battery probably just ran out," Wyatt tried to reassure her.

Lucy didn't protest that point, but she also made no move to hurry back into motion to get dressed,
instead standing frozen in front of him with renewed tears slipping down her cheeks.

Given that his own stomach was in knots, Wyatt knew he couldn't very well try to convince her that everything was fine, so he opted for snagging the sweater hanging behind her in her locker. He tugged the phone out of her hand, replacing it with the sweater. "Come on," he urged. "Let's just get there."

It was enough to jar her back to life; she hurriedly tugged the shirt over her head and shoved her feet into her sneakers before grabbing her purse. After tying his own shoes while she knotted up her own, Wyatt shot a cursory glance around the locker room to ensure that she hadn't left anything important, slid his hand into hers, and began the hurried dash to the parking lot.

They sped to the hospital in record time, taking stop signs and newly-turned red lights as mere suggestions. Once they reached the hospital complex, signage was less than fully informative, so Wyatt pulled haphazardly into the first spot he saw, threats of tickets and towing be damned; whoever the stupid administrator that it was reserved for could take it up with him later. They just needed to get to Lena.

The emergency room was the most recognizable thing on the signs, and given that it was where Carol would have started, Wyatt pulled Lucy by the hand, racing in the direction of those doors.

"Lena Logan," he blurted out when they reached the desk, the little girl's name falling from his lips naturally, though he wasn't sure he'd ever spoken it in full before. "Our daughter," he added, pulling Lucy close to him at the counter. "She came in after a seizure two days ago. Where is she?"

"Eleanor," Lucy amended, her voice still gravelly with tears. "It'll be under Eleanor."

As soon as the nurse at the desk was able to come up with a floor and room number, they were off and running, sprinting down the hall to the elevator. It showed up quickly enough, but the stupid thing certainly took its time climbing the four floors. In the interim, Wyatt pulled Lucy into his arms, telling himself it was for her benefit, but it was him who breathed at least a little more easily once his face was buried in her hair in the embrace.

The elevator door finally slid open at the correct floor and the two of them sprang back to life. Wyatt nudged Lucy into the hall ahead of him and grabbed her hand as they scanned the signs indicating which rooms were in which direction.

"That way," Lucy murmured first, leaning into his side to push him down the hall. And with that, they took off in a sprint towards Lena. They found the correct number shortly, and barreled into the room.

Wyatt could make out Carol in his peripheral vision, half-asleep in an armchair, but he and Lucy pretty well just ignored her, rushing instead to the far side of the room. There, Wyatt sucked in a sharp breath and felt the prickle of tears beginning in his eyes. Between combat and time travel, he'd seen more than his fair share of jarring, traumatic sights, and maybe he was misremembering or glossing over some of the horrors from Syria and Afghanistan, but in that moment, he couldn't think of anything that had ever rattled him more than seeing his tiny little, helpless Lena in the prison of a hospital crib, motionless and clad only in a diaper, with an IV in her arm, oxygen tubes taped to her face, and all sorts of other sensors attached to her chest and tiny hands. The only thing keeping him from breaking down was the whimper from Lucy beside him as she collapsed against his side. He needed to be strong for her. Wyatt slid his arms around her instinctively, holding her up as tears streamed down her face.

"She's ok, Lucy," came Carol's voice suddenly from behind them. Wyatt whirled around. Now
awake, Carol crossed the room, taking Lucy from him and wrapping her in an embrace. "Sweetheart, she's ok," she assured Lucy sympathetically. "She's going to be fine."

Though still within her mother's arms, Lucy reached behind her to grip Wyatt's hand. Her voice thick with tears and preceded by a snuffle, Lucy grasped him tightly as she managed to get out a shaky "Really?" Switching his hands so he could rub Lucy's back, Wyatt was grateful she'd been able to ask, because he wasn't sure he was quite capable of choking any words out himself.

"It's just roseola," Carol explained. She leaned back from Lucy a bit to elaborate. "Sixth disease," she rephrased. "Lucy, you had it when you were three. Most of the time nothing happens, just a little rash. But she..." Carol trailed off, choking up a little herself as she released Lucy to grip the half-lowered crib rail with one hand, reaching to rub Lena's little arm with the other. "I could tell she wasn't feeling well," she continued. "She didn't want to eat, she was a little cranky... Her temperature was a little high, so I gave her Tylenol but all of a sudden her fever was shooting up and then she was just shaking. Convulsing," she added numbly. "I called 911."

Lucy let out a little gasp, her hand drifting up to cover her mouth. A shiver ran down Wyatt's spine at the thought of Lena's little body wracked with spasms and he pulled Lucy to him to press his cheek against her hair.

"Even here," Carol continued, still looking down at Lena, "her fever wasn't responding as well as they wanted it to, so they're keeping her under observation." With that, she turned back to face the two of them. "She'll be fine," she insisted. "The fever breaks on day three and then you can take her home."

Wyatt felt Lucy pull away from him ever so slightly to wave a hand at all the wires and tubes and sensors that Lena was hooked up to, protesting with a sniffle, "But she..."

Carol shook her head, trying to be more reassuring. "They only sedated her because she kept pulling at the IV and they need to keep her hydrated. The nurse said it should wear off soon and by then she'll be nearly better and will probably take a bottle instead of the IV."

It still wasn't particularly reassuring to Wyatt, even if he knew well enough that the logic made sense. Lucy didn't look particularly convinced either and she slipped from his embrace and crept slowly toward the crib. She leaned over, brushing her hand over Lena's cheek. But no sooner had she done that, she turned back around with tears streaming down her cheeks and melted into her mother's arms. All Wyatt could do was stand there, stunned as he watched the whole scene, a knot of fear for his little girl settling in his stomach. When Carol released Lucy to pull him in for a hug, he didn't fight it.

"She'll be fine," she reiterated over his shoulder as she rubbed his back before pulling away again to look at both him and Lucy. "It's almost a formality at this point; her fever is already lower than it was."

Wyatt just nodded numbly. Lucy sniffled again, managing a weak nod, seemingly calmed down at least a little bit. But she still gravitated back to Wyatt, wrapping her arms around his waist and pressing her face to his chest. He wasn't about to complain; he just held her tight.

Carol eyed them sympathetically. "Do you want me to call a nurse into talk to you?" she offered.

Wyatt felt Lucy shake her head almost imperceptibly against his chest, so he gave her a squeeze and mustered up the resolve to use his own voice for the first time since reaching Lena's room. "No, that's ok," he managed to relay to Carol.
She gave him a wan smile, responding, "I'm glad you two are here."

Wyatt was grateful for the sincerity in her voice; the last thing he and Lucy needed was a lecture from her mother about them not having been reachable because of work. He felt miserable enough about that already, having not been there for Lena.

"Lucy, are you ok?" Carol asked after a few more moments of studying them. When Lucy didn't respond, she turned her gaze to him. "Wyatt? I don't really want to leave you here," she confessed, "but my phone died hours ago, I don't have a charger, and I haven't showered. My car is at home since we came in the ambulance, but a friend can give me a ride."

Wyatt felt the barest of nods against his chest. He dropped a kiss on Lucy's head. "We'll be ok," he assured Carol, still not loosening his hold on Lucy.

With a little sigh, Carol reluctantly turned to leave. "I'll be back in an hour," she promised, then slipped from the room.

Once they were alone, Wyatt was at a loss. Lena was still motionless aside from the steady rise and fall of her little chest under all the tubes and sensors; Lucy was pretty well motionless too, save for a sniffled shudder against him once or twice. But regardless, they couldn't just stand there. So he released his arms from around Lucy, instead guiding her over to the crib. Leaving her there for only a second, he reached for the armchair Carol had been occupying and slid it over as close as possible to the crib. He lowered himself to sit, and practically synchronized, Lucy turned to crawl onto his lap just as he reached to pull her to do exactly that.

He folded Lucy into his embrace, but not before catching a glimpse of tears still streaming down her cheeks. Wyatt swallowed hard, his own eyes watering. Holding her close, he pressed a kiss to her forehead and mumbled a weak assurance that Lena would be fine, even though he had absolutely no way of knowing for sure.

They sat there somberly for he didn't even know how long, but eventually the exhaustion of the jump and the trek to DC and back to Boston crept up on Wyatt. He desperately wanted to be awake for any news of change in Lena's condition, but between fatigue and the comfort of having Lucy curled up in his arms, sleep was winning.

Just before he felt himself nod off, he heard Lucy murmur, "If Mason calls, I'm not going."

Wyatt silently agreed as sleep took over; there was nothing he could think of that would make him leave that room before Lena was healthy again.

When he blinked himself awake however many minutes or hours later, Wyatt could see Carol across the room from them, clad in a new outfit as she dozed in an uncomfortable-looking plastic chair. Lucy was still draped across his lap, looking far more peaceful in her sleep than she had since Jiya had first relayed the news. Wyatt was grateful of that for her sake, but the best sight was staring at him from elsewhere in the room.

Lena was sitting up, gripping the crib bars, and staring at him in a wide-eyed, groggy daze. She didn't immediately register the sight of him awake, though slowly but surely recognition set in and she broke out into a grin. "Da," she gurgled happily, "Hi, Da."

Relief washed over Wyatt, and his heart practically melted at her increasingly alert little smile. "Hey, baby girl, you're ok," he whispered, so as not to wake Lucy. He reached out to stroke Lena's cheek around the tape holding her oxygen in place, though she grabbed his hand in her fist before it made it to her face.
He still managed to get a finger free to affectionately bop her on the nose, which in turn elicited enough of a giggle from the little girl to cause Lucy to stir on Wyatt's lap. She blinked a few times before it clicked that she was seeing Lena awake and even cheerful. Once it sunk in, she pushed herself up from Wyatt's chest, gaping first at Lena then at him. He shot a relieved smile back in her direction.

It only took another beat for Lucy to climb off Wyatt to stand next to the crib. Reaching in, she gingerly navigated the web of wires and tubes still attached to Lena until she was able to get her arms around her and scoop her up. "Hi, sweet girl," she murmured, holding her close and pressing a kiss to her little head. "Do you feel better?"

Lena replied with a soft whimper as she squirmed in Lucy's arms and buried her face in the crook of Lucy's neck.

"Shh, shh," Lucy soothed, rubbing Lena's back, though not without first reaching up to brush a tear of relief from the corner of her own eye.

Still in the arm chair, Wyatt watched the pair silently. A lump swelled in his throat at the sight of the two girls who were supposedly his whole world in this timeline. Before long, watching Lucy now sway gently, he couldn't help it; he stood too, and reached to pull them both into his embrace, dropping a kiss on the top of Lena's head and pressing another to Lucy's forehead. And when Lucy leaned into him, her eyes slipping closed, he wasn't going to object.

It ended up being almost another full day before they were allowed to leave the next afternoon. The doctors wanted to ensure that the fever was truly gone and that Lena responded well to being taken off the oxygen and IV fluids. At least she was a little more free and accessible one disconnected from the tubes, especially once the nurses showed them how to drop the crib bar down on one side, which allowed him, Lucy, and Carol to rotate sitting in it with her, either just holding her to cuddle, reading to her, or giving her a bottle.

At some point, a doctor came in to speak more candidly with him and Lucy, explaining the details of the disease, what had happened, and the treatments they'd run through when Lena's abnormal reaction to the roseola had surfaced. It was a common childhood illness, apparently, and just a fluke that her fever had spiked enough to induce a seizure, but Wyatt couldn't help but guiltily wonder if she'd picked it up at the playground the other day and if there was something they should have done to protect her or clean her up better there, something they would have known to do if they were really her parents. A nurse tried to reassure him that there was nothing he'd done wrong, that it was completely normal, but his guilt wasn't really assuaged; the whole experience was just another reminder that none of them really belonged in this life.

Still, they were in this life whether they should be or not, so once Lena was cleared and released, there was nothing to do but head back to the house and back to this bizarre new existence they'd all been living.

So, Lena, actually looking sicker than she had before now that she was starting to sprout the characteristic, though benign, red rash of roseola, got swept up in Lucy's arms and the three of them headed for the car, Carol saying her goodbyes and heading off for her own parking spot in another direction. Mercifully, their own car actually hadn't been towed, and if there had been a ticket for parking in the wrong spot, it had blown away.

Lucy insisted on sitting in the back next to Lena for the ride back to the house. Though Lena was back to normal save for the rash, periodic glances in the rearview mirror told Wyatt that Lucy was still shaken up over the whole thing, looking on the verge of tears half the time. He supposed he couldn't blame her, given that he still had a sizeable knot in his stomach and was haunted by the sight
of little Lena motionless and attached to all sorts of wires and tubes.

Had it not been for the clock on the dashboard staring back at him, Wyatt would have had zero idea what time it was when they finally pulled into the driveway. Mid-afternoon was hardly a normal bed time for any of them; even Lena would be waking from a nap, not going to sleep. But between Lena acting listless and clearly still feeling the effects of the drugs she’d been on, plus her new prescriptions, and both him and Lucy barely having had any real sleep for a few days between the Boston to DC trek and back, and then the hospital, all three of them were exhausted.

Once in the house, Wyatt climbed the stairs to Lena's room, with Lucy close behind. He hugged the baby a little tighter than normal before setting her down in the crib. Lucy leaned over next to him reaching down to brush her fingers over Lena's forehead, and rather quickly, he could hear Lucy begin to sniffle, a sure sign of tears threatening again.

"Why don't you take a shower and just get some sleep?" he suggested quietly, so as to not wake the already-dozing Lena.

It took a minute for Lucy to tear her gaze from Lena, but she eventually looked over at him and gave a resigned nod, emotional, but probably too tired to argue with him.

With a hand to the small of her back, he led her to the master bedroom, where she robotically went through the motions of gathering up some clothes and headed to the bathroom just across the hall.

Once Wyatt heard the water running, he figured he'd take his own advice. On the shower, at least. That he could do in the bathroom downstairs. Get some sleep? That he was a little more uneasy about. They hadn't been back at the house to sleep since he and Lucy had done a hell of a lot more than sleeping in the hotel room after the anniversary party. Sure, they'd shared a bed again on the mission, but the husband and wife guise had been their only option, and it had been more about strategy than sleep anyway. And having Rufus as a chaperone had pretty well killed any would-be romantic overtones that could have surfaced anyway.

Now? No Rufus. Just a couch with his sad, lonely pillow still on one end from the last time he'd slept there, a big, wide bed that would soon hold Lucy, and one ridiculously bizarre half-relationship that he wasn't quite sure would allow for slipping into bed with the woman who he was certainly having feelings for, but wasn't actually his wife.

After the experience of Lena being sick, coupled with knowing Lucy was still rattled by the whole thing too, Wyatt really wanted nothing more than to hold Lucy, for both her and for him, and in a room only one door down from Lena's should the little girl need anything. The thought of the two of them upstairs without him while he was relegated to the couch turned his stomach, but then again, it was of his own doing, wasn't it? He'd agreed to holding back from sex, the conflicting feelings over Lucy and Jessica just too much when they'd slipped up and gotten physical. Not that he didn't want it – Lucy – again… Oh, he so wanted her again, but that was part of the problem. He couldn't let those feelings take over when he still needed to save Jessica. So downstairs it was. And for the best in the long run. He had to preserve some sort of distance, that middle-school relationship that Lucy had joked about, as much as he wanted to be close to both Lena and Lucy upstairs.

So he jumped in the shower in the bathroom downstairs, throwing on some pajama pants and a t-shirt, and only going back up afterwards to quickly toss his dirty clothes into the hamper in the bedroom before heading back down to the couch.

But when he emerged again into the hallway, he caught sight of Lucy in Lena's doorway, the bathroom door ajar and the shirt he recognized as what she was wearing earlier on the floor and half-dragged into the hall.
She was clad only in a too-big baseball-style t-shirt – his, he realized, and absently wondered if she knew she must have stolen it from him in this timeline. She clutched a half-wadded up pair of patterned pajama pants, but being in her hand rather than on her left her long, slim legs bare all the way up to the hem of the oversized shirt.

Wyatt sucked in a sharp breath, hating that he was reacting to the sight even as he was in the midst of said reaction. The noise drew Lucy's gaze to him.

Her cheeks were streaked with tears once more, and his heart ached.

"I thought I heard her coughing," she sniffled, and held up the pajama pants helplessly.

He wanted to do something to comfort her, especially given that he knew he'd probably have reacted the same way had he heard anything resembling a cough come from Lena. But he didn't trust himself to get much closer to Lucy given the way she looked wearing only his old shirt.

But Lucy continued, her voice still thick with tears. "I know we've only had her for a few weeks," she admitted, "but seeing her in the hospital was scarier than any of these stupid missions have been."

Another tear slipped down her cheek, and Wyatt was helpless in his quest to resist her. He reached out, closing the gap between them to wipe it away with his thumb.

And what could he do but slide his other arm around her to draw her into a comforting embrace?

She wrapped herself around his waist, burying her face in the crook of his neck as he held her tighter still. He wanted to tell her it would be ok – that Lena would be ok, that they would be ok, that anything about their insane, messed up life would be ok – but those were hardly promises that he could make. So he just rubbed a hand up and down her back tenderly and pressed a brush of a kiss to her forehead.

At that, he felt Lucy lean back from him until their gazes met. They both stilled for a second, and then lips met lips. Wyatt wasn't really sure if he'd leaned in or if she had, but he did know that the feel of Lucy's tongue slipping into his mouth to slide over his own was not something he could ever really bring himself to complain about. And certainly not when they could both use a little comfort.

He sighed into her mouth, holding her ever closer and letting his hands slide up her back, then back down. And down lower.

Her lack of pants had somehow momentarily slipped his mind, but when the fingers of one hand encountered the thin elastic leg opening of her underwear and then the soft, bare, roundness of her lower rear, her nails dug into his back and his body reacted instantly, middle school arrangement be damned.

Lucy let out a low whimper when he gave that half-bare flesh a squeeze and tugged her closer to his hips. He was fully aware that the threadbare flannel of his well-worn pajama pants was hiding absolutely nothing when it came to how he was feeling about the turn their embrace had taken. But he did. not. care. He wanted her, wanted to make her feel anything but the fear and uncertainty of seeing their little girl lying there, sick and helpless in that stark hospital crib. He needed her too, for that same reason.

With Lucy's hips flush to his and their tongues still teasing each other, Wyatt let his hands drift higher on her, sliding up under that shirt that was once his, over her smooth, bare back, his thumbs sneaking around to her chest to run over the already-pebbled surfaces of her nipples.
When he felt her shift against him, leaning up on her toes to suck on his tongue, he slid his hand back down to her ass, tugging her leg up and around his thigh. Reaching further, his fingertips encountered tantalizingly damp fabric. He nudged it aside, teasing the slick wetness beneath just enough to elicit a shaky moan from Lucy as she curled her leg tighter around him.

It was quite clear by then to Wyatt where this little escapade was heading, agreement or not, so with little effort, he braced her against him and, guiding her other leg up, lifted her into his arms, her legs locked around his hips. Her weight made the short trek to the master bedroom easy; their mouths never left each other as he carried her.

But once they reached the bed, the sheets and covers still in disarray from the last time it had been used, by Lucy before their jump to DC, before the party, before the hotel room, before the hospital… For Wyatt, it seemed almost wrong to just toss Lucy, who, five minutes ago had been distraught over the thought of their daughter being ill, onto the bed like it was any old mildly rough quickie. So Wyatt turned, easing himself to sit on the edge of the bed, Lucy still wrapped around him as she rested on his lap. He sucked gently on her tongue, letting his hands wander up under her (his) shirt over the soft, smooth skin of her stomach and savoring the closeness inherent in having her on his lap.

He wasn't prepared for when Lucy pulled away from the kiss and reached down between them to tug away the elastic waist of his pajama pants. It was almost primal, the noise that escaped him when she wrapped her hand around him. Nor was he prepared for her to shift even closer to him on his lap, reaching down again, this time to pull aside the crotch of her skimpy underwear and guide him into her.

Wyatt bit back a moan as Lucy sank down on him, the stretched elastic of her panties' leg opening adding an extra element of friction to one side of his length as she did. He wouldn't have thought that anything could have been more erotic than the sight of her straddling him, completely naked, half asleep in the middle of the night back at the hotel, but somehow both of them still nearly fully dressed, just sitting there, but him still buried deep inside her warmth, managed to feel even more intimate and sensual. He kissed her hard once more, and gripped her hips to rock her against him. She whimpered against his mouth, and he felt her nails rake through the hair at the back of his neck. With her warm and tight around him, Wyatt almost believed as if he could have stayed like that forever, but a nagging voice echoed in the back of his mind. They weren't meant to be doing this. They weren't meant to be a forever anything.

It was for Lucy, he told himself. She'd been upset over Lena; he needed to comfort her. Her, not them, not him.

So he reluctantly pushed her pelvis away from him, wincing as he slid out and felt the chill of the air against his now-slick erection. Lucy whimpered a soft protest of confusion, but he shushed her with another kiss and eased her off his lap and onto the bed next to him.

It had to be about her, he repeated internally. It was just to comfort her.

He let his pajama waistband slide back into place, the pants tenting obviously. And leaving Lucy to sit on the edge of the bed, he knelt down below her.

Poised between her legs, Wyatt pressed a kiss to the inside of her knee. "Lie down," he murmured, shifting his gaze up to meet her eyes even as his lips lingered on the smooth skin of her leg.

Lucy let out a barely audible "You don't have to…" of protest, but he just trailed another kiss a bit higher on the inside of her thigh, and when he reached up to slip off her panties, she lifted her hips to
ease the process. He tossed them to the side and turned back to her. The heady scent of her arousal had him painfully hard; until the other day, it had been a long time since any sex for him. Since this had been even longer.

But it was for her. Not him…

Wyatt gently lifted Lucy's legs to drape them over his shoulders as he knelt there. He kissed higher still along her thigh, breathing her in as he inched closer.

She was already squirming when he reached from beneath her thighs to slide a finger through the slick heat before him. He heard a quiet moan just from that touch, so using it as encouragement, he nudged her legs a little further apart and leaned in for his first taste.

He'd barely gotten the tip of his tongue on her when she tightened her thighs around his head. "Oh God, Wyatt…" she whimpered, pressing herself against his mouth. He couldn't help but smile against her at the reaction, and he wanted nothing more than to get a whole lot more of those sounds out of her.

Slowly, teasingly, he slid his tongue up and down over her, tasting, savoring, everywhere but where he knew she'd be most aching to feel him. Keeping his hands out of the mix for the time being, he ran his fingertips up her thighs, over the smooth jut of her pelvis to her flat, yet soft, stomach under the hem of his shirt that she wore, the barest whispers of caresses as his tongue slowly but surely worked Lucy into more and more of a desperate frenzy.

Though she'd been gripping at the sheets at first, before long, Wyatt felt her fingers rake through his hair, pulling and tugging as she silently pleaded for him to do something more. But as much as he wanted to send her over the edge and hear her sweet whimpers with her taste on his tongue, Wyatt wasn't willing to go so quickly. He was doing this for her, to distract, to comfort, to soothe. But in the back of his mind, he was also well aware that it wasn't meant to be happening, which meant it could be the only time it would ever happen, and damned if he wasn't going to treasure the moment and make it last.

With his tongue still lapping eagerly at her, Wyatt reached one hand down to his pajama-covered erection, giving his neglected body a few strokes before focusing once more on Lucy. He licked his lips, pulling back from her even as her fingertips pressed harder into his scalp, urging him to continue. He let his eyes drift up to meet Lucy's.

In the golden light of early evening that streamed in through the window, eyes impossibly darker than normal, propped up on her elbows, wearing his shirt and long, bare legs spread wide before him, she was quite possibly the most stunning sight he'd seen in a good long while. Still holding her gaze, he rested back on his heels, and instead of leaning back in with his mouth, he brushed a finger along her, then slid it inside the slippery warmth.

He watched her as he stroked and probed, curling his finger this way and that; she bit her lip at first, and he almost had to smirk at the way she appeared to be fighting for control. Typical Lucy, he mused fondly. But he soon slipped a second finger into her, and when he curled them upwards, her controlled façade crumbled. She flopped back onto the bed from where she'd leant on her elbows, her legs spreading ever wider as she bucked her hips against his fingers.

"Fuck," she hissed, writhing again against his hand. A few more erratic thrusts on her part and she was reaching for his cheek and begging with a whimpered, "Please, Wyatt…"

Wyatt felt himself twitch at the sound of her breathy plea, and he couldn't deny her (or himself…) any longer. Still working her with his fingers, he leaned in once more, darting out his tongue to the
small hardened nub that would push her over the edge.

With a primal moan, Lucy thrashed against his mouth immediately, and her fingers returned to his hair, grasping even harder than before. He flicked his tongue over and over, sliding his fingers inside of her simultaneously, and needing his other hand to brace her hips to try to keep her still.

When he swirled his tongue, circling her, he felt her thighs tighten around his head, and when her heels pressed into his back with another breathy whimper of "Wyatt…” he knew she was close.

He closed his lips around her, alternating a soft sucking and licking, his fingers still curling and stroking inside her.

And then Wyatt felt her legs stiffen, and she pulled his head roughly against her. He lapped at her faster, working his fingers, holding her down with the other hand. He gazed up at her earnestly, wanting to imprint in his mind the memory of her face as she fell.

One more quick circling of his tongue and she was crying out softly and quivering around his fingers. He didn't relent, wanting to prolong it for her as long as she could stand. And when he felt her begin to squirm away from him ever so slightly, he slowed, easing her down, savoring the last tastes of her he might get, considering this wasn't meant to happen in the first place…

Lucy eventually stilled, save for weakly threading her fingers through his hair.

And while he knew he'd told himself he'd only been trying to comfort her after a scary day and a half with Lena in the hospital, Wyatt couldn't deny he'd been shaken up by the ordeal too, and even were it not for the painfully obvious bulge in his pajamas, the fabric of the pants now dark and damp at the tip, he just wanted to be able to lose himself in her embrace.

So leaning back from Lucy, he pressed a quick kiss to the hand that slipped from his scalp, and then he stood, quickly shucking off his clothes and crawling up over her before he could second guess himself. Their eyes locked and she shimmied upward from the edge of the bed, drawing her knees up and wide as he followed her.

Given the lingering slick wetness between her legs, Wyatt slid himself into her with little fanfare aside from a soft sigh somehow laced with both contentment and anguish that slipped from his mouth. For a moment, he simply lay there, buried to the hilt inside her, his face hidden in the crook of her neck, head resting on her still-clothed shoulder. How could he want this so much when it was never supposed to be real in the first place?

If Lucy was thrown at all by him just freezing there, she didn't let on and just wrapped her legs around his thighs and gently ran her hands up and down his back.

He needed more; lifting his head, he captured her lips, tentatively at first, not knowing if she'd be ok with the taste of herself on his tongue. But she responded immediately, deepening the kiss with a muffled whimper as she clung to him.

Wyatt kissed her desperately as he tilted his hips and began to move inside her. She felt so tight, so right, and all he wanted was to somehow split himself in two – one of him to go rescue Jessica and live the life he always should have lived with her, the life Jess had deserved, and one to stay here, buried so deep in Lucy that he couldn't tell where she ended and he began.

Pulling away from her to catch his breath, Wyatt kept up his long, slow strokes, meeting Lucy's gaze when she could manage it, but relishing every time those beautiful brown eyes fluttered shut because of the way he slid into her, hitting what clearly seemed to be the right places.
It was different, the sex this time. Sure, it had happened, but aside from the few extra liberties he was now able to take in terms of holding hands and a few chaste kisses here and there under the terms of the 'middle school' conversation, it was easy to think that the two times they'd been together in the darkened hotel room were just some figment of his sex-deprived imagination, some erotic dream his still-tipsy brain had conjured up after being forced to kiss her so brazenly and repeatedly at the party.

But this? This wasn't the shadowy darkness of a bland hotel room at midnight. This was technicolor, golden hour sunlight filtering in over them. It was her sheets they lay on, his headboard a foot or so from where Lucy's chocolate brown locks were spread over the pillow. His shirt covering her breasts, bunched up around her midsection. Their other clothes were in the closet and dresser a few feet away, and their tiny daughter, now healthy, slumbered in her room, just a few steps from theirs. Even the slippery wet sound each time he sank back into Lucy. It was real.

For just half a nanosecond, that thought of Lena that flitted through his mind had Wyatt wondering what would happen if whatever Lucy was on didn't work. He bit his lip, almost losing control of himself in her too early at the mental image of her round and swollen with his baby. Yet another reason this couldn't happen again, couldn't be risked, he realized – what would happen to a pregnancy given a reset of the timeline to include Jessica?

Wyatt blinked hard, cursing himself for bringing Jessica to mind while he was literally inside Lucy; it wasn't fair to either of the women. He leaned down once more, kissing Lucy fervently to focus himself as he used her name as a mantra, a metronome as he slid in and out of her faster and faster. Lu-cy. Lu-cy.

She whimpered against his lips, writhing ever more against him, and Wyatt knew that the second she tumbled over the edge and clenched down around him, he'd be done for. So he braced himself on one arm and slipped the other hand down between them to give her that extra nudge.

Lucy pulled back from the kiss with a gasp, grasping haphazardly at the sheets as the squirmed beneath him, thrusting up at him frantically. "Wyatt..." she pleaded, panting.

He swirled his fingertip faster, still keeping a quick pace with his hips. Pressing his lips to her neck, now slick with sweat, he murmured. "Let go, Luce," he urged. "I've got you."

Wyatt leaned up once more, just in time to catch her squeezing her eyes shut with a tortured groan, and, a split second later, he felt her walls fluttering around him. That was it for Wyatt too; the tension coiling deep within him won out, and with electric waves washing over him and a strangled grunt of his own, he stiffened and emptied himself deep inside her.

Sweaty and spent, he collapsed on to Lucy a moment later. She squeezed him a few extra times for good measure, sending involuntary shudders through his body. He could feel her giggle under him at the reaction, but, smirking, he silenced her with another kiss.

Their tongues stroked each other lazily a while, and in the breaths in between, Wyatt smoothed Lucy's hair back from her face gently.

It wasn't long before Wyatt felt himself soften and slip from inside her. He sighed; he didn't want the moment to end, but he also didn't want to get anything on her sheets, or at least anything more than they may have already gotten on them. So he rolled off her reluctantly, beginning to climb to the edge of the bed so he could go grab something to clean up with.

But he didn't get very far at all. He hadn't even gotten a foot on the floor when he felt Lucy's fingers wrap around his wrist. He could hear her whisper something, but it was spoken so timidly that he couldn't make it out. Leaning back over towards where she'd already turned her back to him, he
dropped a kiss on her shoulder, asking, "What?"

He was alarmed to get a sniffle in response.

A second later, Lucy rolled back to look him in the eye, her own eyes once again red and shiny with tears, just as they had been in the hallway by Lena's room earlier. So much for using the sex to comfort her.

"Don't sleep on the couch," she repeated quietly, pleading, breaking the eye contact as she did so.

Wyatt opened his mouth to say... something, *anything*, but no words would come out. He'd only been going to get a washcloth; he would have come back. And despite his earlier conviction to keep his distance and stay away, stay downstairs and out of her bed, his heart ached at the notion that Lucy could ever misinterpret his leaving the bed and think he'd just walk away from her without so much as a word after being with her. He hated that broken sound to her voice, hated that she thought she had to ask him to stay with her. They hadn't been meant to sleep together again, and they really, *really* shouldn't have, but it had happened, and now that it had, like hell was he going to crash on the couch downstairs.

Reassuring Lucy of that fact quickly became more of a priority than keeping the sheets clean, so he forewent the trip to the bathroom and instead tugged the covers up over her, slipping into place behind her. He pulled her to him, spooning her tightly against him and he pressed his lips to her shoulder (his shirt) again.

"I'm right here," he murmured, pressing his face into her hair, "I'm here."

Lucy let out only a few more soft sniffles after that, and the tight grip she'd initially had on the hand he'd wrapped around her midsection eventually slackened, telling Wyatt she'd finally drifted off to sleep.

As sleep slowly snuck up on him too, as cozy and content as he was wrapped around Lucy, with Lena just down the hall, one thought came to dominate Wyatt's consciousness.

Once Mason's team figured out what needed to be done in the past to right his timeline with Jessica, as much as he didn't want to trust the mission to anyone else, there was no way he would be able to be the one to do the job now. It had to be someone else who set things right. He couldn't be the one to go. Going meant *remembering*.

And he would never be able to look Jessica in the eye, never mind *be* with her, if he still had memories of *this*. Of Lucy.

TBC...
Chapter 15

Chapter Notes

Um, remember this? That I last updated over six months ago? That I started posting here exactly a year ago, to the day? In that hiatus, there was moving and a new job and so very little free time. I've posted one-shots since then, but those are far easier to throw together quickly than getting in the headspace for this epic. I just didn't have time to do this one justice until now. (At least I hope I've been able to do it justice now….) So I apologize for the long delay, and I'm grateful for those of you who are still around to read. It may be worth going back a chapter or two to remind yourselves what on earth was going on when I last posted.

Here's at least this quick reminder, based both on a couple reader comments and the fact that it's been FOREVER since the last part was posted – this story began waaaaay back after the Chicago World's Fair episode, with the additional tweak that Wyatt never got the name of Jessica's killer (see author's notes for early chapters). It's not a post-season 1 story. So Wyatt and Rufus never went to 1983 in this story, and this Wyatt never got the bit of closure that came with the failed 1983 trip and his time in jail. Which is why here he's been more focused on Jessica than the Wyatt of the season finale was.

And, no Emma yet. They're still following Flynn in this world.

Thanks to TheVelvetDusk for checking to make sure this chapter fit with everything else from so long ago.

ALSO. MARCH 11, my friends, March 11. <3

Lucy blinked awake slowly, not entirely clear on where she was. The past few nights had been spent all over the place – in the hospital, a 1919 hotel, a 2017 hotel… The 2017 hotel where she'd slept with Wyatt. And it was just starting to sink in that she was currently at home – as much of a home as this random house their other selves had purchased could be – where she'd now slept with him again.

Rolling backwards slightly, she peered over her shoulder in the darkness. The dim glow from outside – streetlights, or the moon, she wasn't sure – was just enough that she could see him, on his side, partially curled up behind her, one arm extended toward her as if maybe it had been slung over her at one point when she'd been closer to him. The sheets and thin comforter were pulled high enough that she couldn't tell whether or not he'd gotten up at some point to pull on pants, or even boxers, but she could clearly see that, even if he had grabbed those things, he'd passed on the shirt.

She bit her lip, fighting the instinct to reach out and run her fingertips over his chest, suppressing the urge to press a kiss to that bare skin and maybe leave a whole trail of them heading down under the covers.

But therein lies the problem, she admitted to herself with a soft sigh. They hadn't been meant to have sex again, and now that they had anyway, she just wanted him even more. It was too easy to imagine that they were really together when he was on his knees with his tongue between her legs. Too easy to think that this whole mess wasn't just some serendipitous tweak of timelines when he was buried
inside her, her ankles locked around his waist. Too easy to get caught up in the moment, too easy to pretend it was real.

Because no matter how much Lucy would have liked it to be real, it just wasn't. No matter how real Wyatt may have tried to reassure her that his feelings were, they weren't real enough. Jessica was still in the mix, and Wyatt's feelings for his wife more real, of that Lucy had no doubt.

Which meant that Lucy just couldn't quite figure out where this latest round of falling into bed together had come from. Had she kissed him? Or the other way around? She honestly didn't know. Either way, it wasn't like Wyatt had protested when things escalated, and the notion of his mouth on her hadn't even crossed her mind until he'd already been kissing his way up the inside of her leg. That had all been him.

Still, she'd let it happen, even knowing Jessica was his priority. And she'd been the one, in a moment of weakness, to ask him to stay there in bed.

She really disliked that she'd been that weak, that clingy. But she couldn't help it; seeing Lena-Lucy froze as soon as the first thought of Lena crept into her mind. And chastised herself immediately for wasting any time pondering the sex life she wasn't supposed to have when she should have been checking on the still-recovering little girl.

With one last glance cast in Wyatt's direction, Lucy slipped from her side of the bed. She wasn't sure where the underwear Wyatt had slid down her legs had ended up, so she quietly snagged a new pair from the dresser as she passed it, tugging them on as she slipped into the hallway. The pajama pants that had never made it on in the first place lay abandoned near the door to Lena's room; Lucy grabbed them from the floor and stepped into them as well as she crept into the baby's room.

Thankfully, Lena was asleep, looking far more peaceful than Lucy felt, with neither the rash nor any other lingering symptoms appearing to be bothering her. Lucy smiled at the sight, but couldn't help the shaky breath that escaped as memories of seeing her (temporary? would-be? ersatz? sort of? Lucy was never sure what Lena should really be considered…) daughter hooked up to all sorts of machines assaulted her. She hated that they hadn't been there for her when she'd first fallen ill, hated that, at some point, probably sooner rather than later, they'd be off on another time jump, and again wouldn't be there for Lena if she needed them. What if it was even worse next time? Again she found herself fighting off instinct, suddenly wanting nothing more than to scoop Lena from her crib and hold her. But, though she hadn't been in this position of being a mother for all that long, she knew as well as any seasoned parent that waking up the kid for no reason was not the best of ideas.

So Lucy backed away from the crib.

Which left her at somewhat of an impasse with herself. She couldn't go back to Wyatt, not when doing so would just lead to an assault of all sorts of confusing, conflicting emotions that still ultimately led back to him saving Jessica. She couldn't stay in Lena's room, the memories of the hospital too upsetting, even more so if she were to think about the fact that the alternative to awful parenting experiences like that would be to not be a parent at all, which is what would happen the minute Wyatt was able to reset the timeline.

So she headed for neither bedroom, instead making her way down to the kitchen.

Lucy peered at the contents of the refrigerator once she got there.

Once upon a time, when Amy was still… existing, and when their mother was having a particularly rough night, it wouldn't have been uncommon for the two sisters to split a bottle of wine or pint of ice cream while watching mind-numbing late night talk shows. She tugged open the freezer.
Given the odd timing of when they'd arrived back at the house with Lena, none of them had really eaten since early afternoon, Lucy rationalized as she grabbed a spoon. And it was barely past midnight, so she could totally count half a pint of Haagen Dazs as dinner.

She'd only managed to get about three spoonfuls in when she heard the floor creak behind her. But before Lucy could turn around, Wyatt slipped his arms around her waist, hugging her to him, and dropped a kiss to the bare skin of her shoulder where the neckline of the shirt she'd worn to bed had slid down.

Lucy's eyes fell closed as she, just for a moment, allowed herself to indulge in his embrace. She leaned back, letting her free hand land on his where he'd wrapped his arms around her. But real life crept back into her mind all too quickly, and she reluctantly turned around.

She faltered before she could get any words out; not that she'd have logically expected any different, but he'd put on the same t-shirt and pajama pants he'd been wearing when he'd ambushed her in the hallway outside Lena's room. The same ones that she could vividly picture being pulled off just before he'd climbed over her in bed. She squeezed her eyes shut, trying once more to banish such memories from her mind.

With her eyes open once more, she let out a soft sigh, asking helplessly, "Wyatt, what are we doing?"

If he caught her drift at all, he didn't show it, answering instead with a slight tease to his voice as he nodded to the counter behind her, "Eating ice cream, apparently."

Lucy gave him as stern a glare as she could muster. "I mean we said we wouldn't…" She trailed off, not able to actually articulate what they'd done, and instead nodded upstairs in the direction of the bedroom.

She could see the expression on his face change; there would be no dodging the issue she'd brought up and he knew it. With a deep sigh, his shoulders slumped as he admitted, "You were right." He continued, not quite meeting her eyes, "Lena being that sick was fucking scary. It was," he stressed. "And I don't know," he shrugged, "it just happened but it…" He trailed off for a moment, but then dragged his gaze up to meet hers. With another small shrug, he finished, "…felt right."

Right how? Lucy wondered, not sure how to interpret that. Right that he came to her, specifically? Or just right in that any sex would have proved to be a decent distraction from a sick baby that was only kind of theirs?

Not that she knew which was the preferable answer in their case anyway…

But she didn't get much farther with that internal debate; Wyatt spoke up again. "I wasn't leaving to go sleep on the couch," he informed her, unprompted and almost bashfully. "I was just going to," he shrugged again, scratching the back of his neck and looking away before finishing, "clean up."

"Oh," Lucy replied, feeling a heated flush creep up her cheeks, not only ashamed of herself once again for having been so clingy and insecure and crying, but feeling even more stupid considering he hadn't even been going to the couch in the first place. He'd made it a point to go get a washcloth in the hotel, so of course he'd do the same at the house. She was just being an overly emotional idiot. "I shouldn't have asked you to stay," she apologized, shaking her head. "I'm sorry."

"But you wanted me to?" he interjected, his voice measured and face unreadable.

"No. No," she stammered, "I mean, we said."
"Lucy," he said, his voice gentle and firm as he cut her off once more. "Do you want me to sleep on the couch?"

Lucy opened her mouth to protest again, but this time, he didn't even let her get a word out.

"First thing that comes to mind," he insisted softly, creeping closer to her. "Be honest."

She swallowed hard, unable to hide from his insistent gaze. "…no," she finally admitted, her voice shaky.

"Neither do I," Wyatt countered, his voice unwavering.

"But we… slept together again," Lucy spluttered, baffled as to how he was so calm, "and we said-

He shook his head, infuriatingly defiant. How was he so seemingly unconflicted when she, the one without a spouse lurking somewhere out there in the ether of time travel, couldn't figure out what was right or wrong, what she wanted or what she didn't?

"I know what we said," Wyatt continued, cutting off her train of thought. "And, look," he added, finally showing a little uncertainty, "I'm sorry if-

It was Lucy's turn to cut him off. The last thing she wanted was for him to feel bad or guilty about the two of them ending up back in bed together. "No, don't- don't apologize," she urged. "I could have stopped you. It's ok."

And because Wyatt was still Wyatt, even in the midst of whatever this conversation was, he raised an eyebrow and shot half a smirk in her direction at her choice of wording.

Stifling a smile, Lucy rolled her eyes, knowing exactly what he was getting at. "Fine, it was better than ok. Happy?"

His damn smirk just grew broader and he reached for her hips to pull her closer to him.

Lucy didn't stop him from snaking his arms around her, but she did place a hand on his chest, bracing herself against him as she ducked her head down to gather herself. "I just…" she began more soberly. "We said we wouldn't for a reason." She lifted her gaze back up to him and explained, faltering slightly, "I don't want things to be any more complicated than they already are when you go back to get Jessica."

Wyatt pulled back ever so slightly at that, studying her intently as if weighing his words. "Complicated for me or for you?" he eventually asked.

Which did she mean? No amount of sex, or no sex, was going to change the fact that she had feelings for him. Increasingly strong ones. And that those feelings would be in the wind as soon as he went back in time to reset his history to include Jessica. She'd never begrudge him the opportunity to do exactly that, so far as much as she knew that Jessica was the priority and that she could never compete with her, the last thing Lucy needed would be for anything she did to somehow be interpreted – by Wyatt or by anyone else – as her trying to dissuade him from saving Jessica. Not to mention the fact that the last time they'd talked about this, back in the hotel, he'd looked so completely and utterly broken by the struggle to reconcile whatever he was feeling for her with his relationship with Jessica.

Taking a deep breath, Lucy replied, "You, mostly…"

But Wyatt just set his jaw and shook his head. "I'll deal with me. But…" He trailed off, suddenly
dropping his arms from around her as if burned. "If anything here is too much, just say-"

Continuing the trend of cutting each other off, Lucy leaned up to put a stop to his words with a soft kiss, smoothing her thumb over his jaw in an attempt to reassure him that, for all her uncertainty, she did want something with him. "Just..." she hedged after pulling away, "don't even tell me when you're going to do it. Get her back," she clarified stiltedly. "Just get it over with so I don't know it's coming."

He shied away from her, something between hesitance and anguish washing over his features. "Lucy, I..."

When he just trailed off, Lucy took the opportunity to kiss him once more in an attempt to reassure him. "It's ok, Wyatt. Really," she insisted. And honestly, though it had only occurred to her just then, it really would be better if he just did it that way. Maybe she could convince herself to be happy in this odd existence if she wasn't perpetually waiting for the Jessica shoe to drop. And then one day, in the middle of that happy-ish half-relationship, he would 'go to watch football with Rufus' or something and she'd be none the wiser when everything suddenly jumped to a new timeline. It would be better that way, right? Ignorance is bliss and all that?

Lucy shook her head ever so slightly in an effort to banish that train of thought; overthinking the not thinking about things was pretty much a clear sign she just shouldn't think about any of it at all. So she turned back around to snag the ice cream off the counter, and asked Wyatt, "For now, just help me finish this?"

That got him to let out a soft chuckle, agreeing, "Yeah."

So with that, Lucy smiled back and reached for his hand, leading him to the couch to sit. Flipping on the tail end of Jimmy Fallon just to have something on in the background, she curled up against Wyatt's side, his arms seemingly automatically wrapping around her midsection and pulling her even closer. Twisting in his embrace a little, she held up the pint of ice cream, asking with her eyes if he wanted any. But instead of answering outright, Wyatt just gave a small nod and opened his mouth in the direction of the spoon as his hands stayed in place on her body, one in particular slipping up under the hem of her shirt to caress her hip where her loose pajama pants had slid down slightly.

She'd just – just – finished trying to tell him (and convince herself...) that maybe keeping their distance and stepping back (again) from sex would be best, but the feel of his hand there, along with the casual intimacy of sharing a utensil, she couldn't help but go along with his request. Scooping up a bit of ice cream onto the spoon, she held it out to him. He took it eagerly, and suddenly she was forced to try to ignore the fact that the appreciative noise he let out upon tasting it sounded a hell of a lot like some of the noises he now knew he was prone to making in bed...

The remainder of the pint wasn't much different; ignoring the TV, alternating spoonfuls, sinful noises from Wyatt, and his hands only leaving her once, but considering it was to wipe a wayward little dribble of melted ice cream from the corner of her mouth and then lick it off his own thumb, it didn't exactly dampen the mood.

When Lucy was relegated to scraping the bottom of the container for the last bit, she held it up to Wyatt, but he slipped his hand from under her shirt to redirect it to her. With a shrug, she obliged, but no sooner had she taken the spoon in her mouth, he tugged it away and drew her into a blistering kiss, his tongue snaking into her mouth before she could fully swallow the ice cream. She pulled back for a moment in surprise, gulping down the last of her mouthful as he licked his own lips and stared back at hers wantonly.

Lucy couldn't help it; she leaned in to continue the kiss. And almost immediately, he was laying back
and tugging her half on top of him, hands roaming, nails scraping, and hair getting entirely mussed amidst the labored breathing and the sounds of lips on lips.

Of course, with all that, it didn't take long at all for Lucy to recognize the feel of him against her hip, swelling thick and warm in his pajama pants. God, it would be so easy to just tug down those pants to straddle him right there, she knew. Or even to shimmy further down the couch, down his legs, and return the favor from earlier with her mouth. And she wanted to, oh, she did, especially with his mouth on her neck and his tongue particularly convincing.

But what had they actually just agreed to? They'd left it kind of nebulous, hadn't they? She'd protested the sex at first, albeit halfheartedly because, clearly, her body and brain weren't really on the same page. And he'd insisted not to worry about it on his behalf, and then she'd sort of told him it was ok? If he didn't tell her when he'd be going to get Jessica back? But she'd still know. That it was coming eventually. And so would he.

Reluctantly, Lucy leaned back, pulling away from the kiss and sliding herself off him. As much as she wanted it, wanted him (again…), she knew the best option for both of them was to avoid making things more difficult for either of them later. "Wyatt…" she protested softly.

He just gazed up at her, eyes heavy-lidded and sleepy, lips all shiny and kiss-swollen, and erection clearly straining against the thin fabric of his pajamas.

Faced with that sight, she almost gave in.

But somehow she summoned the resolve to take a step back. "We should… check on Lena," she asserted gently. "Go back to sleep. Try to get on a normal schedule."

He studied her a moment, even opening his mouth at one point as if to speak, but he held back, nodding a moment later and replying with a sigh of "Yeah. Ok."

Lucy halfheartedly crawled away from him, pulling herself up off the couch. She turned to trudge up the stairs, and though she could eventually hear Wyatt padding along behind her, she willed herself not to steal a glance back at him. Once upstairs, she tiptoed over to Lena's room and slipped in quietly, checking on the little girl again. Thankfully, in spite of the sprouting rash, Lena's breathing was peaceful and steady.

Which left Lucy with nothing to do but go back to bed. With Wyatt.

With a shaky breath, she backed away from the crib and turned towards the hall. She didn't expect to encounter Wyatt's chest right as she whirled around. Her hands flew up to steady herself against him; she shivered when she felt his hands grip her waist to do the same.

She was too shaken to even get out an admonishment before Wyatt peered over her shoulder toward the baby. "She okay?" he whispered, not relinquishing his hold on her body.

As much as she knew she should, she couldn't bring herself to pull her hands from his chest. Instead, Lucy just nodded numbly in return before managing a stilted, hushed "Yeah."

Thankfully, Wyatt was then the one to put a little space between them, backing away from her, though a shiver ran up Lucy's spine when he slipped his hand into hers to tug her in the direction of their bedroom.

Lucy was grateful that, once there in the room, Wyatt merely dropped her hand and headed for his side of the bed; had he made even the slightest hint of a move back towards something sexual, she wasn't sure she could have resisted. So instead, she slipped beneath the covers on her side, curling
away from him to try to make sense of… well, of anything that had gone on in the past few weeks, really.

And she certainly didn't push him away when he curled up behind her and wrapped his arms around her waist and pressed a kiss to her shoulder.

When Lucy woke hours later, she was grateful that, though she'd rolled over at some point to face Wyatt, he was still dead-to-the-world, half on his stomach, half facing her, with the comforter bunched up between them. At least that way, the decision about whether or not to act on whatever physical state he may or may not have been in, middle school or otherwise, wasn't really hers to make.

She gingerly pulled herself to a sitting position, still regarding Wyatt as he slept. God, they needed to get better at communication, because she still had no idea where they truly stood. Everything was still so nebulous and vague, and she wanted him, she did, but if she was being honest with herself, she wasn't sure if she was really ok with keeping things sexual, as much as she wanted to. There was a reason they'd agreed not to sleep together when they first embarked on this insane variety of half-relationship a few days ago. That first night, fueled by pent up attraction, putting on a show for her mother's party, and not a small amount of alcohol was one thing, but she really shouldn't have let him escalate things again last night. And she never should have admitted to wanting to have him stay in the bed; the couch was so much safer. Distance was safer. She just wished-

A soft little babble from the baby monitor was what finally broke through Lucy's spiraling train of thought.

Shaking her head, Lucy cursed herself for yet again agonizing over the sex life she wasn't supposed to have instead of checking on sick little Lena. She was so not used to this parenting thing yet. But she still had to do it, of course. So, leaving Wyatt to sleep, she crept out of bed and out to Lena's room.

A bright little smile greeted her from the crib, and Lucy couldn't help, even for all the emotional crap in her mind, smiling right back at Lena.

"Hi, little one," she murmured, crossing the room and reaching to scoop her up for a cuddle, "are you all better?"

Lena giggled in return, shrieking "Ma!" as she bounced up and down at the edge of the crib.

"You are, aren't you?" Lucy grinned, pulling Lena up into her arms. But in doing so, she got a better look at the bright rash now ever more noticeable up and down the length of the toddler's limbs.

"Holy crap." she mumbled against Lena's head, inspecting one leg then the other. It's not like she hadn't known it was coming; the doctors at the children's hospital had made it clear that the rash was the final stage of the illness and that it was totally harmless, but it was still unnerving to see Lena so completely covered.

Lucy shook off the slight sense of alarm at the sight of the rash and set about doing a quick diaper swap. That done, she lifted Lena back up, intending to settle her on the floor to let her burn off a little energy, but the tiny girl was having none of it, instead clutching Lucy's shirt tightly and burying her face in her neck with a muffled, "Ma."

"Oh," Lucy said softly against Lena's head, hugging her closer, Lena's clinginess tugging at her heartstrings, "you don't want to get down?"

Lena stayed still for a moment, then peered in the direction of her crib. "Dis," she declared, pointing.
But she was just as clingy when Lucy tried to put her back into the crib, refusing to let go. "Dis," she repeated.

Only then did it dawn on Lucy that the apparently beloved stuffed bunny had gotten left behind when she'd initially scooped Lena up. She shifted Lena to one side and reached for the toy with her free arm. "You want the bunny?

"Buh," Lena gurgled, reaching for it, then immediately shoved one ear into her mouth before snuggling against Lucy's chest again.

With Lena now happy, Lucy briefly entertained the notion of setting her down on the floor as she'd originally intended, but the little one's reluctance to be put down just made her feel even more terrible about not having been there when the roseola initially struck and landed her in the hospital.

So, before she could talk herself out of it, Lucy leaned back from where she held Lena, impulsively proposing, "Let's go back to bed, huh?" And, biting her lip for a split second, she added, "With… Daddy?" Of course, Lena's little face brightened at the mention of Wyatt.

Back in the master bedroom, Wyatt was still out cold, so Lucy eased herself back down on her side as she cradled Lena against her. She was able to keep her from really noticing Wyatt – because her excitement over seeing him would inevitably have woken him up – by cuddling her and stroking her wispy hair until she was dozing once more. And with Lena's little body warm and heavy against her, Lucy felt herself nodding off too.

Until she was jarred awake by a tiny, yet surprisingly forceful punch to her chest, followed by a kick to the stomach as Lena giggled and flailed her way over to where Wyatt was just barely beginning to stretch his way to wakefulness.

Lucy couldn't help be let out a giggle herself as he ended up bearing even more of the brunt of Lena's antics. She'd managed to crawl her way over the pile of bedding next to him, whipping the bunny along with her, and then flung the full weight of her little frame onto the side of his ribcage with a squeal.

Wyatt let out something between a grunt and an 'oof' and looked down curiously towards his midsection. A sluggish grin spread across his face when his gaze landed on Lena. "Well, hi," he said, his voice still gravelly with sleep.

"Da!" Lena yelped upon the sound of his voice. Then, her little face growing serious, she held out her bunny toward him. "Dis," she informed him somberly.

With a chuckle, Wyatt pulled himself to a sitting position, snatching up both the bunny and Lena onto his lap, adding, "Thank you." He pressed a kiss to the side of her head before turning to face Lucy, his expression quizzical. "What's she doing here?"

Lucy just shrugged, appreciating, not for the first time, how Lena's presence always seemed to help ease whatever weirdness there was between herself and Wyatt at any given time.

It turned out that Lena's early morning allegiances were fickle; just a moment or so after climbing all over Wyatt, she abandoned him and the bunny. She then launched herself back across the bed toward Lucy with a muffled 'Ma' when she faceplanted less than gracefully against Lucy's thigh. But she came up smiling, and continued climbing back onto Lucy.

Beside them, Wyatt snorted. "Oh sure, wake me up and then go right back to Mom-" He caught himself for half a second, but when he looked up and caught Lucy's gaze, he kept right going. "-
Mommy," he finished, a half-smile on his face as he stretched to tickle one of Lena's bare feet.

Lucy fought to suppress the little thrill that bubbled up in her stomach upon hearing him address her like that wish such deliberate ease. It's what they were, wasn't it? For now, at least. So she forced herself to try to emulate that casual air, pointing out, "Uh, Mommy was on diaper duty." She took a deep breath, sneaking a glance at him out of the corner of her eye. "While Daddy was sleeping in. She's just glad one of us got up."

Wyatt just smirked in response, then pushed the pile of blankets from the span of bed between them and slid closer to Lucy and Lena. Looping one arm around Lucy's shoulders, he pressed an unprompted kiss to her temple before snatching up the bunny to make it 'dance' for Lena.

Her eyes fluttering shut at the feel of his lips brushing against her skin, Lucy sighed. She'd been right last night. She really just needed to stop overthinking things. Just go with it, savor moments like this and just try to forget the rest of the mess they were living in.

Which is what she did try to do, at least for the next fifteen minutes or so, until Wyatt's phone started buzzing on the nightstand to his side of the bed. Lucy tensed, dreading the inevitable call that would summon them to another jump.

Wyatt stretched away from her and Lena, snatching up the phone and scanning the screen quickly.

"It's Rufus," he informed her. "He just wants to know how she is," he explained, tilting his head at Lena, "and if we can make trivia night."

As grateful as she was for the text having turned out to be innocuous, Lucy balked at the notion of bringing Lena anywhere in her current state. She was theoretically healthy now, but… "I don't know," she hedged. "She's still on the medication and the rash is even worse."

Wyatt didn't need any other convincing. "Then we'll just stay here," he agreed, nodding.

Still, even as he moved to text back, Lucy couldn't help but feel a tiny twinge of regret at missing out on the chance to do something that felt normal. Before Wyatt could send a reply, she reached to lay a hand on his knee. "We could invite them over?" she suggested tentatively. "They haven't seen the house, right? Or Rufus hasn't," she corrected, "maybe Jiya did before… other us bought it?"

He looked at her thoughtfully, then shrugged. "There's a grill in the shed."

"You want to?" Lucy asked.

"If she gets fussy or doesn't feel well," Wyatt replied, running a hand over Lena's leg as she gnawed on her bunny, "at least we're here instead of out somewhere."

Her stomach settling a little at the thought of actually managing a nice day with their friends, Lucy flashed him a wan smile. "Ok."

"We need barbecuing stuff. And whatever food," Wyatt pointed out.

Lucy frowned, not having thought of that. "Oh…"

But with her mouth still downturned, Wyatt caught her off-guard, capturing her lips in a sweet, but all too short kiss, before sliding away off the bed. "I'll go," he offered. "Let me shower, you come up with what you might want, and I'll run out and get stuff."

Standing by the bed, he sent Rufus a quick rundown of the possible plans, and once Rufus replied in the affirmative with respect to the invite, Wyatt was off to the shower.
Hugging Lena to her, Lucy watched him go, surprising herself when she found she was now actually looking forward to the day instead of dreading endless hours full of getting lost in her own head while pondering the ridiculous state of existence they were currently living in.

The morning ended up flying by. Lucy threw together a list for Wyatt to head off to the store with, then straightened up as best she could given that the remnants of the move were still more than evident around the house as well as the fact that she had to juggle watching a lively Lena at the same time. When that was as done as it was going to get, she gave Lena a quick bath and set her down for a nap so she could jump in the shower herself.

Lucy was just quickly washing up a few breakfast dishes when she heard Wyatt come in and set what sounded like a zillion grocery bags on the floor behind her. When she went to turn her head away from the sink to see, she was surprised – not unlike the night before – by Wyatt's arms wrapping around her waist from behind, sending yet another shiver up her spine.

"I got a present for Lena," he announced in her ear, and she could hear the grin in his voice.

Craning her neck to question him, her inquisitive 'what?' was swallowed by the kiss Wyatt pressed to her lips.

He was gone from behind her before she could even really register the touch of his lips to hers, already rifling through the bags, putting things away. "They had those inflatable baby pools by the grilling stuff," he explained, shoving a pack of ground beef into the refrigerator. "She likes baths, right? Figured she might like a pool." Wyatt paused for a second, the sound of the rustling grocery bags pausing right along with him. "You think that's ok with the rash?"

"Should be fine." Lucy couldn't help but smile to herself as she turned off the water in the sink. His enthusiasm with Lena was so sweet. "But, uh," she warned after a beat, "she's still napping."

He looked so dismayed when she turned around, she couldn't help but laugh. "She should be up soon," she assured him, then offering, "I can go look for a swimsuit for her, if you want."

Wyatt nodded with a grin, putting away the last of the groceries for the barbecue. "And I'll set up the pool."

He headed out into the yard while Lucy made her way upstairs. She did manage to find an adorable little ruffled suit for Lena, plus tiny sunglasses and a matching hat. With Lena still snoozing, she set them on the changing table and headed back out into the hall. Rufus and Jiya wouldn't be there for a while, so they didn't need to prep any food yet. The unpacking? Yeah, it still wasn't done, but she honestly had no interest in doing any more of that at the moment. She could also dive into work and try to figure out anything more about Flynn's actions, but it was just so draining… So before she could guilt herself into doing either of those, she snagged a novel from her bedside table and stole away to test out the new armchair they'd ended up putting in the small office downstairs.

She curled up in the chair, grateful for the reprieve and the chance to just not think about anything for even a little while.

Reality came back full-force just under an hour later when Lena's squeals rang out from the hallway, followed the slaps of tiny bare feet as she tested out her still relatively new walking skills. It was just another couple of seconds before she appeared, teetering in the office doorway, squealing once more when she spied Lucy sitting there.

"Ma!" she giggled, "Hi."
Lucy grinned right back at her; Wyatt had gotten her dressed, and she looked just as adorable as expected in her little swimsuit. Setting aside the book, she stretched out her arms and beckoned for the little girl to come over to her. "Look at you, don't you look adorab-"

Her voice died in her throat mid-word, but not because Lena had given up on the walking for the moment and had opted to scramble over the carpet on her knees instead.

Her voice died out because Wyatt, who had obviously been tailing Lena, had reached the office doorway too.

And Lena wasn't the only one in a bathing suit.

Wyatt was barechested, with swim trunks slung low on his hips, a sight Lucy was not sure she'd ever quite get used to, regardless of how long they were stuck in this married reality. She might have drooled were it not for Lena reaching her and using Lucy's knee to claw her way to a standing position.

"It's set up," he announced. "I heated some water to add, because the stuff straight from the hose was way too cold for her." And approaching her to scoop up Lena, he smiled down at Lucy in the chair. "You coming? Get your suit on."

"Oh, uh-", Lucy stammered, barely able to tear her gaze from his chest to look him in the eye, "No, that's ok, you should-"

"Oh, come on," he chastised, shifting Lena to one hip to reach for Lucy with his free hand. "She wants you out there. Right, kiddo?" he asked, jiggling Lena in his arm.

Of course, Lena gurgled out a laugh, and Lucy was helpless against the two sets of bright blue pleading gazes.

She acquiesced, and, while Wyatt brought Lena outside, Lucy climbed back upstairs to rifle through her dresser.

It turned out that her alter ego from this timeline must have been more secure with her body than she herself was – whether it was the cause or the effect of having snagged a guy like Wyatt of her own accord, Lucy was pretty sure that it would have had something to do with it – because, aside from one maternity one-piece, which would be way too loose, the array of swimwear she pulled from the dresser was restricted to a colorful collection of really skimpy bikinis.

But even as she sat there staring at her options, she could hear Wyatt calling for her to hurry up.

Well, she tried to reason with herself, she'd told herself to just enjoy this life as best she could and to not think about the fact that it wasn't really theirs. So if that meant prancing around in front of Wyatt in next to nothing, even though they theoretically weren't having sex, so be it.

Lucy didn't pick the tiniest bikini, but the bright purple one she put on was damn close to it.

And she didn't miss the appreciative look from Wyatt when she sank down across from him, knee to knee in the 6 or so inches of water he'd put in the small pool.

So that's how they spent the next hour or so, the two of them sneaking glances at each other as Lena splashed around gleefully in the water. When she tired of that, there was a little more walking practice out on the lawn before Lucy realized that neither she nor Wyatt had their phones out there with them, which, while she'd love to be able to ignore a call from Mason Industries were one to ring through, wasn't really particularly responsible of them.
Reluctantly, she left Lena toddling around the lawn with Wyatt in search of her phone. Once she
found it up in the bedroom, she saw that she’d missed a call from her mother, and rather than put off
that conversation, she went ahead and called her back. It turned out to be a whole lot of nothing that
Carol wanted to talk about, but it still took over ten minutes.

Which was long enough so that, when she reemerged from the house into the yard, the sight that
greeted her was enough to make her heart melt.

Wyatt had dragged one of the lounge chairs into the shade of the canopy over the patio and was now
apparently asleep, sprawled back on it, with Lena on his lap and leaning back on him in almost the
exact same position, also snoozing away. It was too precious not to snag a photo of, now that she
had her phone with her.

She could do this, right? She could live this life, with these two? One of which that wasn’t supposed
to exist, and the other that was never supposed to have married her?

It could certainly be worse, right?

Lucy spent the next little while just sitting next to Lena and Wyatt, watching them wistfully as they
slept.

Wyatt woke not long after that, and they set Lena in her playpen and, together, started to throw
together some salads and burgers before Rufus and Jiya arrived. Lucy was beyond worrying about
their relative states of undress, relishing any little brush against each other as they worked side-by-
side in the kitchen.

So it was somewhat reluctantly that she threw on a casual skirt and t-shirt, and Wyatt shorts and a t-
shirt of his own, in anticipation of their friends' arrival.

Still, the rest of the afternoon was just really nice. Much like later on in the evening of when they'd
gone out for trivia night, a little alcohol and some of Lena's sweet antics served to help Lucy from
getting too stuck in her own head. Though with Jiya now also in on the fact that they weren't actually
married in their original timeline (and with neither Rufus nor Jiya in on the more recent physical
developments of said non-marriage…), Lucy found herself missing the forced closeness of that
earlier night. Thankfully Lena kept them all distracted by suddenly deciding she was going to be shy
around anyone that wasn't Lucy or Wyatt, hiding her face with a giggle against whichever of them
was holding her when Rufus or Jiya made eye contact with her.

In the absence of real trivia night, they worked their way through a round of Trivial Pursuit and a
bottle of wine, then broke out Scattergories. About halfway through, Lena's bedtime rolled around
and she started to get fussy.

But just after Wyatt slipped away from the table on the patio, Lena cradled in his arms, to bring her
up to bed, a chorus of buzzes and chirps rang out from Jiya's purse, Rufus' pocket, and Lucy's phone
on the table.

None of them needed to say anything; they all knew exactly what the texts would say; Flynn had
jumped. Wyatt's dark expression matched theirs when he came back outside, the rest of them already
cleaning up the last of the food and games still on the table.

So once again, reluctantly, Lucy and Wyatt plucked Lena up from her crib and headed to Lucy's
mother's home, dropping off the baby to Carol's looks of disapproval and then racing to Mason.

Rufus and Jiya had already arrived, not having had to deal with an extra stop, and were at her desk.
Lucy hurried inside just ahead of Wyatt, and skidded to a stop near the workstation next to Jiya's, where Agent Christopher and Connor Mason were leaning over the shoulder of some guy whose name Lucy should probably know by now. Not that that was her priority at the moment given the ominous expression Agent Christopher wore as she turned to address them.

"April 18, 1906-"

Lucy didn't need to hear anything further before she cut off the older woman, grimly filling in the location they probably all knew, "-here."

"The earthquake?" Rufus squeaked, though he obviously knew the answer to his own question.

Even Wyatt, newest to the Bay Area out of the seven of them there, already knew the implications; with him close behind her, Lucy felt as much as heard a soft "Shit..." escape him in a whoosh of breath simultaneous to Rufus speaking.

Silence settled over the sobered group. It was one thing to jump here and there through time and see things they'd only read about come to life in front of them. It would be quite another to see their own city in another time, in ruins.

Lucy swallowed hard, barely managing to force herself to ask for details. "What time?" she asked, her voice sounding tight and nervous even to her own ears. "Before or after?"

"Just after midnight," confirmed Agent Christopher.

Nodding numbly, Lucy spoke again, informing them, "It hits in the morning. 5:12."

Though that detail wasn't much more of a blow to the others than the initial date had been; if they were arriving at midnight, it pretty much implied they'd have to deal with the earthquake at some point.

It was Wyatt who found his voice next, asking the same question Lucy had already been puzzling over in her mind. "What would he want with an earthquake?"

"Yeah," Rufus echoed. "Geology is one of the few things he can't actually change about history."

Both of them, along with Mason, Christopher, Jiya, and that other guy, turned to Lucy. But she had no answers for them and shied away from the pressure of their collective gaze. "Same as we thought with the molasses?" She spluttered, feeling helpless. "Save someone who was supposed to die or kill someone who wasn't?" It was these missions that were the worst, the ones when she had no idea what could be of any interest to Flynn. What use was she if her knowledge of history didn't actually add anything to the conversation?

"Well, do we know who the prominent people caught in it were?" Agent Christopher prompted. "Survivors?"

"I- I don't know," Lucy stammered apologetically, her voice on the edge of frantic. "I mean, I know Jack London was brought in afterward to write about it?"

"Man, I hated 'Call of the Wild'," Rufus grumbled.

Wyatt nodded emphatically. "Same..."

Despite actually agreeing with them, Lucy shot them an exasperated glare before turning to Christopher and Mason. "What are we supposed to do?" she pleaded, as if they could somehow give
but a satisfactory answer. "The entire city is on fire within two days. We're supposed to somehow find Flynn, figure out his plan, and stop him?" she rattled on. "Without burning to death?"

"We made it out of the Alamo," Rufus reminded her with a shrug.

For that comment, instead of being on the receiving end of Lucy's glare, Wyatt joined her in glaring at Rufus.

Rufus shrugged them off, continuing, "Uh, but yeah, we also have to keep the lifeboat safe. It can handle high temperatures," he allowed, "but I don't know how it'll stand up to an earthquake and then actual fire. With flames."

An involuntary shiver ran up Lucy's spine. They'd been more than too close for comfort when it came to getting stranded in the past already, and that had just been a mere gunshot or two. The tone of Rufus' voice was hardly convincing her that it would fare any better against a raging inferno of a city. And, she noted, glancing over at Wyatt, she wasn't the only one feeling even more uneasy about this jump than usual.

But Denise was having none of the wavering. "People," she chastised. "We still have to do this. Lucy, Wyatt," she directed, "you start figuring out who among survivors might have a target on their back with Flynn and then figure out how to protect them." Turning to Rufus and Jiya, she continued, "You two, figure out what the lifeboat can withstand, figure out where the fires reached, and find yourself a place to park that thing."

She marched away from them with Mason, leaving Lucy feeling utterly lost, looking to Rufus, Jiya, Wyatt, anyone for some answers. The shrug she got from Jiya was less than comforting.

But Wyatt nudged her from behind, murmuring in her ear, "Come on, professor. We start with Wikipedia just like everyone else."

Lucy went along with it, not having any better ideas. So a few minutes later, she was seated at one of the many computers in the warehouse, scrolling through what felt like endless webpages chronicling the various vaguely famous people that had lived through the earthquake. And she felt just as stymied as she usually did when trying to figure out Flynn's motives. "I don't know," she whined, frustrated. "Scientists, actors, photographers…" And then suddenly, one link actually looked like it might make sense. "Oh," she stated, surprised. "Business. Computing."

"Who?" Wyatt asked, rolling his chair close to hers from the desk behind.

"I don't know – this guy, Walter S. Johnson," she explained, pointing at the screen while he hovered just beyond her shoulder. "He was only 21 when his whole family was in the earthquake. The house was damaged, then it burned," she read, paraphrasing as she skimmed the website. "They all escaped, and then 15, 20 years later he turns some lumber company into a multimillion dollar corporation. During the depression and then after the war, he and some Swedish guy create another million dollar company that produces all sorts of calculators and typewriters for scientists and businesses. Precursors to computers," she finished hurriedly.

"You think Flynn could be trying to prevent that technology from ever getting developed?" Wyatt asked, still staring at where she'd been pointing on the screen.

Lucy turned to face him. "And what does that do for us, relying on computers and a time machine?"

"Jesus…" he breathed. "So you think that's it? Flynn's after this Walter guy?"

"I don't know," Lucy admitted, turning back to the computer and clicking on another random name.
"I don't- Shit."

Wyatt, who had been rolling himself back to the other desk, skidded to a stop. "What?"

"Or this guy," Lucy sighed, feeling defeated. "I forgot about him. Isaias Hellman. Practically has Rittenhouse written all over him. His in-laws founded Lehman Brothers, he owned and basically ran Wells Fargo out of his daughter's house after his own house and all the banks burned in the earthquake," she rattled off, reading the page quickly, "and he used his banking connections to basically spearhead the entire rebuilding of San Francisco."

Wyatt echoed Lucy's harried sigh as Agent Christopher approached them. "What do you have?" she inquired.

Lucy spun in her chair, offering up a helpless shrug. "Maybe one of these two?" She gestured to the computer screen behind her, elaborating, "Banking, kept Wells Fargo alive. Business, the company made all sorts of calculators and computer precursors."

Christopher squinted over Lucy's shoulder at the screen, asking, "Do we have locations?"

"Johnson was at 929 Jackson St.," Lucy rattled off, quickly scanning the screen. "Hellman was on Franklin at the intersection of Sacramento."

"They both sound as plausible as anything else we've dealt with," came the Agent's resigned sigh. "You'll have to split up, watch them both."

"And what," Wyatt spat out, "babysit them? Through an earthquake? What if Flynn's not even after them?" he challenged. "Aren't we going to change things ourselves anyway? Being the creepy people who randomly show up at 5 in the morning and we just happen to know that an earthquake is coming?"

"It's all we have," Agent Christopher reiterated, her expression steely. "You find them, you make sure that exactly what happens to them in real history is exactly what happens to them when you're there. You have five more minutes to come up with something better, but then I want you dressed and out of here. We can't waste any more time."

Lucy felt her shoulders slump and eyed Wyatt, his grim expression mirroring how she felt; the missions when the three of them got separated were usually the most stressful, and knowing this one had impending geological disaster on top of Flynn himself just made the looming jump that much more daunting. Especially considering the little they had to go on was a shot in the dark. Not even a shot. More like fumbling around in the dark without a clue.

But they didn't really have a choice. They had to try.

In the end, Wyatt insisted that the plan be for Rufus and Lucy to make their way to the Hellman residence first, given that it was in a neighborhood that didn't get affected by fire quite as quickly as some of the others. He'd deal with ensuring that Johnson – living in a part of town that would go up in flames almost immediately – got to a ferry to safety across the bay without and interference from Flynn. Then, he'd hightail it to the Hellman's to catch up with her and Rufus, make sure that whole family was as it should be, and then get all three of them the hell out of there.

Getting dressed was a somber affair. Jiya helped Lucy into the clothes, but was just as subdued as the rest of them given her worry for Rufus. At least that worry played to Lucy's advantage; once she was finished dressing, Jiya went off to say goodbye to Rufus, allowing Lucy to tug Wyatt discreetly back towards the women's dressing area before they headed for the lifeboat platform. Most of the
employees may have still been of the mind that they were a regular married couple, but Rufus, Jiya, and the other few close to the missions were under the impression that they were still very much not involved other than as victims of the circumstances of timeline swaps.

With her still holding on to where she'd gripped his forearm, and before Lucy could even verbalize her request, Wyatt assured her, his voice soft and eyes knowing, "I'll be careful."

She tried to scoff and brush off his assumption, but the tears sprang to her eyes too quickly and it was useless to try and deny that he'd known exactly what she had been prepared to say. So she nodded, sniffled, and brushed a kiss over his lips. "You have to make sure you're outside before it hits. By 5:10. 5:05, even," she added, wiping a threatening tear from the corner of one eye.

Wyatt just hugged her tighter, resting his chin on the top of her head. "I will," he promised. And, leaning away, he met her eyes, insisting, "You too, ok? And Rufus."

Lucy nodded again obediently and moved in for one more desperate kiss. Only to have Wyatt push her away roughly just as his tongue had started to slip into her mouth.

"On our way, sir," Wyatt coughed out, just as Connor Mason came into Lucy's line of sight.

"See that you are," came the grumbled reply, followed by Agent Christopher's voice calling for all of them, Mason included.

"Come on," Wyatt murmured, sliding his arm around Lucy's waist and guiding them out of their sheltered corner back toward the main area. She obliged, still rattled by the whiplash of the mission, fear of this particular mission, Wyatt seemingly reading her all too well, his kiss, being pushed away… Unfortunately, there was no escaping any of it. So she followed Wyatt's lead and headed back out toward the central area of the warehouse.

Before departing, Lucy insisted that they all sync their (era-appropriate) wrist- and pocket-watches to the lifeboat's operating system so that they'd know exactly how long they'd have until the quake struck. And as they climbed into the time machine, she implored Wyatt yet again to make sure he was in an open area, or at least in the middle of the street and not in a building by 5:10.

And then they were off, for the first time really only going through time, rather than through time and space.

After finding themselves on the outskirts of San Francisco in 1906, the trio split up as planned. In the dark of night, they managed to find a small farm, from which Lucy and Rufus procured a little horse and buggy, and Wyatt a single horse of his own.

Within an hour or two, she and Rufus found themselves making their way down Franklin Street to the Hellman residence so that they could ensure that Flynn didn't make an appearance and interfere with the family's escape to Lafayette Park and eventual evacuation to the south.

Once their carriage slowed to a stop at the intersection, Lucy pointed out the house to Rufus.

"Lights on?" Rufus observed. "At 5 am?"

Lucy's stomach sank. The lights glowing from behind the draperies in the windows hadn't even registered at first. "They could have been awake anyway," she pointed out, albeit hardly sounding – or feeling – confident. "It doesn't necessarily mean Flynn is in there…"

Rufus just eyed her skeptically.
She sighed. Somehow they were going to have to ascertain whether or not Flynn had already interfered. "I'll go," she said quietly, resigned. "You stay with the horse," she instructed Rufus. "We need this buggy to be able to get out of here... after."

She got a solemn nod in response, followed by a "Be careful." Then she slid down from the carriage, fighting the bulky skirt she'd been outfitted in. With literally zero plan in her mind, she stole away across the street to the dimly lit mansion. She was well aware that she only had a few minutes, and if Flynn had done anything short of killing them, anything that could still be remedied, like if he'd tied them up to prevent them from escaping the building during the quake, she had to move on it quickly.

Approaching the house, Lucy crept quietly up to the window closest to street-level and attempted to peer inside.

She couldn't make anything out. Not that it mattered; just a moment later, the front door to the house swung open, revealing who she recognized to be Isaias Hellman himself. Not dead. Also not tied up or otherwise restrained by Flynn or anyone else.

"Can I help you, madam?" he inquired, obviously confused as to Lucy's presence.

Lucy froze. She despised this part; she was still terrible at coming up with cover stories, especially when she was on her own. "Oh, I, uh," she stammered. What could possibly account for her lurking outside someone's window at 5 am? "I'm just looking for... my dog," she spluttered. "My daughter's dog," she amended, a fleeting image of Lena frolicking with a little puppy flickering through her mind's eye. "It got away. I thought I saw him run this way," she lied.

Hellman seemed less than convinced. "I see," he allowed, before inquiring, "And where is your husband? A lady shouldn't be out at night alone."

"He's looking too," Lucy explained stiltedly. "A few streets over. He'll be here soon."

"My dear," Hellman replied, "you should come wait inside for him. It's not safe."

Lucy's eyes widened. She could not be roped into going inside. Not when they were getting down to just minutes before destruction was unleashed on the city. "Oh, no," she protested as demurely as she could. "No, I couldn't, thank you. I'll just be on my way." She turned to try to hurry back towards Rufus, only to feel a hand grip her arm.

"Nonsense," Hellman declared, tugging her arm. "Come inside. I'll have Esther telephone the police and they may be able to assist you and your husband once he arrives."

"Oh, no," Lucy objected, trying to wrench her arm away from him in any sort of way that could have been construed as proper given the era, but she was cut off.

"I insist," he declared. "It's not safe for a lady to be out."

By then, Lucy was a little more frantic, propriety be damned. She had no doubt that he was just trying to help, but... "Please, no," she protested, trying harder to wrench herself from his grasp.

His response was just to call inside to his son-in-law, who Lucy could already see rushing down the stairs along with Esther Hellman. "Sidney!" He called, "I do believe this woman must be hysterical. Please, assist me with escorting her inside."

She struggled against them, but Lucy was no match for the two larger men, even as she kicked and tried to brace herself on the front door frame. They were simply stronger than she was, and she was frantic and feeling trapped, and before she knew it, she'd been herded in through the main door. As a
last resort, she screeched out the door behind them, "Rufus!"

They half-dragged her into the living room, and they'd been standing there debating what to do with her, sending Esther to the telephone elsewhere to call the police, Isaias heading upstairs for some reason, leaving Lucy with just Sidney hanging onto her.

And then it started.

The floor jolted beneath them and a yelp slipped from Lucy's throat in spite of her having known exactly what was coming. She'd only been six years old when the Loma Prieta quake had struck, and she distinctly remembered the terror of that shaking, her mother pushing her under her office desk at Stanford, where Lucy had been waiting after school until they would have gone home to watch the World Series with her dad, who'd been a huge Giants fan.

This was just as terrifying.

The initial jolt was enough to send her, and Sidney, stumbling and off-balance. Trinkets, books, glasses – they all came tumbling down from their perches on shelves and bookcases.

And then the main quake hit.

Lucy was thrown to the floor. She heard a scream, not even registering that it was her own. A piano buckled, a chandelier crashed down, and the noise of the whole house cracking and buckling around them rang out. Clutching at her head, she curled up there on the floor, just hoping she could somehow get through unscathed.

The last thing she remembered was the sharp pain on her side as the heavy weight of a bookcase crushed her.

When she finally came to, the shaking had ceased and the dim, orange-gold light of dawn was starting to filter in. Dawn, or fire, Lucy realized with a start. She stiffened; she had to try to get out. Fire was coming eventually.

Thankfully, she was able to zero in on Sidney, who had a trickle of blood running down his face but was crawling over to her. He began to try to push the large set of shelves off her, asking urgently, "Ma'am, are you injured? Can you walk? We must get out."

Ma'am.

At the sound of that word, a shiver of icy dread washed over Lucy. Wyatt. Was he safe? For all her admonishing him to stay safe and out in the open, there she was, half crushed under a bookcase in the home of the very family they had been trying to not interfere with.

She had to get out and find him.

So she nodded numbly at Sidney. He leaned into the heavy piece of furniture, lifting it off her just enough that she could roll out from under it to relative safety. She groaned as she did so; her ribcage was tight and sore, breathing wasn't the easiest, and something jagged had dug into her leg. But she was freed. Still in the house, but at least able to move, if hindered a bit by injuries. She was certain that more aftershocks were coming; they needed to get out.

With Sidney's assistance, they crept carefully through the shattered, splintered maze of the house toward the front entryway. The entire main stairwell had buckled, and pillars in the hall were twisted, warped, and splintering under the stress of supporting the mangled home.
They'd made it halfway through the hall when a strong aftershock rattled the already-damaged home. Their erstwhile escape route – the front door – was instantaneously blocked as the entirety of the door frame gave way and disintegrated into a pile of rubble.

That escape effort thwarted, Sidney led her back through to the room they'd just left, helping her over the bookcase that she'd just been under. When they reached the windows at the front of the room – the very same one Lucy had been trying to look into, getting herself into the mess in the first place – one was reasonably clear of debris, though still had large, jagged shards of glass in the frame. Sidney warned her to stay back, taking a leg from the collapsed piano to break away the remainder of the sharp hazards. With his help, Lucy climbed through the window, tumbling down and landing in a heap. She was surprised when he didn't follow; then again, she realized, his wife would have been upstairs in a bedroom, and he must have gone to try to find her. She thought about calling after him to warn of fire, but she realized her voice would be of no use in the chaotic din that filled the air outside.

So she lay still for a moment, eyes clenched closed as if to ward off the sharp ache in her ribs and the throbbing in her leg.

But she had to find Wyatt. And Rufus.

Rufus. Rufus was definitely there.

That thought spurred Lucy into action, and she hauled herself to her feet and peered into the dusty, frenzied street before her.

"Rufus!" she choked out, squinting as she hobbled over piles of bricks from the crumbled building façade. "Rufus?"

She stumbled a little further, calling his name louder, "Rufus?"

And then there he was, flying at her with arms wide. "Lucy!" He wrapped her up in a bear hug, and in spite of the pain in her side, Lucy embraced him right back, sniffing. "Oh jeez," he muttered over her shoulder, "I thought you were-"

Lucy pulled back with a weak smile as she met his eyes. "I'm ok," she assured him, bending the truth a little.

With him found, her gaze instinctively shifted to over his shoulder, darting around in search of Wyatt. If he wasn't there yet, he should have been on his way from where Johnson lived, and arriving soon.

She looked back at Rufus, asking worriedly, "Where's Wyatt?"

But her inquiry died on her lips when she realized that he'd mirrored her exact question, speaking it simultaneously to hers.

She could almost feel the blood drain from her face. Why would Rufus think she had any idea where Wyatt was when she'd been trapped inside? "What do you mean where is he?" she demanded frantically. "Did he get here?"

Rufus looked as rattled as she felt, stammering out, "He… he did."

Lucy's heart seized as Rufus continued, "Maybe 20 minutes ago, after the first..." He trailed off as tears welled up in Lucy's eyes and began to trickle down her face. And then he confirmed, "He went in after you."
The terror that Lucy had felt while inside during the quake was nothing compared to that which gripped her upon learning that Wyatt had gone inside after her.

She whirled around to face the crumbling house just as another temblor shook the city. And along with the shaking came an explosion, flames bursting from the back of the sagging skeleton of a building, almost surely a result of the gas lines rupturing in the kitchen by the stove.

"No… Wyatt!" Lucy shrieked, sprinting for the house. "Wyatt!"

Or at least she tried to sprint; for as quickly as she'd taken off, Rufus was just as quick, grabbing at her waist from behind her. He'd just gotten a hold on her when the house creaked and sagged in one sudden lurch, flames licking at the exposed beams.

She cried out again, fighting against Rufus.

But he held fast to her, hugging her tight to him, his voice cracking as he spoke. "Lucy-" he started, "You can't-"

Lucy still flailed in his arms, pushing and kicking against him as she wailed, crying Wyatt's name over and over. Hiccupping sobs overwhelmed her, and combined with the smoke and the tightness in her ribs, she couldn't breathe.

But Wyatt was inside. He was trapped or dead and it was all her fault.

Another wave of hysterical tears hit her, even as she was already struggling to breathe.

Devastated, she staggered weakly against Rufus' restraint, collapsing backwards against him and sinking to the ground right there on the destroyed street.

Was it ironic that, to truly understand Wyatt – why he was so fixated on saving his wife, why he was willing to sacrifice himself in hopeless despair at the Alamo, why he felt so guilty about Jessica's death – she had to lose him just like he'd lost Jessica?

She'd stupidly, idiotically, recklessly, let herself get dragged into that house, let herself get caught up in the earthquake. If she hadn't been so irresponsible, Wyatt never would have gone inside. He was dead, or as good as, trapped inside the burning wreckage, because of her. It was her fault.

And now, because of her own actions, she'd never see him again. Never get to tell him how much she loved him.

Because, she realized, lying there, inconsolable on the mangled street of 1906 San Francisco, she did love him. So much, for all she'd tried to fight it and deny it. And now she'd never get to tell him.

Lucy wept bitterly, crying until she couldn't anymore, nearly catatonic as she lay draped across Rufus' lap.

If Rufus had said anything to the effect of suggesting they leave, she didn't hear it; she wouldn't have gone anyway. He'd have to drag her. For all she cared, she could just wither up and die with everyone else as the fires sweep through the city.

Time didn't mean anything anymore. She had no idea how long she stayed there, numb and devoid any emotion beyond regret and despair.

Until a voice pierced through the clamor of the quake-ravaged streets.
...wife is in there. Let me go, I gotta- Lucy! Please, my wife- Lucy!"

Lucy lifted her head groggily, not trusting that it was possible. "Wyatt?" she whispered in utter disbelief.

She struggled to sit, even as Rufus tried to help her up. But she was able to see, through the hazy smoke, two men, soot-covered and tattered, emerge from the wreckage at the side of the house.

And they were hauling a third person between them. A third person twisting and kicking against their hold on him, wailing, "No, my wife is inside, please... Lucy!"

"Wyatt," Lucy whispered again, stunned.

Instinct kicked in and she scrambled to get up, calling for him over and over as her weakened voice gathered strength. "Wyatt! Wyatt!" She tripped on her own skirt, tumbling to the ground in her haste, but she hauled herself up, tears streaming down her face.

The others must have seen her coming, for they set Wyatt down on the ground just in time for Lucy to fling herself into his arms.

She never wanted to let go, but Wyatt pushed her away, holding her at arm's length. He cradled her face, stammering and stuttering in disbelief as his gaze raked over her, as if he'd seen a ghost. "Lucy? I thought you were-" He stopped short, choking up as his own tears spilled over onto his sooty face. And then he pulled her back to him, embracing her tightly, cradling her head as he pressed a kiss to her temple.

"I'm here," Lucy cried softly into Wyatt's shoulder, "I'm here. I-" She, too, found herself choking on her words because she can't even articulate what she'd thought had happened to him because of her and just how much that knowledge had broken her.

And the one thing she knew she would be able to articulate, she couldn't let herself tell him. Not now.

She loved him; she knew it was true, and she couldn't deny it to herself anymore. But she couldn't tell him. It was one thing to admit vaguely affectionate feelings and fool around with a little kissing and touching, and even sex, but love? When he was already so tortured about doing anything with her when the prospect of getting Jessica back was ever-present? More than ever, Lucy understood Wyatt's need to right the timeline with Jessica; she couldn't put this – love – on him and get in the way of that. It would just make him feel badly about leaving her, and she couldn't cause that extra stress for him. She loved him too much to put him in that position.

They were alive. Ultimately, that's all that mattered, right? They'd get back to the present and she'd urge him to do it, do it as soon as possible, the fix to save Jessica. And to not tell her about it, so she could just live their life together, relishing what little time she'd have left with him and Lena.

Lucy shifted, burying her face against Wyatt's shoulder and hugging him closer.

She'd just heard Rufus clear his throat behind her when a sharp crack rang out from inside one of the houses near them, and three structures in a row lurched under their own weight.

Startled by the noise, Lucy jumped, her movement eliciting a hiss of pain from Wyatt.

Only then did she stop to lean back from his embrace and actually digest the state he was in. It wasn't just soot from the fire; a large swath of his pants were singed and raw, blistered flesh lay beneath up much of the length of one of his legs.
Lucy's stomach seized at the sight and she had to turn away, wailing, "Oh, god, you are hurt." She looked up, seeking out Rufus, calling for him urgently, "Rufus!"

Beside her, Wyatt attempted a weak protest, "I'm fi-" But, his face pinched in pain as he tried to move, he wasn't even able to finish speaking.

Her heart sank under the crushing guilt brought on by the knowledge that he was hurting because of her. "He's hurt," she explained hurriedly to Rufus, who had just crouched down beside them. "We have to get back to the lifeboat and get him to a doctor."

"You too," Rufus added, nodding gravely down to where her skirt, nearly shredded on one side, was tinged with the deep browns and reds of her drying blood.

Wyatt immediately turned her in his arms to allow him to see her injured side. "Jesus, Lucy," he breathed, "why didn't you say-"

"I don't care," she countered, tears springing to her eyes once again as she zeroed in on blood of his own marring his sleeve. "You wer-"

Yet another aftershock rattled the street, and, injuries be damned, Lucy clung to Wyatt as Rufus hovered over both of them.

Once the shaking subsided, Rufus straightened and declared, "Ok, executive decision. You're both hurt," he pointed out, "everything's going down in flames, quite literally, so screw Flynn. The buggy is still here," he informed them, and Lucy was glad to see, just across the wreckage of the street, not only the one horse they'd initially arrived with, but also the one that Wyatt had ridden. "I don't know how far we'll get on wheels," Rufus continued, "streets are buckled." And, looking down at Wyatt, asked, "Can you walk, man?"

He couldn't, really, as they quickly found as soon as they'd helped him up. His burned leg just wouldn't bear any weight. Lucy and Rufus helped him hobble to the carriage, Rufus more than her, to be fair, because of the ache in one side of her torso. But somehow, between the three of them, they got Wyatt up into the rear of the carriage. Lucy hauled herself up to sit with him, cradling his head in her lap and stroking his hair as Rufus slowly maneuvered the buggy through the debris-ridden streets.

And she couldn't help it; not long into the ride, despite the fact that Wyatt was alive, a fresh wave of tears overtook her, and deep, painful, hiccupping sobs rattled her body as the carriage rattled through San Francisco. For his part, Wyatt didn't try to stop her, instead just clasping one of her hands as damp streaks made their way down his own face.

They got something like two-thirds of the way back to where they'd left the lifeboat hidden before the route became completely impassable to the carriage, leaving them with just the horses as an option.

Rufus tried to insist that Lucy and Wyatt should each take one and that he could walk, but Lucy refused immediately. Wyatt's skin had taken on a sickly pallor, and she worried that his burns were already going to be terribly infected. They had to go faster than Rufus could walk. And there was no way she was going to leave Wyatt's side anyway.

With Rufus' help, before long, she was in the saddle in front of Wyatt, with him slumped against her back, his arm wrapped around her midsection. She had to grit her teeth for the duration of the ride, his grip on her too tight given the pain in her side, but he was there. That's all she cared about.
And then – finally – they reached the lifeboat. And they could get out of that godforsaken day.

Their arrival back in the present was a blur. Rufus launched himself out of the lifeboat practically before they'd gotten there, calling for medical help. Before she knew it, Lucy was whisked away to an exam room with Wyatt nowhere to be seen. She was so desperate to know that he was ok, she barely noticed all the poking and prodding and x-rays and stitching they put her through; she just needed to get to Wyatt.

Thankfully, Jiya brought in her clothes from the locker room, letting her know that Rufus was fine but she hadn't heard any news on Wyatt.

More worried than ever, Lucy threw her clothes on, barely feeling the stitches in her thigh or the ache in what she now knew to be her three broken ribs. The nurse rattled off some instructions to keep the cut clean and to refrain from too much physical activity to let her ribs heal, but Lucy was barely listening. There was something else about changing out the bandages and pain medication, and the next thing she knew, the nurse was gone, off to fetch the gauze and medication to bring back to her.

The minute she had the bandages and pills in hand, Lucy was darting out of the room, not even waiting for the rest of the nurse's instructions. She hurried down the hall in search of Wyatt, the fear of not knowing the extent of his injuries gnawing away at her. Not caring in the least who she might walk in on, she opened each of the patient room doors systematically, only to find them empty. It wasn't until she reached the last room on the left, tears threatening as the worry mounted, did she finally find him.

Lucy froze in the doorway, taken aback at the sight before her. Wyatt was on a gurney, the head end of it propped up at an angle, his eyes closed, his face still marred with dust, soot, and blood. Someone had taken him out of his burnt, tattered outfit, leaving him clad only in a generic hospital gown. His legs and feet were bare, sticking out from beneath the hem, and some sort of gauze covered large swaths of his forearm and leg, where she knew the worst of his burns to be. Her stomach lurched. They'd just come through the ordeal of Lena's hospital stay; now this?

A few tears trickled down her cheek. For all they'd been through, she'd never seen Wyatt look so small and vulnerable. Even when he'd been shot, he'd struggled through the rest of the mission to prevent the assassinations, and had come out fine in the end. And that hadn't been her fault.

This was her fault.

And it was all too much, all too overwhelming. That Lena had been terrifyingly ill and they hadn't been there for her. That Wyatt was injured because of her, that she'd been so reckless, that he'd been willing to risk his own life to rescue her. That she loved him…

It was that last bit that, despite being nearly sick with guilt about the rest of it, pushed her to slip into the room.

Lucy tried to ease the door closed behind her as quietly as possible, so as to not disturb him, but she wasn't successful. Wyatt stirred almost immediately, blinking awake and zeroing in on her. The relieved smile that spread across his face when he did so was almost too much for Lucy; how could he smile at all when she was responsible for the state he was in?

When she didn't make a move toward him, lingering instead near the door, Wyatt pushed himself further up in the bed, his smile quickly fading to a worried frown. "Hey…"

Biting her lip and just trying to hold herself together, Lucy didn't trust herself to reply without
completely breaking down into tears.

When she still didn't move, Wyatt beckoned for her, murmuring, "Lucy, c'mere."

The only reason she acquiesced and began a tentative trek across the room was because she was afraid if she didn't, he'd just climb out of bed in spite of his injuries to come get her, and the last thing she wanted to be responsible for was further pain or injury for him.

Once she was within reach, he stretched out his gauze-covered arm to tug her hip, pulling her close to the bed. "Are you ok?" he inquired, his eyes wide as he scanned her for any obvious injuries.

"Are you?" Lucy blurted out back at him, her voice cracking along with her resolve. Any attempt to stave off further crying was out the window considering the fact that, despite her being the reason for him being in that hospital bed, he was somehow more anxious about her health than his own. Tears streamed down her face as she tried in vain to protest against his misplaced concern. "Wyatt…"

But he was having none of the crying, immediately rushing to brush his thumb over her cheek to wipe them away. "Hey, hey, I'm fine," he assured her, his voice hushed. "It's just a few little burns and a fracture in some stupid little bone in my foot," he explained, nodding down the bed at where he demonstrated that he could wiggle his toes just fine. "They're trying to find one of those plastic boot things for it now."

Though it was a bit of a relief to hear that there wasn't anything that sounded like any of the life-threatening infections or sepsis she'd been imagining, it didn't change the fact that he was sitting there in front of her in a hospital bed. Still biting back tears, Lucy rested her hand on Wyatt's leg, scanning him up and down and gingerly fingering the edge of one of the gauze covering his burns. "But…"

"Lucy," he cut her off, nudging her chin to direct her gaze back to him. "I'm fine. And it's not your fault." Before she could even formulate a protest, he shook his head, continuing, "I know you think it is. It's not," he insisted. "It's not. Ok?"

Well, no, it wasn't ok, Lucy knew. She didn't believe for a second that it wasn't her fault; it was. But she also didn't want to get him agitated by arguing after what she'd already put him through. So she wiped at her face, sniffling and managing a nod to placate him.

Slipping his hand into hers, Wyatt laced his fingers through hers and gave a squeeze, reiterating his initial question. "You're ok?"

She gave a weak shrug, feeling even more guilty over the fact that she'd gotten off easy relative to him. "Hairline fractures in three ribs, but mostly bruises," she mumbled. "Stitches in my leg."

Hearing that, Wyatt dropped her hand, instead ghosting his fingertips over her torso, his expression somber. After a moment, he squeezed his eyes shut and almost visibly shook himself out of that melancholy daze, then inched himself over to the edge of his gurney, patting the now-empty space he'd made next to him on the far side of the bed. "C'mere," he said, his eyes pleading. "This side's ok."

Lucy took half a step back, shaking her head in the beginning of a weak protest, but he managed to grab her hand before she got too far. "Please?"

Her heart ached at that; she couldn't say no to him. Not when she was why he was in that stupid bed in the first place. So she reluctantly rounded the end of the gurney and let him pull her up next to him, curling herself around him and resting her head on his shoulder.

She didn't expect the onslaught of fresh tears upon doing so. But something about being so close to
him, wrapped up in his embrace for the first time since finding him on the street after she'd thought he'd been dead, was too much for her. Lucy shook, her body wracked with sobs as she buried her face in Wyatt's hospital gown.

She'd almost lost him.

She didn't ever even really have him, but she'd almost lost him.

It was her fault that she'd almost lost him, and could have died herself to boot. If she'd thought she'd felt badly after missing the onset of Lena's illness and trip to the hospital, god, it was nothing compared to the realization that she'd almost single-handedly orphaned the little girl.

And she loved him. It had taken her by surprise, but the ferocity of the anguish she'd felt upon hearing he was in that burning, collapsing building couldn't have been attributed to anything but that. For as much as their relationship wasn't real, somehow these very real emotions had managed to develop, and the words had been threatening to spill out since she'd thrown herself at him after he'd emerged, alive, from the house.

But she couldn't put that on him. Not when she was already the reason he'd been put through the wringer, and more, today. Not when she knew, because of who he was, he'd only be left feeling guilty that he didn't feel the same for her, for sad, pathetic Lucy.

God, she was pathetic, wasn't she? Sobbing all over him when he was the one dealing with worse, physically at least. She let out a sniffle, reaching up to wipe her eyes. But in shifting, she somehow managed to put pressure on those cracked ribs, leading her to wince in pain.

Wyatt's hand froze against her head, where Lucy hadn't even realized that he'd been stroking her hair softly for the entirety of her tearful meltdown. "You ok?" he asked, alarmed.

"Just sore. It's fine," she insisted, nodding sheepishly. "You have it worse than I do."

He chuckled, resuming his absent threading of his fingers through her hair. "At least I didn't get shot this time," he pointed out. "But yeah," he continued, only half-serious, "we're both a little banged up; think we can get Lena to take it easy on us for the next few days?"

In spite of everything, Lucy couldn't help but let out a sniffly laugh at the thought of trying to rationally present that logic to a barely-verbal, squirmy 14-month-old. "My mom can help if she doesn't," she pointed out, a wan smile making its way across her face.

Wyatt fell silent for a moment after that, but Lucy felt him press his face to her hair, even feeling him smile against her before he spoke up again. "Ok, here's the deal," he declared. "You're busted up. I'm busted up. Lena's still got spots." He hugged her closer to him as he continued, "I say when we're all good to go again, we just bail on all this shit for a few days."

Lucy wasn't really sure what she'd been expecting him to say, but that wasn't it. Careful not to put too much pressure on her injured ribs, she propped herself up on her elbow and turned to face him with a questioning gaze.

"It's been what, a month?" he postulated, "Almost? Everything's been crazy. We need a break."

A soft snort escaped from Lucy of its own volition. That was just when they'd shown up to a world that included wedding rings and a daughter; crazy was a lot longer ago than that. "Try all the way back to the Hindenburg," she scoffed, swiping once more at the last of her drying tears.

"Ok, yeah," Wyatt acknowledged with a snort of his own. "But crazier lately," he pointed out.
"Even Lena's been cooped up in the hospital and now at home. So," he proposed, "we all take a few days, go to the beach, camping, a resort, Disneyland, New York City, whatever you want. We need a break."

Lucy's breath caught in her throat at Wyatt's words. She couldn't deny that getting away from the madness of work for a little while would be more than welcome. Nor could she deny the little thrill that raced up her spine at the notion of the three of them doing something together as a family, or as a family in something more than just the bare minimum survival-mode they seem to have been existing in since getting dropped in this timeline. Especially given the fact that Wyatt was the one suggesting it, giving her a little hope that even though he wouldn't return her feelings, he at least wasn't holding his injuries from the fire against her.

"…she might like the beach," she suddenly heard herself admitting dreamily, recalling Lena in the yard before the mess that was 1906. "She loved the little pool."

"So we do the beach," Wyatt agreed, grinning at her. "With a boardwalk. Your mom can come too. No time jumps. Just a whole lot of nothing besides the water, sand castles, taking Lena on the dinky little kid rides, junk food-" he mused before cutting himself off with a smirk. "And your mom can get her own hotel room and take Lena at night so I can have you to myself."

Never mind that they'd left the sex issue up in the air or that she'd nearly gotten him killed because of her own reckless stupidity, Lucy felt her cheeks warm at his racy insinuation. Despite the realization of the depth of her own feelings for him, she still found herself taken aback by his blatant, voiced acknowledgement – this time, or any other time he'd done the same – that they were something, despite the Jessica issue.

Lucy immediately mentally scolded herself for bringing Jessica to mind. Had she not just vowed to herself the night before to just not think about that? Had what they'd just been through not showed her that she should be glad to have Wyatt alive at all? More than ever, she needed to just be happy in the moment, for whatever time she had with him and Lena. So she drew on the memory of them in the little pool in the yard yesterday, picturing the two of them doing the same at some beach somewhere, Lena grabbing fistfuls of sand with her pudgy little hands, sitting between Wyatt's legs. And she couldn't help but smile wistfully at the prospect of such a sight. "That sounds really nice," she confessed.

He grinned back down at her, and before Lucy realized what was happening, his lips were on hers for the first time since before the earthquake. The first time since she'd realized, or maybe just finally admitted, exactly how much she truly felt for him. And while she'd promised herself that she wouldn't speak the words aloud and burden him with that knowledge, that didn't mean she couldn't somehow try to convey that love through her actions. So she leaned up into him, coaxing his mouth open to hers, pouring her heart into the kiss, clutching at Wyatt's flimsy hospital gown while taking care to avoid his injuries.

It wasn't until a throat cleared behind them that they came up for air, and even then, neither one of them looked back to the actual source of the noise. Rather, Lucy pulled back, dazed, only to find Wyatt gazing down at her, looking transfixed.

Another cough behind them finally got them to look up sheepishly, and Lucy reluctantly slid off the edge of Wyatt's gurney as the doctor on staff crossed the room, gray plastic walking casts in hand.

The first was slightly too big, hitting just high enough on Wyatt's leg to contact the gauze covering a smaller burn below his knee. He immediately reached for Lucy, gripping her hand tightly as he hissed in pain. Lucy teared up all over again, and not because of his too-tight grip. She hated that he was being put through this.
It was a relief to them both when the second cast fit much better, not putting any pressure on any of the burns.

Like her, Wyatt was given instructions on how to keep his wounds clean along with orders to see an orthopedic surgeon within a few days to get his foot looked at.

And then it was just the two of them again.

As much as Lucy was once again hesitant to leave him, the team treating him had stripped Wyatt of all his clothes, and he made it clear – with that trademark smirk of his – that he had no intention of hobbling around with his ass hanging out of a hospital gown.

So Lucy hurried to the men's locker room to retrieve his clothes, grateful for the dumb luck of him having been wearing shorts at their impromptu barbecue; wrestling jeans on over a walking cast would have been much more of an ordeal.

When she returned to him, it was pretty obvious that he wouldn't be able to dress himself, at least not easily. Helping him brought tears to Lucy's eyes for what felt like the thousandth time in just a few hours. Somehow – easing boxers up his legs over the cast and gauze, maneuvering his sleeve over the burns on his arm – felt more intimate than anything else they'd done, sex or otherwise.

Wyatt must have felt it too; as soon as he was dressed, he gently pulled Lucy to him and drew her into a desperate kiss. She melted into him, though taking care to avoid his bandages as she clung to him.

He pulled back before Lucy would have liked, taking a deep, shuddery breath as he rested his forehead on hers.

Then, in an about-face, he backed up from her with a grin as he slid his hand into hers. "Come on," he smirked, nodding at the door to the exam room, "Let's go get Lena."

Lucy managed a watery smile and gave his hand a squeeze before leading him out to the car. She drove, given the awkward plastic boot on his right leg, and it wasn't long before they had a bubbly, babbling Lena in the backseat.

And as they made their way home, Wyatt turned around as best he could in the passenger seat, facing Lena and using a goofy voice and faces to tell her all about the beach vacation they were going to take soon. Of course, Lena had no idea what he was talking about, but it didn't stop her from squealing at her Daddy's antics.

The sweet ache in Lucy's chest when witnessing that scene had nothing to do with her fractured ribs; she loved their little haphazard family, and she wasn't going to take whatever time she had left with them for granted.

**TBC…**
insane. Thank you so much to all of you who have stuck with me this far! And we're not done yet! Seriously, thanks so much for all the feedback along the way – knowing that this story is well-liked has definitely been motivation to get back to this as soon as humanly possible.

(Also, Johnson and Hellman, and Hellman's family, were real. I'm sure I didn't get all the specifics of them and the quake accurate and realistic, but I tried to get close. That's another reason this took so long – research.)
Hello again! No, it's not some weird Groundhog Day loop you're stuck in – I did just update, and literally a year after the last one. Two years after starting to post it here. All on 2/2. Groundhog Day!

Anyway, I'm the worst! Seriously! I really NEVER intended for there to be so long a gap between chapters, never mind a full year. Suffice it to say that 2018 was an incredibly weird and busy, once-in-a-lifetime sort of year for me in real life (plus 2019 is already giving it a run for its money in weirdness), and it was always easier to spit out little one shots and such rather than to get fully immersed in this beast, which is really what it requires at this point. So I apologize for this taking forever. To those still here reading and reviewing, thanks so much for sticking with me.

And, um, the whole Lucy-thinking-Wyatt-was-dead-then-finally-admitting-she-loves-him? The NBC finale totally stole that from the last chapter, right? ;)

Also, whoops, in re-reading my previous chapters, I realized I mistakenly have had Lena in a forward-facing car seat. She's still too little for that and would still be facing backwards. And I called Carol 'Carolyn' for a while there. I dunno. I was still new to being fic-level obsessed with the show when I started writing this, what did I know?

Thanks to qwertygal for the beta on this part. She didn't edit the final version, so lingering issues are mine.

In the car, Wyatt turned back around to face forward, falling quiet as Lena babbled to herself. And as Lucy rounded a corner on their drive back to the house, his stomach seized and he squeezed his eyes tightly shut. Telling Lena about the trip they'd be taking to the beach had to wait; he could only keep up the cheery front for her, and for Lucy's, benefit for so long. Not after what had just happened.

But closing his eyes offered no real relief. Not when all he could see in his mind was the fire raging around him as he'd frantically, helplessly sought Lucy out in the rubble of the collapsing row house.

He forced his eyes open again, grateful for the harmless sight of Lucy maneuvering the traffic and the swarm of school buses they'd found themselves in. Wyatt shook off the haze of his dismal thinking and swiped at his phone.

Lena may not have had any idea what he was talking about when he started rattling off the beach options that he found on Google, and Lucy had the driving to focus on, but at least it kept him distracted for the rest of the ride.

By the time they made it back to the house, it was late morning. Lena was on some semblance of her normal schedule, having already had breakfast and her late morning snack, and, having slept a bit in the car on the way home, was clearly all for skipping her full nap and was raring to go for playtime.
Wyatt and Lucy, however, had essentially been up all night and hadn't eaten since their impromptu barbecue with Rufus and Jiya the evening before. And, oh yeah, not to mention having been through a literal earthquake, and all of the physical trauma and emotional turmoil that had gone right along with it.

With Wyatt meant to stay off his foot and rest, he begrudgingly obliged Lucy's direction to go sit on the couch while she figured out something to eat for lunch from the previous night's leftovers. Lena got parked on the floor near Wyatt, where she immediately took to meticulously moving some of her Duplo blocks from their bin to the floor and back to the bin, for reasons known only to her.

Watching Lena kept Wyatt amused for all of about thirty seconds before the twinges of panic crept back in. Logically, he knew that Lucy was right there, barely more than a room away in the kitchen. But after everything from earlier that morning, not having her in his sight wasn't sitting well.

So he hauled himself up off the couch, hissing softly at Lena, who cheerfully obliged when he beckoned, toddling after him, block in hand, as he limped his way to the kitchen.

"Ma!" she yelped, waving the prized block at Lucy once they rounded the corner from the foyer to the kitchen.

For her part, Lucy managed a grin at Lena first, and affectionately brushed her hand over the little girl's head as she wandered past. But the smile for Lena quickly turned into an expression of mildly annoyed confusion at Wyatt.

"What are you doing?" She admonished. "You shouldn't be walking if you don't need to. I'm just grabbing the salads and I was going to be right back." But for some reason, she quickly backtracked from her mild scolding, instead fretting, "Unless you don't want this. We have other stuff, even cereal or something…"

It was all Wyatt could do to refrain from wrapping her in his arms and just holding her, even as she just stood there in the kitchen, benignly holding a bowl of fruit salad.

He'd almost let her die.

When he'd felt the sheer power of the ground shaking beneath him back in 1906, Wyatt had known immediately that he never should have gone along with the plan to split up from Rufus and Lucy. Rittenhouse be damned, especially when they really had no idea whether they were even on the right track or not in terms of who Flynn's targets could have been. He never should have left his team. Ever. So he'd picked himself up from the ground, given cursory instructions to Walter Johnson, and, horse gone missing, just taken off at full-tilt on foot to the intersection to which Lucy and Rufus had gone. The dread had swelled the entire race across town, and the worst of his fears had been confirmed when he'd found Rufus waiting in the buckled, burning street.

Rufus. But no Lucy.

He'd stopped only long enough to get confirmation from Rufus of which building Lucy had gone into before sprinting in after her, flames, explosions, and aftershocks doing nothing to deter him.

It hadn't even been a conscious choice, to go in after her. It had been like autopilot, simply no other option.

But why? Why did he care so much? Feel so much?

The worst part? He couldn't even blame himself and his being weak enough to give into his stupid burgeoning feelings for her lately. Because even before... everything, she'd been taken by Flynn,
locked up by Holmes in Chicago. And the fear, the guilt, the terror over her being gone – it had been there then too.

Actually, even worse, if he was being honest with himself, was that this time had been different. At least when Lucy had disappeared with Flynn and Holmes, there had been some hope. Even if only a tiny little sliver… Knowing that she was so damn smart, so brave and feisty, that she had a chance of getting herself out of whatever situation that whoever had put her in.

But the earthquake? Wyatt knew how that had ended for far too many people, and Lucy's ability to outsmart captors wasn't going to do her any good when it came to shoddy construction and the violent shaking of the earth. And he supposed that's why it had felt different from those other times – this time, he'd known what would almost surely have happened if he didn't get her out of there in time.

Even now, knowing that she was perfectly safe, if a little bruised and battered, he couldn't shake the feeling of needing her near him, needing to have that visual reassurance that she was alive and well.

And it wasn't as if he hadn't already come to grips, on some level, with his feelings for her. They were more than he was comfortable with, by far. But that discomfort had been eased somewhat by his realization the other night that, if he wasn't on the trip to right things with Jessica, he wouldn't have memories of this life with Lucy. Since it wouldn't matter in the end, he was a little more easily able to justify to himself the sex, the touching, the holding, the kissing.

Still, needing her in his sight or reach at all times? That was a bit much, right? Even though it was his fault he'd left her alone beforehand, left her to get trapped in that building. Yeah, still too much, he told himself. For Lucy surely, considering he was practically smothering her, but for him too – he shouldn't need her this much.

So Wyatt worked up the restraint to stammer an excuse of, "Um... bathroom," nodding at the hallway off the kitchen.

"Oh," Lucy muttered. But then she frowned, worry etched across her face as she regarded him. "... do you need help, or..." she finally offered tentatively, trailing off before adding, "And yes, I realize how weird it sounds to say that, but if you need-"

"I'll be fine," Wyatt cut her off, then immediately felt guilty all over again for being harsh with her when she backed off, a surprised expression on her face.

Fuck, he was messed up.

Feelings for Lucy that were way too intense in the first place, with a boatload of guilt on top of that for having left her alone with Rufus so that she could end up nearly dying in that burning, collapsing building? Promising some farce of a happy family vacation, as if it could somehow make up for what he'd let happen to her? An overprotective instinct gone into overdrive to the point that he needed to be within five feet of her at all times? Only to snap at her when his first effort in suppressing that urge – heading to the bathroom alone – was nearly thwarted by her unfailing kindness in offering to help him?

Wyatt took a deep breath. Bathroom. Because he wasn't going to figure out his too-strong feelings just standing there.

So he forced himself to leave Lucy and Lena behind momentarily, hobbling the short distance to the bathroom just beyond the kitchen. He quickly managed to use the toilet easily enough by himself considering that no clothes actually had to come on or off over the bandages and burns. But when
washing his hands, he caught a glimpse of himself in the mirror.

Even ignoring the dark circles – lack of sleep, stress of the jump, and the ever-present and building emotional turmoil over just what he felt for Lucy compounded under his eyes – the nurses at Mason that had attended to him had obviously thoroughly cleaned his cuts and burns when treating the injuries, but in the rush to address the actual medical needs, it had meant they’d foregone any other cleaning up. Wyatt could still see the smudges of soot, smears of blood marring his cheeks and forehead. He quickly ducked his head and splashed water on his face, scrubbing furiously with his fingers in his need to erase as much as he could of the ill-fated jump the night before. He knew that he wasn’t the only one feeling the weight of guilt over injuries, reminders of which were inescapable for the time being given his boot and their bandages. But the last thing Lucy needed was even more of a reminder of the fiery quake streaked all over him.

Satisfied that at least his face was clean – he’d have to figure out the logistics of a real shower later – and the unsettling, urgent need to be near Lucy rapidly creeping back in, Wyatt headed back in the direction of the living room.

Where the sight that greeted him was almost too much.

Lucy sat perched in the middle of the couch, Lena balanced on the leg that she hadn't gotten stitches in. And while Lucy was clearly eating her own lunch, she paused, sharing a bit of cucumber with Lena. Who squealed and gobbled it right up.

Wyatt felt a tug in his chest at the sight, even more so when, after getting handed a bit of pineapple, Lena caught sight of him in the doorway and grinned widely, waving at him after shoving the next bite in her mouth.

They were fine, he reminded himself, taking a deep breath before heading back to his seat. Lucy was fine. Lena was fine, her rash already fading. And he was fine.

Everything was fine. He was just going to sit on the couch, foot up, like the doctor instructed. Ice the foot every once in a while. On the couch next to Lucy. No big deal. All fine.

Until, once finished eating, and having set Lena back down with her blocks, Lucy began to gather up the lunch dishes, announcing halfheartedly, "I guess I should try and tackle some of those boxes."

Caught off-guard, a tightness suddenly squeezing his chest, Wyatt sat up straighter and followed Lucy’s gaze through the doorway to the significant pile of plastic bins and cardboard boxes in the dining room. "What?" he stammered.

"I don't even know what's in some of them," she sighed, sounding reluctant. "We had packed them before-"

Wyatt didn't even give her a chance to finish her sentence, over there in the dining room suddenly seeming way too far from where he had to stay on the couch. "No, Lucy-" he started, not even really knowing why, exactly, he was protesting. But thankfully, the bandages adorning his own arm gave him a reasonable excuse, bringing to mind the fact that she wasn't physically unscathed either. "Come on, you're hurt too," he reminded her. "You don't need to be lifting stuff with broken ribs."

She just shot him a small smile, rolled her eyes, and gathered the rest of their dishes. "Barely broken," she pointed out, then nodded at Lena. "And I can carry her fine, so-"

"Just stay?"

He didn't blame Lucy for eyeing him curiously when he cut her off with his plaintive request. Hell,
he'd eye himself curiously if it were possible. She'd only been going into the next room. Where he could see her.

But something in him needed her nearby. After what had almost happened…

And it couldn't have been too crazy to be thinking that way, Wyatt told himself, because for as much as she seemed to have been thrown off by his request, Lucy did set their used plates back down on the coffee table to carefully ease herself down next to his uninjured side, much as she had back in Mason's exam room.

It was fine. It was fine for him to be a little rattled; Lucy clearly was too. It was fine.

More than fine, really, when Lucy curled up against him, and rather quickly nodded off. Wyatt was glad for that; it had been such a demanding trip, physically and mentally, and they hadn't slept the night before. She needed the sleep and he was glad he'd been able to convince her to stay on the couch.

Except he'd missed out on just as much sleep as she had. So, with her by his side and none of the worry of her being out of his sight, Wyatt was momentarily calm enough that slumber began to close in on him as well.

But as he started to nod off, he knew he couldn't just leave Lena to wander around unsupervised. Luckily, it was nearing her afternoon nap time anyway, and she was rubbing at her tired eyes with her little fists. So, ever so carefully, Wyatt eased Lucy off him, leaving her leaning against the back of the couch momentarily. And, mindful of just how far her crib was from him, Wyatt carefully scooped Lena up with his good arm and set her in the small playpen in the corner of the living room. It was just easier to not attempt climbing the stairs in his boot, he rationalized as he coaxed the little girl into lying down with her fuzzy blanket. He was just being practical. Not insanely overprotective and way too attached. Not at all.

Once he was satisfied that Lena was starting to doze, her thumb planted firmly in her mouth and the soft blanket up against her cheek, he turned back to Lucy, still fast asleep on the couch.

Wyatt tried not to think about it, tried not to think about how the whole near-death, scary injury and illness thing, for both Lucy and Lena, had shaken him so much. It was fine.

He settled himself back down on the couch and gingerly reached for Lucy, bringing her against his side once more as she slept. She stirred a tiny bit, but only to nuzzle his chest and snuggle in closer as he wrapped his arm over her shoulder.

And if her doing so let Wyatt breathe a little easier, so what? It was fine. It was normal. He wasn't crazy or smothering. It was fine.

It was with that thought that he let himself drift off to sleep too.

But things were very much not fine when he blinked awake to the late afternoon sun streaming in the windows.

Panic seized him. Lucy wasn't next to him. He peered across the room, his pulse quickening. Lena wasn't in the playpen. They weren't there. They just… weren't there.

His heart racing, Wyatt yanked his booted foot from where it had been propped up on the coffee table, and pushed himself up off-

"Hi!" Lena chirped.
Wyatt gulped for air as he sank back down onto the couch.

Lucy came into view from where she'd just descended the stairs in the foyer, Lena in her arms, the little girl waving at him and squealing as Lucy gave her tummy a little tickle.

"Someone needed a diaper change," Lucy informed him, exaggeratedly wrinkling her nose for Lena's sake, as if Wyatt hadn't just had a mini-heart attack in waking to find both of them gone.

Wyatt swallowed hard and managed a nod and a wan smile in response. They were fine. Well, maybe he wasn't. He was fucking crazy for flipping out every time Lucy was out of his sight. Fuck.

He shook his head slightly, as if trying to rattle back into place whatever it was that was askew and making him act so irrationally. He cared for Lucy, he did. But, as if it wasn't enough to be warring over those feelings and not wanting to have them given that he needed to get Jess back, this new level of needing to be near Lucy was bordering on insane.

Not that that stopped him from relaxing as soon as Lucy was back at his side on the couch, Lena in her lap and a book to read to her.

Wyatt tried not to think about it.

In time, Lena grew bored with the book and wriggled her way off Lucy's lap to head back to her toys on the floor. Not wanting it to be an excuse for Lucy to get up and try to leave again, Wyatt quickly flipped on the TV and headed right for the History Channel. She smirked at him knowingly when the commercial gave way to a well-timed Civil War documentary, but it worked; she tucked her feet up under her and leaned into his side.

And when afternoon faded into night and Lucy had foregone the documentaries in favor of an airing of Apollo 13, still curled up against his side, Wyatt made it easy for all of them and simply tapped away on his phone to order pizza delivery for dinner.

He managed to hold back from following Lucy to the door when the food arrived, though his anxiety level rose yet again when, before eating, she ducked out once more with Lena for another diaper change.

He hated how relieved he felt when they reappeared, plates, napkins, and other things from the kitchen in hand.

He hated even more the anxious tension in the pit of his stomach when, after Lena ended up wearing a whole lot of pizza sauce, Lucy had to disappear upstairs to give the little girl a bath before bedtime.

And he really, really hated, once she finally came back downstairs, Lena already tucked in for the night, Lucy's announcement that she herself was going to go take a shower upstairs. And that she'd come back and help him shower and with his re-bandaging once she was done. He loathed the implication that he'd be taking his shower in the downstairs bathroom. The implication that he wasn't to venture up the stairs in his god awful walking boot. That he'd be relegated to the couch once again. Alone.

Like hell was that going to happen. Not after last night. Not after what had happened. And not when the separation of Lucy being gone for the twenty minutes it had taken to clean Lena up had felt like torture.

So as soon as he heard the water of the shower running, Wyatt headed for the stairs. It was slow-going and clumsy, always having to lead with one foot rather than both, but soon enough, he'd made his way up, and without aggravating any sort of pain in his foot.
Of course that just left him anxiously and awkwardly pacing in the dumb boot outside the bathroom, that tense twinge of not being close enough to Lucy still gnawing at his gut.

He busied himself with visiting Lena's room, then their room, and back to Lena's. He was mid-return to the master bedroom when Lucy emerged from the bathroom, clad only in a loose t-shirt and little pajama shorts not nearly long enough to conceal the bandage on her own thigh.

Wyatt grimaced at the reminder of the bloody gash she'd been marred with.

But he didn't get to dwell on that for very long; right away upon noticing him, Lucy reprimanded, "What are you doing upstairs?"

What, indeed. Certainly not practically stalking her again because he couldn't stand the thought of being apart for even a second…

"The showerhead," Wyatt managed to stammer, eternally grateful that an actual, reasonable excuse had popped into his head right when he needed it. "This one's the removable one. I figured it would be easier with-" he elaborated, nodding down at his own more expansive set of bandages.

He must have sounded convincing enough considering that Lucy's initially skeptical glance faded quickly.

The showerhead did make things relatively easy and quick once he was in the shower, but not without some tricky and embarrassing moments in the bathroom first. Much as she'd had to help dress him at Mason, with one of Wyatt's arms being part of his set of injuries, Lucy was the one to ease his clothes down his arms and legs over the bandages, to slip the boot off his fractured foot. And the one to help brace him as he stepped, bare naked before her, into the shower on that same injured foot. They decided he'd leave the old bandages on in the shower, letting the tape get wet and easier for Lucy to remove when she helped him re-dress the wounds after he'd dried off.

It was the weirdest damn thing ever, Wyatt decided as he quickly shampooed the last of the soot out of his hair, having Lucy there in the room as he bathed. He'd told her it wasn't necessary, but she'd insisted, in case the whole standing on one foot in a slippery tub turned out badly.

It shouldn't have been weird; they'd certainly seen each other nude before, and while doing a whole lot more with each other than simply taking a shower. But somehow this, in spite of being able to hide behind the shower curtain, had him feeling more vulnerable than any other time he could remember with her.

His solution? Finish the stupid shower as quickly as possible. Of course that still led to her helping him out and toweling off. But he hurried her through the motions as best he could, wrapped the towel around his waist, shoved his foot back in the boot, and hobbled into the hall and back to the bedroom.

Lucy wasn't far behind, bearing the array of first-aid accoutrements given to them by the nurses back at Mason Industries. She nudged Wyatt towards the foot of the bed, murmuring for him to sit there.

The shower turned out to be nothing compared to Lucy attending to his wounds.

Wyatt let out the breath he hadn't realized he'd been holding when she peeled off the last of the damp, used bandages. It was… oddly intimate, sitting there, wearing only a towel, Lucy's hands oh-so careful as she navigated the antiseptic cleansing wipes, the ointment, the gauze, and the tape to gently re-dress the burns on his forearm, thigh, and shin. Her methodical, delicate touch was almost hypnotic and Wyatt was so, so grateful that she was there to do it for him. Alive.
So could he really be faulted for, once she finished the last of the taping, pulling her in desperately for a kiss?

She pulled away from him far too quickly for his liking, though she hovered close, their breath mingling as he awaited her next move. Relief surged over him when she leaned in once more, pressing her lips to his, teasing him with her tongue.

What Wyatt hadn't anticipated was her hand creeping under the towel he still wore wrapped around his waist, brushing cautiously over him.

"Lucy," he breathed, pulling reluctantly away from the kiss. For as much as his body had reacted instantly to her touch, and for as much as he wanted to lose himself in her again, to know that she was safe and whole and in his arms, he couldn't see how they could manage it given the extent and locations of his injuries. "We can't," he protested half-heartedly. "With the burns, I--"

"I know," she acknowledged softly, her gaze directed down toward her hand. But it didn't deter her. To Wyatt's surprise, instead of backing away, she tugged the towel from his waist and tentatively wrapped her hand around him. "Is this ok though?" she murmured, pressing a kiss to his bare shoulder as she sat perched next to him.

All he could manage was a shaky gulp as he nodded, lost in the sensation as she slid her hand up and down.

His eyes falling closed, Wyatt allowed himself a few seconds of just reveling in the feel of her hand on him. But when he opened them once more, ready to reach for her, needing to kiss her, needing her, she was sliding off the edge of the bed, carefully maneuvering herself around his boot, all the while never losing her grip on him.

Only when she settled on her knees in front of him did her intent become fully clear to Wyatt.

"Lucy, no," he protested automatically. "You don't have to…" He'd let her get hurt; he was the one getting eaten away by the weight of the guilt for what had almost happened to her. He needed to take care of her. If anyone should have been doing anything along these lines, he should have been doing this for her.

But his protests fell away with a soft "It's ok" from Lucy, and then the feel of her taking him in.

They did almost die earlier that day, but Wyatt would swear he was dying all over again. Her mouth on him, her lips, her tongue, the feel of her silky hair in his fingers, still damp from the shower as he ran his hands over her head, helpless to do anything else but just revel in the sensations of Lucy.

It shouldn't have taken him by surprise just how quickly she had him at the edge. But with the telltale sensation rapidly threatening to overtake him, the last thing he wanted to do was take her by surprise.

He managed to warn her with a strangled "Lucy-" as he gripped her shoulder, pushing her away with one hand while haphazardly grabbing for the bandaging scraps with the other.

And then, with one of her hands still wrapped around him, he gave into the feel of just having her near, and spilled himself into his fistful of gauze pad wrappers.

Wyatt was still trying to catch his breath and wrap his mind around the turn of events that had gotten them there when he felt Lucy loosen her grip and finally release him.

"...you didn't have to..." she hedged, breaking the uneasy silence and nodding subtly in the direction of the less-than-pleasant handful Wyatt now held.
"Well, it would have been… easier," she shrugged, a self-conscious blush tingeing her cheeks. "And I don't mind."

Only then did Wyatt pick up on the insinuations in her words. "Not-" he started, grimacing first at his one hand, then using his other to gesture more broadly to indicate the bigger picture of where the bandaging session had ended up. "Why?"

She just shrugged once more, shyly tucking a strand of drying hair behind her ear as she dodged his gaze and pulled herself to her feet. "I wanted… to do something for you."

Wyatt shook his head as she walked past him to the side of the bed, hating that not only was she still feeling responsible when he'd been the one to leave her alone to go in the house and get hurt in the first place, but hating also that somehow she'd turned that feeling responsible into somehow feeling that she owed him… anything, never mind a blowjob. With a sigh, he tugged the towel back into place over his lap and protested, "You didn't need to-"

"I wanted to," Lucy insisted, suddenly back at his side and handing him a few tissues as she sat gingerly beside him. "Wyatt, I know you don't want me taking any blame for your injuries," she continued softly, "but you only went in because I did."

"Lucy…” he chided with a sigh, wiping up his hand. Typical stubborn Lucy, refusing to accept that he’d only gone in because he’d left her alone, essentially letting her go in by herself.

But she cut him off before he could elaborate on that point. "But even…” she started hesitantly. "Even without this," she continued, nodding down to where her fingertips ghosted over the edges of the bandage on his arm, "…I know you have PTSD."

Caught off guard, Wyatt's head jerked up and he met her gaze questioningly. His protest was immediate and reflexive, "I don't-"

"You do," she maintained, adding quietly, "I do too. From the car accident. You know I do," she continued more strongly, "and you've known since Germany." She dropped her hand away from him, wringing her fingers together and wordless for a moment. "And I know that's what got to you at the Alamo," she finally said. "I heard what you said about you being the only one who got out. And you were… You were having flashbacks that day. In Texas. Weren't you?"

Wyatt couldn't help but meet her piercing eyes for a split second. How did she know that?

But for as badly as he felt about lying to her, admitting to that weakness wasn't something he was quite feeling up for. He dropped his gaze, remaining silent with only an evasive shrug as a response.

He was grateful that Lucy didn't push that any further.

He was less pleased when she spoke up softly a moment later.

"Yesterday…” Lucy broached, sounded tentative. "I heard you calling for your wife."

His pulse suddenly speeding up, Wyatt tensed.

His wife? Had he? Said that? The only thing he had actually registered during the whole ordeal was...
the pure terror of not being able to find Lucy as the flames had licked at his clothes and the building had creaked and crumbled around him.

Whether Lucy noticed his reaction or not, she just continued, adding, "I know it wasn't exactly the same, but I know that looking for me had to have brought back memories of searching for Jessica when she was missing. You were re-living it," she asserted. "Looking for her.'

Wyatt's mind reeled. Re-living Jess? His instinctive reaction was to correct Lucy, to deny that PTSD had anything to do with… anything, really. But he found that he couldn't bring himself to contradict her assertion.

She continued regardless, "I hate that I brought that on you. I'm sorry," she apologized, her voice shaky. "And even today, I can tell you're worried every time I'm not in sight, and I know that must be the same thing. I'm sorry. I just wanted to…” She bit her lip. "…take your mind off her," she eventually whispered with a contrite shrug. "A distraction. I don't know."

Not that Wyatt really heard much of what she was saying.

Now, he would never deny that those days of not knowing where Jessica was, and subsequently finding her mangled body in the brush off Portero Road, were the among the worst in his life. Yesterday's earthquake and the search for Lucy now had to rank pretty high too.

But he hadn't made the connection.

Until Lucy did.

Was that it? The PTSD that he was so often able to ignore, hide, and keep under wraps, even in those therapy sessions he'd been required to do after his tours in the Middle East?

Rattled by the possibility, Wyatt couldn't quite process everything flooding his mind. Was Lucy right? Was the unsettled feeling he'd had all day because of Jess?

Thinking along those lines – of Jess – left him suddenly rather uncomfortable, essentially naked, only a towel draped loosely over him, with someone who wasn't her. He slid away from Lucy on the bed. He couldn't be near her. He needed to think, needed to try to wrap his mind around it being Jess that was affecting him right now.

"It's… ok," he managed to stammer in Lucy's direction, knowing she was probably wanting and needing some sort of response. "It's fine," he repeated, shaking his head. "It's not- It's ok." Really, he didn't even know what he was saying, he just needed to not be near Lucy. Thankfully, the crumpled wad of wrappers and tissues still in his grip gave him the excuse he needed. He held up his hand, lamely gesturing to the mess and the bathroom, muttering, "I gotta…"

He tried to ignore the twinge in his stomach when Lucy sniffled at his about-face, wiped the beginnings of tears away from her eyes, and plastered on a forced, wan smile. "Right," she agreed, nodding. "Yeah, go…clean up. I, uh," she mumbled, "realized that we probably left out the pizza. I'm gonna go put it in the fridge."

It may have been an excuse, for all Wyatt knew, but then she was gone.

And, for everything racing through his mind, he still had to bite back the reflex to call her back and keep her by his side even as he paradoxically needed space from her.

Fuck, he was so screwed up.
Instead of calling after Lucy, Wyatt managed to grip the towel around his waist in one hand and then shuffle to the bathroom to wash up. Scrubbing his hands, he replayed Lucy's words in his head.

Honestly, he didn't remember anything like what she was describing – the flashbacks, the re-living the frantic search for Jess. But maybe it had happened and he'd already blocked it out…

It made complete sense, right? Being on edge ever since getting back from 1906? The guilt over leaving Lucy alone? The panic that gripped him every time she was out of sight?

It's exactly how he could see himself having behaved if they'd found Jess alive; he never would have wanted her to leave his side again after the torture of her having been missing.

That had to be it, he told himself as he hobbled back to the bedroom. It had to be. The stomach-churning terror he'd felt inside that crumbling mansion in San Francisco? It had been the terror of finding Lucy the same way he'd found Jessica. Everything he was experiencing since 1906… it wasn't some extension of having slept with Lucy, having developed feelings for her that were far too strong for comfort. No. It was just re-living having lost Jessica. It was actually all about Jess.

And all of it would be resolved once he got her back.

Lucy still hadn't returned to the bedroom yet, which was more than fine with Wyatt. In one sense, anyway. Knowing why he was feeling the way he did still didn't lessen the need to have her nearby. Which was incredibly frustrating.

Back at Mason Industries, he'd needed her help to get his clothes on over the dumb boot on his foot, but given that he'd be taking it off to sleep anyway, he yanked off the Velcro straps and, ignoring the ache of the broken bone when he put weight on it, tugged on his own boxers and pajama pants. He pulled on a t-shirt and crept back to the bed.

At least the combination of his side of the bed and the side of his body that had taken the brunt of the burns meant that it was unlikely that he'd end up subconsciously rolling over and wrapping himself around her again.

So, hearing the faint sounds of Lucy making her way up back the stairs, Wyatt curled up on his good side, facing the wall. He may have needed her nearby, but he did not need another conversation that was likely to set his head spinning again.

Because she was right, wasn't she? Of course he felt something for Lucy and was wracked with guilt over what had happened in 1906. But this extreme reaction, the anxiety when she wasn't close to him, it was just an overreaction because of what he'd gone through with Jess. That's all. And, like so many times since the mess of the timeline switch began, he found himself begging for sleep to just take over and give him a respite from everything that was going on.

Not that it felt like sleep would be coming anytime soon…

He could hear Lucy using the bathroom, then brushing her teeth. Wyatt squeezed his eyes shut; if he wasn't going to be able to fall asleep, he needed to at least convince Lucy that he had.

The bathroom door eventually opened once more and he could just make out Lucy's light footsteps back to the bedroom. Except, if he wasn't mistaken, she got only as far as the doorway before stopping there, hovering. Eventually, there was another little shuffle of steps, and then, out of nowhere, a soft brush of her hand over his face.

Wyatt had to fight to keep his breathing level as Lucy's fingertips traced over the lines of his jaw.
And when he felt her press a gentle kiss to his forehead, it was all he could do to not reach for her, swap sides on the bed, and curl up around her. Fuck, he just needed to sleep, and not think about the whole messy Lucy-Jessica-PTSD-guilt issue. Fuck.

The urge to hold her didn't lessen any when she rounded the bed back to her side and slipped between the covers behind him.

It was a torturous few hours, but Wyatt finally fell asleep.

But he was right back where he started when he woke the next morning to find Lucy gone from the bed, the bedding already tugged back up into place on her side.

Wyatt wanted to be able to ignore it. He should have been able to ignore that pull, that need, to see Lucy and know that she was okay. She was fine. He was only freaking out because of what he'd been through with Jessica.

But damn it all if he couldn't convince himself to stay away.

So he hastily threw off the covers and shoved his foot into the walking boot. Peeking quickly into Lena's room, he confirmed that she wasn't there either. Going down the stairs was even more slow-going than heading up had been, but it didn't stop him. And it was only when he rounded the turn from the stairs and foyer into the kitchen that he could finally take a deep breath.

There stood Lucy, at the counter, slicing up some banana, with Lena clinging to her leg and whining.

They were here. And fine.

Lucy looked up just then, finally registering Wyatt's presence. "Sorry," she said, guilt written all over her face, "I wanted to-" But whatever she'd started to say, she clearly thought better of it and rephrased, "I would have stayed upstairs with you, but she was really fussing for breakfast."

Jesus. Now he'd made her feel guilty about even more.

"It's ok," he mumbled, wondering absently just how many more times the apologies and that response were going to bounce back and forth between them before one of them actually believed it.

Lena whimpered again as Lucy switched her focus to scooping out a tiny bowl of yogurt for her. The little girl, hungry and impatient, swatted at anything in her reach. Which was mostly the cabinets, but also, as Wyatt caught out of the corner of his eye, the cut on Lucy's leg.

Lucy winced and shied away as Lena's little hand made contact with the bandage and, his own injuries be damned, Wyatt immediately leaned over and scooped Lena up.

"You okay?" he asked Lucy, seeking out any signs of lingering pain in her eyes.

"She barely touched me," Lucy replied, not meeting his eyes and brushing off his concern with a slight shake of her head.

Wyatt was hardly convinced. She'd been trying to hide it since yesterday, focusing instead on him, but a deep gash and broken ribs wasn't just a paper cut or a stubbed toe. "Lucy…"

"I'm fine," she countered again, a little more insistent as she met his gaze. "Really. She just surprised me, that's all. I'm ok."

He still wasn't entirely sure she wasn't just putting up a good front again, but Lena was squirming in
his arms and was dangerously close to landing a blow to his own injured arm. So he limped the few steps over to the dining table and strapped her into her high chair.

After that he, flopped down in the chair next to her, not quite sure what to do with himself. He was hurt. So was Lucy. Lena still had the remnants of her rash. And his brain was in overdrive, a jumbled mess of guilt and fear and Jessica and Lucy.

A plate with toast and some fruit suddenly slid into place in front of him at the table.

"You should eat something," Lucy said quietly, slipping into her own chair on Lena's other side as she placed Lena's breakfast in front of her.

With a sigh, Wyatt picked halfheartedly at the food.

He and Lucy had just gotten to such a good place before the stupid earthquake. No, where their relationship had landed hadn't been without problems, but when he'd been able to ignore the eventual going back to Jess, it had been good.

Now? Now he just didn't know how to… *be.*

Even Lena trying to feed herself handfuls of yogurt, which was going about as well as expected and which would have been amusing in most any other situation, still couldn't settle the unease over nearly having lost Lucy, nor did it settle the unease over knowing that the other unease was a result of Jessica's murder.

The ring of Lucy's phone on the counter was what eventually broke the awkward silence in the room.

The subsequent buzz of his own phone in his pajama pants pocket would have been a welcome diversion were it not for the sinking feeling that always accompanied the coincidence of their phones going off so nearly simultaneously. Wyatt pulled his phone out; a cursory glance confirmed his suspicion. Mason Industries.

Well, *fuck* that.

He'd barely swiped his thumb across the screen when he barked into the device, "We're not going. Or Lucy's not, at least." Like hell was he going to let her get put through anything like that earthquake again. Not right now. Not so soon.

The outburst earned him a confused glance from Lucy, but Wyatt just waved it off, shaking his head as he listened to Agent Christopher.

He was rather confused himself when their superior relayed that they were not, in fact, being summoned for another time jump. "Then what do you want?" he sighed, protesting, "We're just having breakf-"

Of course, the tight-lipped agent was having none of those protests, even when he added, "Lena still has a rash."

She reiterated the order to return to Mason, telling him to just bring the baby with them since she wasn't contagious, leaving Wyatt with little to do but grumble his begrudging agreement. "Fine, he snapped. "An hour, max, and we're gone."

Wyatt hung up the call with a sigh. He practically felt uncomfortable in his own skin, sitting there in the house with Lucy, but that didn't mean that Mason Industries was the escape he'd been looking
for. PTSD? Yeah, like going back to the place so intimately tied to the quake was a good idea. Fuck.

Lucy reached past Lena and nudged his good arm gently. "What?"

Right, Wyatt realized. It's not as if that half a conversation would have been particularly enlightening to her. "I don't know," he grumbled. "She won't say. Debrief, I guess. Since we didn't actually get to it yesterday."

A troubled frown washed over Lucy's face, even before she gestured to Lena, objecting, "But-"

Wyatt shrugged. "They said bring her. I don't know."

Still looking doubtful, Lucy agreed hesitantly. "Ok…"

At least Wyatt had something to do with himself; he had to get ready to go.

Just under an hour later – between injuries and a yogurt-covered toddler, it had taken them longer to leave the house than she would have liked – Lucy eased the car into a spot in the Mason Industries parking lot.

She pretty much hated today already, and she had a feeling that the debrief that awaited them inside wasn't going to make things any better.

For one, in spite of initially seeming ok yesterday, suggesting the beach trip with Lena and regaling them both with all sorts of fun trip options in the car ride home, Wyatt had been acting strangely since they'd gotten back to the house. Lucy hadn't noticed at first, but the longer the day had gone on, the more obvious it had become that Wyatt didn't want to be much more than an arm's length away from her at all times.

Which, fine, in certain situations, maybe not the worst thing in the world. But he just hadn't ever seemed the clingy type like that.

It had taken her a while, but Lucy had finally managed to piece together the clues when alone in the shower.

He'd called out for his wife when he'd been looking for her. It had to have been related to Jessica. And what would make sense for how he'd have behaved back then, had he managed to find Jessica alive?

Stuck to her side like glue, Lucy had surmised. And now he was doing some sort of weird PTSD transference thing and behaving the same way around her.

Or at least he had for a while.

She hadn't been entirely confident in the idea when she'd begun to bandage his wounds, but then he'd kissed her and… it just… made sense. To… do that for him, some small gesture in the hopes of giving him some sort of comfort or distraction.

Turns out it had probably been ill-advised, given the detached, withdrawn way he'd acted afterward and again in the morning.

Lucy just didn't know what to do.

Being in love was supposed to be hard.
Sure, she got that. But she’d had to go and make it that much harder for herself by falling for Wyatt, who was clearly still emotionally wrapped up in the trauma of losing his real wife.

She just hoped, for his sake, that the debrief wasn’t too bad. Because she had the sinking feeling that Agent Christopher would be none too happy with the injuries and lack of progress on the Flynn and Rittenhouse fronts. So she just had to make sure that it was absolutely clear that she had been the one to make the stupid decision to get involved with the Hellmans and caught up in the chaos in their house. Lucy was going to make sure, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that Wyatt did not take the heat for any of this. He’d lived through guilt like that once with Jessica; she wasn’t about to let anyone make him feel even worse about what had happened when he was already clearly re-traumatized.

Of course, none of that was going to happen if they didn’t get out of the car and just get inside the stupid building and get it all over with.

So she pulled herself out of the driver’s seat, wincing a bit as the stitches in her thigh tugged at her skin. Shooting Lena a little smile as she passed the back window, she rounded the car to the trunk. But, she realized when it popped open, they’d managed yet again to leave the stupid stroller somewhere. And, she really didn’t want to strap herself into the chest carrier contraption with broken ribs. Wyatt was no better off with his burns. With a defeated sigh, Lucy turned to pluck Lena from her car seat, instead just hefting her up on her hip.

And, with Wyatt still distant, the trio walked into Mason Industries in silence.

That silence was broken the moment they stepped in the door.

Even before Agent Christopher and Mason had made it all the way over to them, Wyatt snapped, "What do you want to know? I didn't get back in time, she got hurt," he declared, gesturing at Lucy. "It's my fault. End of story. Can we leave now?"

Lucy's jaw dropped as she was taken aback by the outburst. "No," she spluttered, trying in vain to correct him and convince everyone of exactly the opposite. "No, it's-"

But, oddly, Agent Christopher was fazed by neither of their sudden declarations. Rather she remained eerily calm and just requested, "Wyatt, if you'll follow Connor; Lucy, this way with me, please."

"What?" Lucy blurted out, alarmed by the change of plans. "Debrief is the whole team," she protested. "No-"

Mason cut in, nodding in the direction of the stairs heading to the second floor. "Wyatt…"

Agent Christopher followed suit, prompting, "This way, Lucy."

"It's not his fault," Lucy hissed, trying to keep some semblance of calm for Lena's sake. "He's wrong; you can't punish him. It's my fault," she insisted, practically begging Agent Christopher to understand. "I went inside."

Before Denise could respond, however, Lucy felt a tug at her arm. "It's ok," Wyatt said, his voice low and resigned. "Just… drop it. If they didn't get rid of me after the Alamo, they're not going to do anything now." He took a deep breath, looking over Lucy's shoulder to where Agent Christopher was waiting. "My fault. Answer the stupid questions; get it over with," he instructed. "We'll be home in an hour and we can plan our beach trip, right, kiddo?"

Lucy watched him skeptically as he pasted on a wan smile and bopped Lena on the nose, eliciting a giggle from the little girl. She just couldn't figure him out. Clingy but distant? Practically mute but
suddenly back to planning a vacation for Lena? He wasn't making any sense.

But before she could question him or protest, he'd gone, headed off to the stairs with Connor.

Against her better judgement, Lucy relented and reluctantly turned to follow Agent Christopher. Because, regardless of what Wyatt he'd just said, she'd sure as hell still be making her case once they got to wherever they were going. And on the way too. There's no way she was letting him take the fall for this. "It's not his fault," she called down the hall, lagging behind Denise. "I-"

Apparently that was the last straw, because the older woman whirled around in exasperation. "Lucy," she said sharply. "Please."

"What the fuck, dude?" Wyatt snapped as Mason closed the door behind them after ushering him upstairs and down the hall. Sure, he realized now that it was the PTSD causing it, but it didn't mean that the urge have Lucy nearby had subsided at all. Which was annoying in and of itself, that his brain was messing with him like that, but he really didn't need Connor Mason messing with him too. Really, he just wanted to go back to the house and escape into another nap, because sleep had been the only reprieve so far from all of the insanity of the earthquake and the subsequent equally insane reaction on his part. Of course, he still felt the irritating need to have Lucy at his side in bed for that nap, but that wasn't the issue at the moment.

Mason just glared at him, gesturing for him Wyatt to sit. "If you don't mind," he said, not without a bit of a snarky tone.

Wyatt scoffed, rolling his eyes. But, given the ache in his foot and the clunkiness of the boot, he complied begrudgingly. "What?" he asked with a sigh.

With a sigh of his own, Mason ignored Wyatt's touchy behavior and turned to a couple of manila folders that had been sitting on the table. He plucked something from one of them, sliding it across the table to Wyatt.

A rather old-looking sketch of some random guy that Wyatt didn't recognize. He looked up at Mason skeptically.

"Well, if you look here," Mason started, gesturing to the sketched portrait, "we have this dapper gentleman, Elijah Price."

Which meant nothing to Wyatt; he shot Mason a look to convey his increasingly annoyed confusion.

Mason just continued on with his rambles, ignoring Wyatt's silent impatience. "Sadly," he explained, "Mr. Price here passed away in battle. Left behind his lovely new bride, Sarah," he added, sliding a second drawing, this one depicting Elijah and a woman that was presumably Sarah. "Now, in spite of the tragic loss of her husband," Mason carried on, his tone clearly meant to provoke Wyatt, "Sarah did go on to re-marry and have seven children."

Wyatt shot a narrow-eyed warning across the table, not pleased with the obvious insinuation that he should be moving on from his own dead spouse.

Not that the warning appeared to register with Mason, who seemed to be absentely peering at the portraits. "Rather smart-looking for their time, don't you think?" he mused.

"Yeah, sure," Wyatt muttered, increasingly on edge over being kept from Lucy over what appeared so far to be a nonsensical waste of time. "What the-"
Mason just cut him off, mocking, "'And what time would that be, Mr. Mason?' you ask, hmm?"

Still baffled, Wyatt glared at him incredulously.

"Well, that would be …Ah, yes," Mason grinned smugly, "1812."

Wyatt tensed. 1812. The mission that had somehow brought him Lena and a marriage to Lucy.

Mason, the jerk, immediately picked up on the subtle change in Wyatt's demeanor. "Ah," he goaded knowingly, "I see I have your attention now. Good. You see," he explained, "Mr. Price passed away in this timeline. To us. However, we found that when we searched the databases stored in the lifeboat, which have preserved the original timeline," he reminded Wyatt, "we see that our friend Elijah originally survived that battle. He and Sarah had twelve children of their own. Twelve – can you imagine?" He ruminated absently. "Actually, I believe it was fourteen," he amended, "but two passed away as infants."

As if Wyatt cared if it was twelve or fourteen when there was clearly something much more important going on here. "So what?" he snapped impatiently.

"Ah yes, well," Mason muttered, seemingly chastened at least a little bit. "I won't bore you with the entire story, but here is a tree of the descendants of Elijah, Sarah, and those twelve children." He punctuated his statement by sliding a printout of a detailed, branching family tree across the table to Wyatt.

But a tangled web of what looked to be hundreds of names did nothing to ease Wyatt's impatience or confusion. He scanned the elaborate chart, seeing absolutely nothing that meant anything to him, which just served to make him that much more anxious about the whole... whatever this was. "What?" he stammered, frustrated and antsy. "I don't-"

"Might the name 'Brendan Underhill' ring any bells?" Mason inquired snidely, tapping one of the far bottom branches of the tree. "Elijah was his four-times great grandfather."

And it did. It did ring a bell, Wyatt realized, panicky unease seizing his stomach. He just couldn't place it. Couldn't figure out how or why it rang that bell. "I know that name," he breathed, frantically scanning the family tree for any other sort of clue. "Why do I know that name?"

Lucy cast one last fraught glance down the hall after Wyatt before reluctantly following the now cryptically silent Agent Christopher. After nearly losing Wyatt in the fire, and him struggling with his PTSD, the absolute last thing she wanted right then was to be separated, even if he was only a few doors down the hall. Really, she just wanted to wrap her arms around him and never let go, even with him clearly not feeling the same for her.

Not that doing so was possible on any level... Especially if she was going to continue to plead her case on Wyatt's behalf so it was her that took the blame for the 1906 mission gone wrong.

She did the next best thing to wrapping her arms around Wyatt, hugging Lena tighter to her. She pressed a kiss to the little girl's head and breathed in her sweet baby scent as they stepped into one of the smaller meeting rooms that lined the upstairs halls of Mason Industries.

With Agent Christopher being so evasive about why they'd been brought back, Lucy had zero confidence that it wasn't actually an issue of the injuries sustained on the mission. It was no secret that the higher-ups hadn't been pleased with Wyatt both before, and after, the Alamo. And while she obviously hadn't been there when he and Rufus had had to return to the present without her after meeting David Rittenhouse, she imagined that Wyatt must have taken heat for Flynn dragging her
away into the Mothership. Both of them showing up with more-than-minor injuries, while also not having accomplished anything at all in terms of tracking Flynn? Even though it was entirely her fault for venturing into that house, she had to believe he was getting interrogated and reprimanded. If it was just a regular debrief, why weren't they together? And where was Rufus?

No, she knew. It wasn't a routine debrief. Beyond just being split up, this wasn't normal. Something was wrong about this.

She whirled around to face Agent Christopher accusingly, only to find the older woman already seated at the head of the table and sliding a plain manila folder across the table in Lucy's direction.

Lucy peered down at it, still not sitting down, curious but wary. "It's my fault," she repeated, her voice a bit more shaky than it had been downstairs.

With a roll of her eyes, Agent Christopher pulled the folder back closer to her so she could open it and display the contents. "This is the family tree that Jiya put together after your first Flynn-related mission," she explained.

Lucy's brow furrowed as she nodded slowly, recognizing the printout that held the family history that only she remembered, but completely thrown off by the shift in topic. "Right," she confirmed. "That hasn't changed like…" she trailed off, shrugging and nodding down at Lena, contentedly sucking her thumb against her shoulder, the biggest of all changes in their lives since-

Only then did Lucy's brain catch up to what all the hush-hush secrets and closed-door meetings had to be all about. "Wait," she gasped, "do you have a way to fix it?" She threw herself into the chair across from Denise, flailing across the table for the folder, cracked rib pain be damned. "Can we get Amy back?"

Agent Christopher produced another folder from her briefcase. "This is the authorization to-"

"-go make sure my parents meet?" Lucy finished hurriedly, barely able to hear her own words over the racing of her heart.

"To ensure that Irene Doehner's descendants don't interfere with your family," Denise corrected with a stern sigh.

Lucy frowned, unsure of what exactly she was getting at. "So…" she stuttered, "just change her life – who she marries – instead?"

"To eliminate her," came the terse reply. "When she should have died anyway."

Lucy's jaw dropped. "You…" she stammered. "What?" Eliminate? Kill? A child? Reflexively, she held Lena tighter, to the point that the little girl whimpered a soft "No, ma!" and tried to squirm away.

With another sigh, Agent Christopher elaborated, "I've secured authorization to go to the next day after the Hindenburg and have her eliminated."

"You can't kill a child!" Lucy blurted out, rattled that Denise would have ever even suggested such a thing. "Why can't we just go make sure my dad meets my mom?" she begged as Lena fussed in her arms. "Why would-"

"Because," the older woman cut her off, "we have no way of knowing what else changed in the intervening decades. And you don't know that introducing your parents in a different way than they originally met would even work the way you want it to," she added. "Removing Irene from the
picture right when she should have already been out of the picture is the simplest, cleanest way to address the issue," she finished, though perhaps not as convincingly as she might have intended.

"You can't kill her!" Lucy cried, reiterating, "She's a kid!" By that point, her protests were emphatic enough that Lena, already upset and having sensed the tension radiating from her mother, burst into tears with a wail right along with Lucy.

Tears already streaking down her own face from the frustration and utter absurdity of Denise's proposition, Lucy hastily wiped the tears from Lena's flushed, chubby cheeks. "Shh, shh," she tried to soothe her, bouncing Lena in her arms and stroking her little head. "It's ok, baby. Shh."

And though Lucy sensed from the expression on her face that the older woman wasn't quite as comfortable with the notion as she was making herself out to be, Agent Christopher elaborated, "This is the only thing that my superiors – and I mean very superior, Lucy – would authorize. This may be your only option."

Shaking her head, incredulous, her mind spinning and stomach turning, Lucy protested weakly, "But we can't..." She sniffled and shook her head once more, as if to clear her thoughts. But those thoughts were racing incoherently; she needed perspective. From someone she trusted with this. "No," she repeated, clearing her throat and shaking her head even more vehemently, "no. I need to talk to Wyatt."

"That will have to wait," Denise replied blandly as she dragged the folder back over to her side of the table. "He's being briefed on his own options to correct the Jessica situation."

And just when Lucy had thought she was already having trouble processing what she'd been presented with since entering the small meeting room, that. Agent Christopher's words hung in the air, ringing over and over in Lucy's ears and stealing her breath as surely as a swift punch to the stomach would have. Even Lena's piercing cries faded to nothing more than background noise in the face of Denise's casual revelation.

Stunned beyond coherent thought, and her voice nearly failing her, the only thing Lucy could manage was a hushed, plaintive, "What?"

With Wyatt still wrestling with not being able to place the name he recognized, Mason finally cut in, clarifying, "Well, based on yearbooks and instant message records from 'America Online', it would appear that he was the boyfriend of one Miss Jessica Backman, wasn't he? Before you met her."

Wyatt's breath caught in his throat, his heart thudding loudly in his ears at the mention of Jess. Brendan. The ex.

His mind raced, still not quite grasping the implication of Connor's words. "But-"

"We know what changed, Wyatt," Mason stated plainly. "We know how to re-set your timeline to include Jessica."

Hearing those words finally articulated... Well, Wyatt was grateful that he was already sitting down.

Jess.

Jess.

He just couldn't wrap his mind around the fact that it could possibly be true. That he could
finally, finally get her back after all this time. Breathing hard, he stammered a weak, "You…"

"Without Brendan to date Jessica, everything was different," Mason confirmed.

Which didn't actually make any sense, Wyatt realized. "But," he spluttered, "she had already broken up with him when we met. How…?"

"Indeed!" Mason exclaimed as he pulled more documents from the folder. "But without him there in the first place, before she met you, she met our other friend here," he said, sliding across to Wyatt what looked to be a print of a yearbook photo, "Michael Lankowski. A year before you claim to have met her in your timeline. Jessica and Michael got along swimmingly, it seems," he added, as he appeared to read yet another paper pulled from the folder. "Which led Michael to propose to her roughly… two months before you crossed paths with her." With that, he laid a printout of a newspaper wedding announcement in front of Wyatt. "She was engaged when you met."

Wyatt stared blankly at the photo in the announcement, his Jess, beaming in a wedding dress, with… some guy. It didn't make sense. …but they could fix it?

Leveling with Wyatt, Mason reiterated, "We know what changed. We know what to fix. Ensure Elijah doesn't die in battle in 1812. Brendan exists, and Michael doesn't date your wife, because she was still with Brendan. Leaving her free to date you later," he wrapped up neatly.

Wyatt shook his head, trying in vain to come to grips with all of this new information.

Jess. They could fix it. They could fix it.

…but she'd been killed. Nothing in the folder, nothing that Mason had said, had anything to do with her death. Nothing fixed that. Why? Why didn't they fix that? "But she still died?" he finally blurted out.

"Yes. Sad, that," Mason replied, reaching for a second manila folder. "We haven't quite cracked that – we thought it best to speak with you as soon as we made our realization about the timeline changes – but we're nearly there." And, reading from whatever was in the new folder, he continued, "It appears that her killer may have been a… Wesley Dean Gilliam, already incarcerated on two other counts of homicide. But we'd want to confirm that before launching a separate mission to adjust that aspect of your timeline, of course."

Wyatt's mind raced. They really could fix it. Fix everything.

"Now, you'll also note that I mentioned you marrying our Lucy," Mason continued, "which, as we know, was a result of you meeting her here far earlier than you apparently did in your original timeline. And that seems to stem from the same battle," he mused. "Fascinating, really," he added. "Yet another chap in the 1812 battle, this one who lived after you interfered, instead of passing away like Mr. Price. He survived and had a string of descendants who led to my largest benefactor in the early years of the company. It appears that, with his funds, we were able to focus on the more… impractical, theoretical aspects of research and development rather than consumer products, meaning the time machines were completed years earlier."

Wyatt barely registered whatever it was that Mason was still rambling on about, instead glaring at him for blathering on about anything but the most important issue.

They could get Jessica back.

"Yes, well," Mason grumbled, only slightly chastened by the look of warning. "In any case, we'll leave that bit in place, now won't we?" And then, to Wyatt's relief, he finally got back to the point of
it all, laying it out in frank terms, "For you, it's merely a matter of going back to slightly before the skirmish and evacuating Elijah Price to safety. Simply remove the possibility of him passing away in that battle," he rephrased. "And you marry Jessica instead of Lucy."

Wyatt's breath caught in his throat.

Jessica instead of Lucy.

It wasn't until that moment that either he or Mason had put the conversation into precisely that context.

But it's what it boiled down to, isn't it? For whoever they'd have to save or change or whatever, it all came down to that one little phrase.

Jessica instead of Lucy.

Jessica instead of Lucy.

Jessica instead of Lucy.

The sudden, harsh juxtaposition of the two of them made Wyatt's head hurt and his stomach roiled.

Jessica instead of Lucy.

His breathing hitched again, shaky and unsteady, as those four little words ran on an incessant, agonizing loop in his mind.

Jessica instead of Lucy.

Somewhere in there, between the almost unbearable repetitions, Wyatt was able to vaguely register that Connor was still speaking.

"Now," the older man said, rifling through some additional paperwork, "I believe we'd just have some forms for you to sign giving the us the go-ahead to do so, and we can begin to iron out the details of just how-"

"...No," Wyatt heard himself croak. The word snuck out of its own accord, somewhere amidst the pounding in his ears, racing of his heart, and sharp turn of his breathing towards hyperventilation.

But he'd said it.

And, once he had, the ramifications of doing so finally sank in.

Lucy.

Lucy.

Lucy instead of Jessica.

"Pardon me?" Mason asked, clearly baffled by Wyatt's response.

A near-hysterical laugh bubbled up from deep within Wyatt as he reiterated louder, more sure than ever, "No."

He was staying with Lucy.
Wyatt hadn't been able to even articulate it to himself until that very moment, suddenly faced with choosing between his past and his future. But, it turned out, with Lucy, there really was no choice.

He loved her.

Lucy. He was so, so in love with Lucy Preston.

For all his idiotic struggling – and exponentially more of it recently, sure, but even since before this damn timeline switch – over what he'd been feeling for her, over the guilt of wanting her, the newer guilt of nearly letting her die, it was all there in that tiny little, one-word answer, plain as day now. No. He loved her.

It was as simple as that, and he'd just somehow kept himself so deep in denial about it that it took the sudden and very real prospect of having to leave her behind to admit it to himself.

Another incredulous chuckle escaped; how could he have ever thought he'd just be able to walk away from Lucy, from their life together? He loved her too much to even wrap his mind around how he could have ever thought that such a thing would even be remotely possible.

And finally admitting that meant that it suddenly felt like the weight of the world had been lifted from Wyatt's shoulders. Part of him would always mourn Jessica, and what they'd had together, he knew. But Lucy was here. Now. His future.

And Lena, it dawned on him. Lena. Their baby girl. He laughed again, completely enamored with the realization that he'd get to see his wonderful little daughter grow up.

Mason, however, was clearly not amused by what probably looked like a bought of frantic, hysterical laughter brought on by literal insanity. With a sigh and an exasperated eye roll, he prompted dryly, "No, what?"

"I don't want to reset anything," Wyatt clarified, practically giddy and swiping at the tears of joy threatening to spill over from the corners of his eyes. "No one's resetting anything. I'm staying with Lucy," he declared, exhilarated. "This timeline," he added. "Here. Now."

If he hadn't been so happy and preoccupied with the notion of Lucy, Wyatt probably would have been annoyed by the smug, amused smirk that Connor shot him when informing him, "You do realize this may be your only chance."

Sobered a bit by that reminder, Wyatt swallowed hard and eyed the two folders still sitting on the table in front of him. But it really didn't take much deliberation at all; he reached and slid the second folder back across the table to Mason. "Have someone do this one," he said shakily. "When you figure it out for sure. Make sure Jess is alive. But..." He trailed off as he regarded the other folder, almost as if testing himself. The joy and relief never wavered. "I'm staying with Lucy," he reiterated, feeling a broad smile take over his face once more.

But as soon as he said it, it sank in that, for all he'd just admitted to Connor Mason, Lucy was the one who needed to hear those words. As quickly as his injuries allowed, he jumped to his feet and made a beeline for the door. "I need to see her. Sorry, I have to-"

"They may not be done," Mason warned over his shoulder, in that infuriatingly blasé tone of his.

Wyatt paused at the door, his brow furrowed in confusion. "Aren't they just waiting for this?" he asked.

Sounding irritated as he righted all of the paperwork in the folders, Mason sighed, stating, "She's
getting her own briefing on the plan to save her sister."

"Amy..." The name slipped out in a stunned whisper. Wyatt had just been blindsided by his own personal revelation. Amy on top of that?

He needed to see Lucy. "Look," he apologized hastily to Connor, "I'm sorry you wasted your time, sir. With all the research." He cast one last glance at the folders in Mason's hands. "Please, save Jess," he implored. "But not the other one, the Elijah one. I'm staying with Lucy."

And then he was off, hurrying down the hall to Lucy.

Tears sprang anew to Lucy's eyes as the reality of Agent Christopher's words sank in. She looked over at the older woman, hoping desperately that she'd heard wrong, seeking some sort of reassurance that she'd said something else, anything else. "He's-?" she choked out weakly.

The older woman eyed her warily before elaborating, "Mason's research team figured out what was changed for you to arrive in this new timeline and have a plan to reverse it."

Lucy's stomach nearly revolted right then and there. It was happening. Exactly what she'd dreaded since they'd landed in this sham of a marriage.

Shaken, she slumped back in her chair, tears now unabashedly streaming down her face. This was why she'd told him to just do it without telling her. Knowing he was leaving her behind? She'd never been in love before, and with her heart feeling like it was utterly shattering, Lucy could only ruefully wish that she wasn't in love right now either. This was why she never should have let herself get involved with him, never let herself get close enough to fall for him.

Seeking comfort anywhere she could find it, she absently hugged the still-whimpering Lena closer.

Lena.

When realization hit, Lucy's heart broke all over again.

Because her heart wouldn't be the only casualty of Wyatt resetting the timeline.

Lucy leaned back from the little girl, holding her at arm's length and staring into those sweet, guileless big blue eyes.

Wyatt's eyes.

This wonderful, perfect, innocent baby girl – her daughter – just... wouldn't exist.

And, Lucy lamented to herself, sniffing and brushing at Lena's wispy curls, she wouldn't even remember that she ever had.

As she sat there, watching the tiny girl blink up at her, sucking her thumb, so trusting and dependent on her, Lucy swallowed hard and clutched the locket she still wore around her neck.

"...I need to change my deal," she eventually managed to rasp out, her voice hushed and her gaze still fixed on Lena.

"Excuse me?" Agent Christopher shot back, sounding mildly shocked.

Lucy took a deep breath, letting her eyes fall closed as she fought to maintain her composure. "We had a deal to get Amy back," she stated, casting one more glance down at her little girl before lifting
her eyes to meet Agent Christopher's. "I need something different."

Denise just lifted an eyebrow ever so slightly.

Her mouth suddenly even more dry and scratchy, Lucy swallowed hard. "Whatever happens to fix Wyatt… and Jessica," she strained to add, "I need to go. On the mission."

Concern and confusion washed over Agent Christopher's face. "But then you'll-

"With Lena," Lucy added quietly.

And, instantly, Lucy could see the realization dawn on Denise's face.

"Lucy," she admonished softly, "you can't bring a baby in a time machine."

"I have to," Lucy insisted, her voice shaky. "She's all I have."

"You have no idea what that could do to a child," Denise reminded her, "and there isn't room for a fourth person anyway. You don't know the ramifications of that," she added, her tone somewhere between scolding and cautionary.

But Lucy had to fight for this. She had to. "She'll sit on my lap," she countered, trying unsuccessfully to remain somewhat calm. "We won't get out of the Lifeboat. We just have to go to the time period," she pleaded. "Please," she begged. "I have to try."

"Lucy…" Denise hedged.

Sensing the agent's slight hesitation, Lucy launched into her next appeal, zeroing in on the sentiments that she'd only recently had the privilege of sharing with Denise. A mother herself.

"What would you do? With your kids?" she implored. "Run the risk of something possibly going wrong? Or know that you'll never see them again," Lucy added, a hint of accusation sneaking into her tone as a stray tear slipped down her cheek. "You gave me that USB drive for a reason. I won't even remember her," she added, lifting Lena to rest against her shoulder, rubbing the little one's back. "I have to try it."

Lucy fought not to let herself shrink under the agent's wary scrutiny, keeping her own gaze fixed on the older woman.

Finally, and not without a harried sigh, Denise shook her head in defeat. "You can be the third," she relented, reluctance obvious in her voice, "with Rufus and Wyatt. I'll look the other way when it comes time for the three of you to get into the Lifeboat." She eyed Lena skeptically, adding, "I will not be responsible for-

Something between a gasp, a sob, and a laugh burst from Lucy with the breath she hadn't realized she'd been holding. "Thank you," she exhaled, her voice shaky as she hugged her baby girl tighter.

Cradling Lena against her, Lucy didn't even bother trying to hold back her tears anymore; it was just too much. She wept openly, rocking Lena and just letting out the maelstrom of emotion that was assaulting her.

Unimaginable relief that she had the chance to keep Lena.

Gut-wrenching fear over what could happen to Lena in the time machine as a result of that chance.

Crushing grief at the near-certainty of never being able to see her sister again.
Anxious, tentative hope that, were she given the choice herself, Amy might have sacrificed herself for her dear niece.

And utter devastation over losing Wyatt just as she'd finally admitted to herself that she was desperately, heartbreakingly, head over heels in love with him.

Yet – perhaps because she loved him so much – there was also something bittersweetly happy in there. As much as there was dread over the fact that she would remember everything that had happened with Wyatt, all while being forced to take a front row seat to him living out his happily ever after with Jessica, Lucy truly was glad for him. He was finally getting everything he'd wanted for the past five years.

Lucy certainly wouldn't have everything she wanted, but she'd have Lena. Precious little Lena.

Leaning back in her chair, Lucy eased Lena off her shoulder so she could sit the little girl in her lap and look her over. Lena, who had been starting to snooze post-tears, blinked up at her in confusion, asking, "Ma?"

With a sniffle, Lucy gave the baby a smile and little tickle on her round tummy. "Yeah, baby," she sighed, the reality of what she was facing as a single mother – with the father around, but not actually in the picture as far as being a family – suddenly hitting hard. "Just you and me, ok?" she asked, trying to mask her tears with a light, playful tone. "That ok with you?"

Lena may have let out a giggle at the tickle, but Lucy was swept up in a fresh round of weeping, overwhelmed by everything.

Of course, all that wasn't enough; the universe wasn't done torturing her yet. For, not a moment later, there was a frantic knock on the door to the small meeting room.

Lucy and Lena both turned to look, as did Agent Christopher, who had lingered quietly at the other end of the table.

And then it wasn't just knocking. The voice was muffled by the door, but there was no mistaking that it was Wyatt, calling out for Lucy.

Lena squirmed on Lucy's lap as soon as she heard him, immediately letting out a bubbly shriek of "Da!"

Wyatt could feel his grin broaden even further when he heard Lena's little voice call out for him.

On one hand, he still couldn't quite wrap his mind around the fact that he'd finally made his peace with Jess' passing and being dropped in this new timeline, but on the other, he was so damn excited to just really and truly be with Lucy, to move forward together, both as a couple and as a family with Lena.

And Amy. God, he was so happy that they'd finally figured that out for Lucy; he had no doubt that she'd be over the moon. And not for nothing, he was kind of excited himself about getting to meet Amy, who would surely be just as sharp as Lucy, and therefore the perfect younger sister(-in-law) that he'd never had, who would also most definitely be annoying as all hell when she wanted to keep him on his toes. It was going to be great.

But for as much as he wanted to celebrate that with Lucy, he didn't want to intrude on whatever she was discussing about it with Agent Christopher. At least any more than knocking and calling her name already had.
Which left him anxiously pacing – as much as the clunky, awkward boot for his fractured foot would allow – outside the door, knowing that Lucy would be thrilled about Amy.

But far less certain that she'd be thrilled about his decision.

Not that she'd given him any real reason to doubt that she cared about him, at least on some level; she'd admitted as much that night in the hotel room.

But... love? God, now that he'd finally been able to admit it to himself, there was no denying just how strongly he felt for Lucy. The prospect of being with her – really being with her – was nothing short of breathtaking and there was simply no other way to describe it but to say that, somewhere along the way, for as much as he fought it, even before the timeline switch if he was being completely honest with himself, he'd fallen head over heels for her.

Was she there though? Or had she only been with him to fill the time before he was supposed to have gotten Jessica back? Some little fling, knowing that it was only ever meant to be temporary? She'd said otherwise, but who knew if she'd just been saying it for his benefit.

He really, really hoped that wasn't the case.

More than anything, Wyatt just wanted to get in there and just tell Lucy exactly how he felt. A weight had already been lifted from his shoulders when the simple 'No' had slipped from his mouth in response to Mason's proposal; he could only imagine that letting Lucy in on how he truly felt would feel that much more exhilarating.

He wrung his fingers, still left waiting in the hall, though he could hear faint murmurs from in the room. His face falling, he knocked again, sure they had to have heard him the first time, but trepidation getting the best of him.

Wyatt's heart skipped a beat when the door finally opened, but to his dismay, not to mention bewilderment, Agent Christopher was the only one who emerged. Other than little Lena in her arms. He cast a quick glance inside the room as he absently offered Lena his finger to grab, but couldn't see Lucy from his angle in the hall. With a questioning glance at Agent Christopher, he started, "Wha-?"

But the agent cut him off, prying his finger from Lena's grip as she explained, "Lucy asked me to take her." And, casting a knowing glance behind her at the partially opened meeting room door, she nodded in that direction. "You two need to talk."

Which was exactly what Wyatt wanted to do – talk to Lucy and finally tell her just how deeply in love with her he was – but something about Agent Christopher's tone was more than unsettling. He frowned in confusion for a second, watching as she walked away with Lena, but quickly turned to more pressing matters.

As swiftly as the damn boot allowed, Wyatt darted into the small meeting room. But instead of a Lucy elated over news of a mission to rescue Amy, he found a disconsolate Lucy, red-eyed, crying, and pacing in the far corner of the room.

His stomach seized. "Lucy, hey, hey, what's wrong?" he asked frantically, trying to hobble over to her as quickly as he could. He shook his head in disbelief and confusion. Shouldn't she be happy?"They just told me they figured out how to get Amy back," he stammered. "What-?"

All that got him was more tears and Lucy shaking her head, sniffling.

"What?" Wyatt pleaded, begging for an explanation for what could possibly have her so upset at what should be such a happy time. And, the burns and bandages adorning his arm be damned, he
reached to embrace Lucy, trying his best to offer whatever comfort he could without knowing what was actually going on. "What?" he whispered, his hand sliding behind her shoulder to tug her close.

"No, don't," Lucy mumbled, her voice thick with phlegm and tears as she inexplicably ducked his reach and pushed his arm away.

Not only that, but to Wyatt's further dismay and confusion, she backed another few steps away from him. It would be one thing if she'd thought him hugging her might be painful for his injured arm, but suddenly not wanting to be near him? Evading him when it was that much more awkward him to try to follow her around in his clunky boot? The knots in Wyatt's stomach twisted and tightened; he didn't like this. Something was very wrong. "Lucy-?"

She cut off his careful questioning, tears still streaming down her cheeks. "It's not going to happen," she choked out. "I can't. They want to kill the girl, the one that has the granddaughter that married my dad. I can't…"

Wyatt's stomach turned as Lucy trailed off; Jesus, no wonder she was upset. He shook his head forcefully, declaring, "That's bullshit." As if Lucy – any of them, but especially Lucy – would ever condone such an action. "There has to be another way."

"They won't," she shot back with a sniffle, shaking her own head and holding her arms tightly folded across her stomach. "It's the one thing we know changed it; it's the one thing they'd let me change back." Since Wyatt had entered the room, Lucy had been avoiding him, including even making eye contact. But she looked up just then, eyes red and shiny as she met his gaze. "I can't… Not a little girl."

A little girl. Like Lena, Wyatt realized. He sighed, understanding completely. Not that he'd ever have been ok with the plan that had apparently been proposed, but, as it seemed it also had for Lucy, it just rattled him that much more now that a certain tiny, curly-haired, blue-eyed little girl of their own had somehow managed to toddle her way into their lives. And hearts.

"But something else," he insisted, once again trying to inch closer to Lucy. "They'll figure out a work-around eventually."

She just backed away yet again, vehemently shaking her head. And, evading even his gaze once more, she let out still another sniffle. "I told them I'd stop pushing on Amy," she finally admitted, her voice hushed. "That I'd just drop it."

That stopped Wyatt in his tracks. "What? Why?" he asked, absolutely flummoxed. Amy had been Lucy's singular focus through this entire mess, literally since the first day they'd all met and had come home to a completely new life on Lucy's part. The notion that she'd sacrifice her sister for something else – anything else – just made zero sense.

"Because I needed something else from them more," Lucy replied shakily. "Christopher let me change the deal."

Which made no sense either. "What?" Wyatt breathed in confusion. What could Lucy possibly be trading Amy for?

Still being evasive, Lucy ducked her head and crossed her arms across her stomach, hugging herself instead of allowing Wyatt to take her in his own arms. He caught one quick dart of her gaze up to his before she looked away again. And, with a hard swallow, she finally explained haltingly, "…when you go to… wherever it is you're going, to fix the timeline with Jessica… I'm coming and so is Lena."
Wyatt's mind raced, his ears pounding as soon as Lucy's utterly nonsensical words reached him. Logic was failing him, because all he could register was the horrifying notion of his baby girl being subjected to the awful, awful mess that was time travel, and he couldn't begin to fathom why Lucy would ever even consider bringing their little Lena in the freaking time machine. Why would she—

And then her earlier words hit home. Jessica.

"No, no, no," he blurted out, desperate to set Lucy straight – his initial purpose for seeking her out, before he'd managed to get distracted by the prospect of getting Amy back. Lucy needed to know that he was so completely and entirely in love with her. Needed to know that he wasn't going to get Jess back. Ever. He hurried to explain, reaching out to Lucy once more, "No, you don't need t-

"I do need to," she countered, tears streaking down her face anew as she dodged him yet again with another few steps backward. "And I know it's not what we agreed to," she sniffled, swiping at her damp cheeks. "I know I said that this was only ok because I'd forget when you changed things back, and I'm sorry - I know you won't want me knowing that we did anything or that we ever had Lena, and honestly, I don't want to know we were together at all either, when I have to see you back with Jessica, but I can't just…" Her slightly unhinged-sounding rambling came to a halt when her voice cracked, but she strained to finish, "…let her go. She's all I have," she whispered, finally meeting Wyatt's gaze once more. "I have to try and keep her."

Wyatt felt physically ill hearing those words coming from Lucy; he'd thought the horror of finding Jessica's body and the terror over Lucy being stuck in that house in 1906, facing the same fate as Jessica, were the worst possible feelings he could ever possibly feel.

He'd been wrong.

This? Lucy – Lucy that he loved so, so much – pulling away from him, thinking that he was just tossing her to the side like garbage, as if he'd never even cared? And all because he'd let her think for so long – essentially told her – that that's exactly what he'd do? He wanted to vomit; he hated that he'd let it come to this. Hated that he'd been in denial for so long. Hated that he hadn't been able to admit, to himself or to her, his true feelings. Pretty much hated himself.

Tears stung his own eyes as he tried once more to get closer to her, urging, "Lucy, no, I'm not going to get Jessica back." But she backed away again. "Please," he begged, reaching for her. "I'm not-"

"Oh," she cut him off, her voice hollow and dull. "That's better I guess, if you stay here and you're the one to forget. It'll be like you were always together with her. I'll just show up back in the present with a baby." And, even with tears still streaming down her cheeks, she added with a wry smile, "One that looks just like you."

"Lucy," Wyatt pleaded as his own tears finally slipped out, "no-"

But she wasn't done, cutting him off with yet another dull, "Oh," of realization. "She'll know you," Lucy stammered. "Lena. As her… dad. I-I don't-" She continued rambling, apparently at a loss, for a split second before her shoulders slumped in defeat. "I'll just… keep her away from you," she informed him. "She's little; she'll forget pretty quickly," she added with a half-hearted shrug.

All the while, Wyatt's heart was breaking. He couldn't lose Lucy. He couldn't lose Lena. And, in retrospect, yes, he knew he should have just blurted out an explanation right then and there to ensure that Lucy was on the same page as him once and for all, but the notion of his sweet baby girl eventually not even remembering him momentarily distracted him from the bigger picture of Lucy's ongoing, almost deliberate-seeming misunderstanding of what he was trying to say.
He tried once more to reach for Lucy, to pull her in, wrap her in his arms and set her straight, but
damn it if she didn't dodge his touch once more. It was bordering on absurd by then, that he was
literally chasing her in laps around the table, limping along in his unwieldy walking boot-cast-thing
while it was figuratively killing him that he couldn't seem to quite form the right words to get Lucy to
realize what he was trying to tell her.

Another hiccupping sob from across the room finally broke him, broke through.

"Lucy!" Wyatt barked desperately, swiping at the tears escaping from his own eyes. And though
she'd been avoiding looking into his eyes nearly the entire time they'd been in the small room, his
tone must have been enough to get her to look up in alarm, at least for a split second. Wyatt seized
the moment. "Nobody's going to get Jessica back."

He could practically see the question marks popping up in the air around her head as her face
contorted in confusion and disbelief. She protested weakly, "But Christopher said-"

"I told them no," Wyatt stated plainly, testing the waters and inching closer to her.

"But-" Lucy spluttered, obviously at a loss. "Because of how they would-? Like with Amy?" she
wondered aloud, once again not looking at him, her gaze instead darting about, as if she expected
some sort of explanation to pop up in mid-air instead of coming from him.

And Wyatt knew that he could easily launch into the whole story, the full explanation of the
conversation with Mason. He could tell her all about the fact that it would actually be saving
someone, not killing them. That it would be two missions – one to set things straight with Elijah, and
thus with Jessica, and another wholly separate one to prevent Jessica from ultimately suffering the
same fate as she had in their own timeline.

But Lucy deserved the plain and simple truth. And right away.

So he told her.

"Because I'm in love with you."

Time practically ground to a halt as Lucy stood there, frozen, staring incredulously at Wyatt. She just
gaped at him. Because there was no way, just no possible way, that he ever could have said what it
sounded like he just said.

Her mind and heart racing, and breathing not coming nearly as easily as she would have liked, she
grappled with what she might have misheard. He'd said 'love'. But she hadn't heard 'Jessica'. Maybe
he'd said 'no', and she'd missed it? Or it wasn't 'love' that he'd said – it was… luck? lug? cub? bug? mud? Or not 'you', but instead… shoe? Drew? crew?

But nothing that sounded even vaguely like what she'd thought she'd heard made any sense
whatsoever.

Of course, neither did what she'd thought she'd heard. That had to have been some crazy concoction
of sleep-deprived and overly-emotional wishful thinking. Just because she'd recently arrived at a
similar conclusion about him… well, obviously it had no bearing on what he felt.

Eventually – whether it was seconds or minutes or hours later, Lucy had no idea – she was left with
no other option but to try and ask for some sort of clarification. Because Wyatt himself just stood
there, staring right back at her with tears in his eyes.
Still gaping at him, she managed, with a disbelieving shake of her head, to breathe a hesitant, questioning, "…you-?"

"I'm so in love with you," Wyatt repeated. "I love you, Lucy. And our life, and Lena." He stammered, brushing away escaped tears as he added, his voice strained, "I- I can't give that up."

Lucy was bawling – gut-wrenching, full-body sobs – before he even finished his sentence. Because there was no mistaking all of those words; he'd said exactly what she thought he'd said.

But it just couldn't be true. It couldn't. It was everything she wanted, but everything she'd never thought she'd have. And life just never worked out like that for her. It didn't make any sense.

It was an impossible mix of elation, denial, and utter disbelief; she simply stood there crying, frozen and unable to formulate any sort of reasonable response to Wyatt's admission.

Which meant he was finally able to close in on her and slide his hands over her hips, tugging her closer as he continued, "And it's not just because of Lena, it's not the extras, the whole package deal or anything." More tears slipped down both their cheeks as his hands left her waist and moved up to frame her face. "I love her too, but even if it was just you and me," Wyatt added, a sense of urgency creeping into his tone, as if he were desperate to get her to believe him. "I love you. I'm not going anywhere."

Lucy shook her head, even as his hands still gently cradled her jaw, leaving a shiver running up her spine at his touch. But still not convinced, she spluttered, "But Jessica-"

"Is my past," he insisted in earnest, his thumbs brushing away her tears.

Until his demeanor changed suddenly, as if some lightbulb had gone off in his mind, sending him careening toward defeated resignation. His hands dropped from her face and he backed up a few steps, shoulders slumping and gaze falling away from her. "And if you don't… feel the same," he sighed sadly, his eyes downcast, "it's still true. I moved on. She's my past. I'll still stay. Here, this timeline, and we can split up, or whatever." With that he looked back up at Lucy, tears still evident in his red-rimmed eyes as he shrugged in defeat. "I know you didn't ask to be thrown into this. Us." He shrugged again with a sigh, and mumbled, "We can just… share custody of Lena or something."

Her breath caught in her throat, Lucy blinked at him in disbelief. He was done? With Jessica? Regardless?

He actually wanted this life above anything – anyone – else? This timeline? Lucy and Lena?

He loved her?

And he was standing there doubting that she wanted all of the same things he did, Lucy realized in dismay. He wanted everything she wanted and she was letting him stand there suffering, doubting everything, just as she had for so long.

With a sniffle and a futile swipe at the tears still streaming down her cheeks, Lucy shook her head weakly and inched tentatively toward him. "We don't have to split up," she managed to choke out in a shaky whisper.

Wyatt's head jerked up, his eyes wide in disbelief as they fixed on Lucy.

And before she knew it, Lucy was launching herself into his arms, clinging to him in a fierce hug as she wept.
Her fractured ribs ached as his arms tightened around her through his own sniffling sobs, but she didn't care. She just didn't care. It was Wyatt. And he chose her.

Which she still couldn't quite believe.

Not quite trusting it – because since when did good things happen to her like this? – Lucy shook her head softly as if to try to clear her mind and shied away from him, backing out of his embrace. "Really?"

Wyatt’s initial response wasn't much more than a strangled laugh as he reached for her waist with one hand, wiping at his eyes with the back of the other. "Lucy," he finally managed, "Jessica could be alive and standing right next to you right now, and I'd still want this life with you." With a watery grin, he reiterated, "I'd still want you."

Tears sprang to Lucy's eyes anew. She was pretty sure that he could say it a million times over and that she'd be left in stunned disbelief every time. But she knew that, at some point, she'd have to just believe him. She loved him too, after all.

It was with that thought that she let him fold her into his embrace once more, and, just as soon as she could form the words, she finally told him the truth he deserved to hear, murmuring in his ear, "I love you so much."

With a phlegmy, tearful chuckle, Wyatt leaned back from her and cradled her face in his hands again. "Good to know, ma'am," he laughed, "because I love you too."

That earned an equally awful-sounding laugh from Lucy, complete with a snuffle and tears. But in spite of all that messy, ugly crying, the next thing she knew, Wyatt's lips were on hers in the sweetest of kisses, in spite of the salty tang of their tears.

Lucy let out another necessary snuffle when the kiss broke. She wiped at her eyes in futility, still crying as she launched herself into Wyatt's arms anew.

It just felt so right. Being in his arms, not the both of them weeping like idiots part… After so long of nothing feeling right or normal or comfortable or routine, just having him hold her… it felt right.

Which was why the tiny, nagging feeling in the pit of her stomach just wouldn't quite let Lucy believe that it was truly happening. She backed away to arm's length once more, searching his face for any hint of… anything. "You're sure?" she breathed. "I mean-"

"Sure that I love you and that this is the right decision?" He grinned, cutting her off with a teasing lilt to his voice. "100%," he added. And, sobering, he continued seriously, "More than anything, ever."

Relief washed over Lucy and she hugged him tightly once more. At least until his embrace tightened as well and hit her just so, eliciting a dull ache from her cracked ribs. Which just served to remind her of his injuries. How long had they been standing there, him on his broken foot? And who knows how many times she must have already brushed against his burns. "Your arm," she gasped, stumbling away from him. "Your leg. You should sit," Lucy urged, already reaching for one of the chairs lining the table.

But Wyatt gripped her other hand, tugging her instead to the edge of the room.

Perplexed, Lucy murmured, "…what are you-?"

But her inquiry was answered as Wyatt eased himself down to the floor, sitting with his back against the wall, then gesturing for her to sit beside him.
She obliged, of course, sliding into place along his good side.

At which point he inched even closer, wrapping his arm around her shoulders and tucking her against his chest. "Can't do this in two separate chairs," he pointed out, pressing a kiss to the top of her head.

With a smile, Lucy snuggled in even a little closer; she was never going to complain about him holding her like that. And somehow content, after all the chaos that had led up to that moment, she simply took a deep breath and reveled in the notion that they were finally there, together, loving each other, and, hopefully, just… happy.

But, she wondered, one little thought still not quite letting her rest, how had all that chaos and timeline messiness actually led to that very moment? She shook her head softly against Wyatt, incredulous at just what had gone on to get them to that point. "…how did we get here?" she finally mused aloud.

"The floor?" Wyatt teased, chuckling.

Lucy rolled her eyes and swatted his uninjured thigh.

But, growing more serious, he continued. "Here?" He asked, gesturing to between the two of them. "Or this timeline?"

She paused, her voice caught in her throat for a split second. She hadn't really considered them separately. "Well, both, I guess," she shrugged. "This timeline. This relationship."

The tiniest twinge of panic raced through her when Wyatt removed his arm from her shoulder, situating himself just a little bit differently. But she breathed a little more easily when, though no longer angled toward her and wrapped around her, he still reached to hold her hand, his fingers looped through hers and their entwined grips resting between their legs.

"It was just…" Wyatt let out a weighty sigh, as if not quite sure of the right words. "…timing, really," he said after a beat. "When I met Jess originally, she was single. I was single. So we got together," he shrugged, staring down at joined hands. "Later, when I met you, I was still stuck on her."

None of which was news to Lucy. Still curious, she prompted softly, "Ok…"

With an incredulous shake of his head, Wyatt continued, explaining, "It was some guy. At that battle, on that mission. 1812. Guess he got killed and wasn't supposed to." He shook his head once more. "I don't even remember him specifically; it must have just been some tiny little thing we did or changed with other people that were there. He died. And then, what, 200 years later, his great-great-whatever grandson isn't there to be the guy Jess was with right before me. Without that guy, Jess ended up with someone else first, and they were still together when I met her. So she wasn't even on my radar as… anything." At that point, Wyatt finally looked up, meeting Lucy's gaze with a helpless shrug at the inevitability of what would have followed in such a scenario. "So then I'm single when I meet you and…"

Lucy couldn't stifle the grin of disbelief that crept onto her face as she finished his sentence, "...we're together right away." How often, both before and after this insane timeline switch, had she wondered exactly that – what would have happened had they been unattached when they met? Well, at least now she had her answer, for sure. Then again, she realized, catching a glimpse of her rings, even if he had been… available in their own timeline, they surely couldn't have been married yet. And Lena, it occurred to her. Lena would have been born, and most certainly conceived, well before
they'd even met in their original timeline. "But," she started, her brow furrowed in confusion, "we only started here this year, in our timeline. How-?"

Wyatt cut her off with an incredulous laugh of his own. "Because some other dude related to that battle ended up with some crazy rich descendant who gave Mason a bazillion dollars earlier than he was able to raise it on his own. This timeline?" he explained. " Fewer vacuums and cars, but time travel, like seven years earlier."

Utterly baffled by the insane coincidence, Lucy shook her head with a laugh of her own. Sure, there could be hundreds and hundreds of modern descendants of two people from 1812, but still… "That's… crazy," she exclaimed. "I mean, what are the odds that both of those things would-"

"I don't know," Wyatt replied, his eyes suddenly looking a little shiny once more. He gave Lucy's hand a squeeze, his voice a little gravelly as he added, "All I know is I'm really glad they did."

It wasn't as if Lucy was going to be able to fend off another round of tears at that. She squeezed back, wiping at her eyes with her other hand as she flashed Wyatt a watery smile. "Me too."

Strangely though, Wyatt then released his grip on her and tugged his hand back into his own lap. "Look, I know this is still weird," he said after a moment, his words stilted. "We got thrown into this life - married, living together, Lena," he stressed, as if not able to wrap his mind around the child's existence. With a slight shrug he continued, "…and everything, and if we were back in our own timeline, we'd barely be dating yet, and-"

"We'd be dating?" Lucy interrupted, stunned at the admission he'd snuck in there. "At all?" As much as she might have wanted it back then, the last time they'd gotten anywhere near that sort of topic before the timeline switch, Wyatt had declared, rather emphatically, that the kiss they'd shared had been merely for the role.

She'd thrown him off, catching that slip-up, Lucy could tell. Wyatt stumbled over his initial attempt at speaking again, and a rosy blush crept onto his cheeks as he looked away sheepishly. She smirked when his eventual words reeked of false confidence as he declared, "I mean, I think-"

But then he stopped again, swallowed, and reached for Lucy's hand once more. Her breath caught in her throat when he looked her in the eyes, his expression nothing but vulnerable and honest, no false confidence to be seen.

"Lucy," he breathed, "maybe the timing wasn't quite right yet, but there's no way I could have stayed away from you forever."

Lucy was the one to feel her cheeks flush then, taken aback by his sincerity. "…I didn't think it would ever happen," she whispered, admitting, "I did want it to."

"It would have," Wyatt assured with a grin.

The next thing Lucy realized, they'd melted into a sweet kiss, and she almost felt a bit of regret that she hadn't gotten to experience that more natural progression of attraction and falling in love with him.

Almost. Because she wouldn't trade where they were in that very moment for anything.

But as if he'd somehow read her earlier thought, Wyatt let out another harried sigh. "But this… life," he muttered absently. "I know we can't go back, obviously, and most people won't know that we're not this Lucy and Wyatt, but I still want us to get what we would have had, you know? Dating and-"
"We live together," Lucy cut in, reminding him of the very real absurdity of their situation and his proposition. "And have a baby."

"Yeah, but you didn't ask for that," he countered.

As if that mattered, Lucy scoffed inwardly. She certainly would have wanted it, asked for it, had she known it would ever be a possibility for them. She protested, "Wyatt-

"I'm just saying," he interjected. "We should still… be dating. Not just… diapers and a mortgage and grocery shopping," he grimaced. "And if you're not sick of me in however long, we get engaged. For us."

Lucy couldn't deny that the notion of actually getting engaged to Wyatt set off a little flurry of butterflies in her stomach, but, she told herself, that just wasn't their reality. And it was silly in the first place; they were already married, well beyond the engagement phase. She tried to deflect him once more with a shake of her head, "That's-

Wyatt just shook his head right back, even more emphatically. "You've shown up to two different engagement rings, but as far as I know, no one ever actually proposed to you."

A vision of Wyatt down on one knee flickered through Lucy's mind, setting off those butterflies again, though it felt dumb to want such a thing when they had so much more already. She tried to shrug it off as no big deal.

Still having none of her protests, Wyatt reached for her left hand and ran his thumb over the engagement ring that she already wore. "Well, you deserve it," he insisted. "And a wedding," he added, before hedging, "Assuming you want it, and with me…"

That little bit of added uncertainty tugged at Lucy's heart. Like she could ever want it with anyone else. And given that the last thing either of them needed was any more misunderstandings and miscommunications about who stood where in terms of feelings, Lucy looked him in the eye, confirming seriously, "I'll want it. With you." She still couldn't stop the giggle that bubbled up at the notion of trying to manage a wedding when all but five or so people in the entire world thought them to already be together. "But we're already married," she reminded Wyatt, still laughing.

He just shook his head and rolled his eyes. And, with a shrug, he promised, "We'll make it work." Wyatt was quiet then, still focused down on their laps, where he still ran his thumb over Lucy's rings. "And Lena," he finally voiced softly, "she's not going anywhere, but… if you want more kids…" He shrugged as if trying to pass it off like it was no big deal. "I dunno, all that kind of stuff. Milestones, I guess. You should still have them. Whatever you want."

But the quickening of Lucy's pulse at the mere mention of children belied his casual shrug. She was very nearly choked up all over again, imagining not only their beautiful little Lena growing up, but, just maybe, a tiny little, brand new, scrunchy-faced newborn cradled in Wyatt's arms. The very thing already captured in the photos from the wall in Lena's room, but for them this time, getting to live it themselves.

She brushed away the beginnings of a tear. Whatever she wanted? Lucy wanted it. All of it. Everything Wyatt had just said, and she wanted it with him. "We," she corrected with a soft sniffle. "Whatever we want. And we'll figure it out. Together." She looked up to Wyatt wearing a soft smile of his own, his eyes shiny. Lucy pressed a kiss to his lips, then rested her forehead on his. "I love you."

"I love you."
Wyatt's heart was as full as he could ever remember it being, sitting there with Lucy like that. He almost couldn't believe how the past twenty-four hours or so had played out, and, in spite of the collateral damage of their injuries, he was so grateful that things had fallen into place exactly as they had.

Of course, they couldn't just sit there on the floor holding each other forever, which Lucy apparently realized just as well as he did.

"Now what?" she eventually murmured, leaning back away from him.

Now what, indeed.

It felt kind of ridiculous, but honestly, all Wyatt wanted to do was exactly what they had been doing, last night, and for however long now – just go home and be a family. Except he wanted it without the uncertainty and tension and unease that had plagued just about everything since the timeline switch.

"We go find the kid, for one," he rationalized, then started to rattle off the rest of the mental list that would get them home. "We tell Agent Christopher that she still needs a new plan to get Amy back-

Except he couldn't forget one crushing aspect of Lucy's erstwhile strategy. "Were you really going to bring Lena in the lifeboat?"

Wyatt hated the remorseful look that flickered across Lucy's face as she started with a defensive, "I-

that then faded into a helpless shrug and a mumbled, "Yeah."

It saddened him that he'd been the one to put her in the position of making that sort of decision, that he'd been the one that left her so desperate and uncertain as to be willing to put their little girl at risk like that. It was just one more thing that he'd do everything in his power to make up for.

But that could wait for now, he told himself. The rest of today would be for just… being together. Happy. In love. "Anyway," he said, mentally shaking off the touch of melancholy that had encroached. "Then we just get the hell out of here, we go home, and we just… be together."

"Sounds good," Lucy replied, beaming once more. At least until a bemused frown marred her delicate features. But the frown ended up accompanied by an incredulous chuckle. "We have a daughter."

A chuckle of his own slipped from Wyatt in response. He still couldn't really believe it either, that they'd somehow ended up with this tiny little person, a perfect mix of him and Lucy. And for all the time they'd spent with her now, the two of them hadn't done much more than just deal with the boring practicalities of having Lena around, never mind actually talking about having suddenly become parents. Diapers and naps and dropping her off at Carol's had pretty much been it. Now?

Now he couldn't wait to just be her dad. And to see Lucy get to be Lena's mom. "She's pretty much the best," he replied with a smile. "Speaking of…" he added, and pulled out his phone to shoot off a quick text to Rufus.

Wyatt looked up to find Lucy eyeing his phone curiously, but instead of asking about the text, she shook her head ever so slightly and wondered aloud, "...what do we… say though? I mean," she pointed out, "most people won't know the difference, but Rufus… Jiya, Mason, Agent Christopher…"

Wyatt scoffed. "Pretty sure Rufus won't be surprised," he confessed.

Lucy's cheeks pinked up with a pretty blush as she looked down and admitted, "Jiya either."
"Mason and Christopher?" he theorized with a sigh. "They'll just be glad I'm not-"

He was cut off by the door to the room opening ever so slightly, though given the angle from where they were sitting, they didn't have the line of sight to see just who had opened it. But whoever it was that Rufus had sent in response to the text clearly didn't want to intrude, for it was only little Lena, toddling on her own, that actually entered the room.

Lucy looked over at him in surprise as the door closed behind the little girl, but Wyatt just shrugged, offering the only explanation he could think of. "I think they're all afraid of what they might find in here," he said, only half-joking, "for better or for worse…"

Lena was still facing away from them and looking a little lost, so he called out in a playful voice, "Lena! Hi, baby girl!"

Wyatt was pretty sure he'd never get tired of the smile that graced that little face whenever she heard him.

Beaming, Lena waved and hurriedly wobbled over to the two of them with a piercing squeal.

And still a little less than coordinated, she just sort of threw herself at Lucy's shins, leaving Lucy to reach down and haul her up between herself and Wyatt.

From there, Wyatt wrapped his arms around both his girls, ignoring the sting of the burn on his arm. A little pain was nothing compared to having his family for real. For good. Releasing them enough to reach down to Lena, he smiled. "You're stuck with us, kid," he teased her, poking her little stomach. "Hope that's ok with you."

Lena's reply came in the form of her snuggling closer to Lucy, laying her head on her shoulder and wrapping her arm around her neck. Wyatt almost teared up again; god, he loved the sight of Lucy as a mother.

Lucy hugged Lena right back, dropping a kiss atop her little head, but then looked over at Wyatt, questions in her eyes. "…they'll be glad you're not what?"

It took Wyatt a moment to realize that she was referring back to when Lena's entrance had interrupted him. "…bugging them about Jess anymore," he finished, feeling slightly uncomfortable in bringing up Jessica's name.

The discomfort clearly extended to Lucy, who replied with a short, "Oh."

The last – the absolute last – thing that Wyatt wanted for their relationship was any lingering awkwardness over Jessica. He felt terrible over having let Lucy think for so long that she was his second choice; he planned to spend the rest of his life making sure that she never had any reason to doubt him, ever again.

But that was long term.

Right then, Wyatt knew that there was one thing he did need to share and be honest with her about. "Lucy?"

"Yeah?" she asked, mild concern evident in her voice.

"…it was actually going to be two missions," Wyatt admitted tentatively. "One to re-set my history with her, another to keep her from getting killed. They hadn't actually worked out the details of that one yet. I did… tell them to keep doing that, save her, make sure she's alive," rambled, "I just-"
"I'm glad," Lucy said, cutting him off softly.

Which didn't quite make sense, so Wyatt spluttered further, "It's not to be with her or-

She just smiled and squeezed his hand. "I know."

He smiled right back, grateful. Then, nodding down at Lena, he prompted, "Think we can get out of here now?"

"And go… home?" Lucy ventured, sounding ever so slightly cautious.

And Wyatt understood immediately why she did. Her words echoed almost the exact same question, the one she'd asked that very first night in this timeline. When the notion of 'home' with Lucy had rattled him so, so much. And they hadn't even known about Lena yet at that point.

If only he'd known then what Lucy, and Lena, and home, would eventually come to mean to him.

"Definitely," he confirmed, squeezing Lucy's hand right back. "Plus we have a vacation to plan, right, little girl?" he posed goofily to Lena. "You want to go to the beach?"

Lena squealed again in response, laughing as Lucy set her down on the floor to allow her to haul herself up to her feet. With Lena already scampering away, Lucy turned back to Wyatt, offering him a hand to help him up.

Once Wyatt was back up on his feet, he didn't let go, seamlessly pulling Lucy in for one more hug before they went anywhere. He buried his face in her hair, breathing her in, beyond thrilled about the turn of events that had led them there. Pressing a kiss to her forehead, he smiled. "Come on. Let's go home."

Lucy grinned her agreement. But as she reached to pick up Lena so they could do so, the little girl chose that moment to begin to assert some of the independence that her relatively newfound mobility offered. With gleeful "No!" she managed to wriggle out of Lucy's initial grasp and duck away to wander closer to the door.

Wyatt turned to Lucy, amused. They were definitely in for a ride now that they were staying with the precocious little toddler for good. "I got it," he assured her, hoping he was right. Then he crept close to Lena, his arm outstretched. "Lena, hold my hand?" he coaxed.

And with a proud "Hi!" Lena did indeed obey, sliding her tiny little palm into Wyatt's. His heart fluttered at that, but she didn't stop there, swinging around and reaching out with her other arm to Lucy. "Ma?"

Now, Wyatt had no idea how Lena could have known what had just transpired between her parents – she couldn't have somehow picked up on a different… vibe? Could she? But honestly, he didn't care. He just watched happily as Lucy took Lena's other hand, wearing a smile that he was pretty sure matched his own.

Together, if a little awkwardly considering that Lena wasn't quite tall enough yet to make walking hand-in-hand compatible with Lucy and Wyatt's regular posture, the three of them emerged from the room into the hallway. They'd just rounded the corner to near the top of the stairs when Agent Christopher appeared, approaching them cautiously.

"Everything ok in there?" she inquired, nodding back in the direction of the room they'd come from.

Wyatt rolled his eyes; she and Connor would have exchanged information as soon as he'd gone in to
see Lucy. "Mason told you," he challenged.

They were interrupted momentarily as Lena yanked her arms away and darted toward the stairs, leaving Lucy to scoop her up against her protests.

But when they approached the others once more, Lena in Lucy's arms, Denise shot right back with a wry arch of her eyebrow. "Yes, he told me what you had decided. But when I left that room," she gestured again to where she'd spoken with Lucy before Wyatt had arrived, "your one-year-old was about to go time traveling. We didn't exactly have everyone on the same page."

Wyatt's eyes slipped closed at the thought of just how stupid he'd been and how close he'd come to missing out on this life. Opening them again with a steadying breath, he emphatically reached for Lucy's free hand and laced his fingers through hers. "Same page now."

He felt Lucy give his hand a squeeze as she echoed, sounding a little choked up, "Same page."

"This stays," Wyatt vowed, gesturing to Lucy and Lena to ensure that Agent Christopher was getting the message. "For good."

Thankfully, instead of any sort of pushback, or words of warning, or… whatever – Wyatt hadn't really known what to expect from her – Denise's expression softened, her only reply being a simple, affectionate smile at the three of them.

Wyatt let out a shaky breath. It was all going to work. They were going to remain a family.

But there was one thing he'd spoken with Mason about that Agent Christopher perhaps hadn't heard about… With a hard swallow, Wyatt asked hesitantly, "But you'll still-"

"As soon as they confirm their research about her killer," she replied with a knowing nod.

"Wyatt breathed a little easier at that, but it wasn't only Jess that deserved to be alive. "You need to find another way to get her sister back," he warned.

Denise's expression tuned skeptical, but she relented, replying, "I'll do what I can."

It was Lena who then took over the conversation, letting out a loud shriek for no particular reason. She also looked pretty proud of herself for having gotten everyone's attention.

The three adults chuckled at the toddler's antics, and with another soft smile at them, Agent Christopher encouraged, "You three should go home."

Wyatt felt a wide smile take over his face at the thought. "We are," he grinned, turning to Lucy to find a matching expression on her.

God, he loved her.

And then there was nothing for the three of them to do but go.

Except one thing, Wyatt realized, just as they'd begun to head down the stairs. "Oh," he called out for Agent Christopher, steadying himself with the railing as he turned back to face her. Hobbling through time whenever Flynn next jumped was one thing; he could manage that, injuries or not. But…

"You should get a backup for me or something," he informed the Agent. "We're going to need some time off." And, brushing his hand affectionately over Lena's little head, he added. "We promised
someone a beach vacation."

Lena giggled her agreement for good measure as Denise looked on in amusement and nodded.

With that, they headed down the stairs slowly, but together, Lucy holding Lena while offering her other hand as extra support for Wyatt and his awkward boot. But they made it.

They made it down the stairs and they made it to the door, the same as they’d somehow managed to not only make into this timeline, but to make it through all of the emotional hurdles and confusion and misunderstanding that had come with it.

They had made it, and they would make it. As a couple, as a family. Of that Wyatt had no doubt.

So with their daughter in her embrace, he wrapped his arm around Lucy's waist, pressed a kiss to her head, and ushered the two most important people in his life – the loves of his life – out the door, out into their new future together.

He couldn't wait to see what else this quirk of timing would bring for the three of them.

He couldn't wait.

"Timing is everything, right?"

~Wyatt Logan, The Miracle of Christmas

~FIN~

Chapter End Notes

Yes, before anyone asks, (because I would if I was in the shoes of a reader,) it was always meant to end there, this chapter, like that. I'm not cutting it short because I don't have time or because the show is over (or not?) or anything like that. This was the story arc conceived over two years ago at this point. It's bittersweet to finally end it, but it is nice to know that it's now canon that the 'real' Lucy and Wyatt actually ended up with double the Lena-esque 'happily ever after' with their own little twin girls. Though yes, the serendipitous final quote from Wyatt was obviously not part of this until December :)

(Also, remember – when I started this, Flynn was the bad guy, we didn't know Emma yet, we didn't know the full Wyatt/Jessica backstory, we didn't know Carol was RH, Lucy didn't know Cahill was RH, and probably a whole bunch of other things in this that don't fit with current canon. So if you're hoping for explanation or resolution on all that, sorry – I don't have it. I came up with all of this based on the simple premise of them showing up to a timeline with a marriage and a kid, and way back in mid-late season 1. There was no way to tweak it as I went to accommodate all the new twists and turns of canon. Also note that the Jessica referred to in this is the pleasant-seeming gal from the photos in season 1. Not the evil RH version that showed up in season 2.)

For better or for worse, I hope you enjoyed this. I'm going to miss this little family! I really appreciate those who have stuck around to see it through :)


Stay tuned for the epilogue!

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