

Chapter 19

The rich scent of hot toast, fried eggs, and sizzling bacon filled the kitchen, wrapping Theta in the warmth of a slow morning. The kettle clicked, and she poured steaming water into her mug, watching as the dark swirl of coffee rose to the surface. Taking a slow sip, she turned her attention back to the stove, checking on the eggs as they cooked.

Yaz had gone for her morning run and should be back any minute now. Their holiday was coming to an end, and Theta wasn't quite sure how she felt about it. On one hand, she was excited for the baby's arrival, counting down the weeks until they'd finally meet their little one. But on the other, it meant slipping back into the rhythm of their everyday lives, Yaz's demanding work schedule, the long hours, and the time apart that always seemed to stretch too far.

She had cherished this time together, waking up side by side, sharing lazy breakfasts, laughing over silly things, spending every moment wrapped in each other's presence. Giving that up felt heavier than she expected, pressing against her chest like a weight she wasn't ready to carry just yet.

It also felt unfair. She would soon be on maternity leave, soaking in every moment of their baby's first weeks, while Yaz would be pulled back into work, away from them. Theta sighed, absently stirring the eggs, wishing, just for a little longer, they could stay in this bubble where it was just the two of them, no schedules, no distractions, just them and the little life they were about to welcome.

The door clicked shut, pulling Theta from her thoughts.

"Heya," Yaz greeted, kicking off her running shoes and making her way into the kitchen.

"Hey, love... Had a nice run?"

"Mmm," Yaz hummed, stepping behind her and sliding her hands down Theta's arms before pressing a soft kiss to the side of her neck. "Argh... that smells amazing. Now I'm starving," she chirped.

Theta set the spatula down and turned, draping her arms over Yaz's shoulders.

"I'm all sweaty," Yaz warned with a scrunched nose.

"I don't care," Theta murmured, melting their lips together in a tender kiss before resting her forehead against Yaz's.

Yaz's hands instinctively settled on Theta's waist, her fingers tracing over the curve of her bump. "What's with the long face, snuggle bug?" she asked, her voice laced with concern.

"I don't wanna go back," Theta admitted, nuzzling against her cheek.

"Believe me, neither do I. If you think I'm looking forward to working overtime and Saturdays, I'm really not. I love my job, but it does get a bit much."

"Why can't we just have this all the time?" Theta murmured, tucking a stray curl behind Yaz's ear, her voice tinged with melancholy.

Yaz chuckled and swayed her gently side to side. "Cause we're not millionaires."

Theta giggled, eyes twinkling. "You never know... we might be one day," she smirked cheekily.

"Sure, babe... I just need to wait for my rich uncle to pop his clogs, and we're sorted."

Theta slumped her head against her shoulder, laughing. "Didn't know you had one."

"Well, I didn't want you dating me for my money," Yaz teased with a wink.

Theta burst into another fit of giggles, pressing a kiss to Yaz's neck. "I'm glad I passed the test." She grinned, then patted Yaz's bum playfully. "Now, go get your sexy butt under the shower before the eggs get cold."

Yaz shot her a teasing smirk. "You just wanna ogle me in a towel."

"Obviously," Theta quipped, grabbing her coffee and taking a smug sip as Yaz shook her head, laughing on her way to the bathroom.

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Yaz emerged from the bathroom, her damp hair tousled from the towel she had used to dry it. She padded barefoot into the kitchen, drawn in by the smell of toast and bacon. The table was already set plates piled with eggs, crispy bacon, sausages and golden toast, alongside a fresh pot of tea. Theta sat comfortably, fork in one hand, phone in the other, lazily scrolling as she chewed.

Yaz plopped into the chair opposite, grabbing her fork eagerly. "God, I'm starving," she groaned before shoveling a bite of eggs into her mouth.

Theta smirked, glancing up from her phone. "Worked up an appetite, did ya?"

"Mmmhmm." Yaz barely acknowledged her as she reached for the sausage, chewing happily. "This is perfect."

Theta smiled, shaking her head before turning her phone toward Yaz. "Hey, what do you think about this?"

Yaz paused mid-chew, squinting at the screen. "What am I looking at?"

"The aquarium." Theta tapped the website, scrolling through the pictures. "I went ages ago, but it's still open. Thought it might be fun."

Yaz's eyes lit up. "Ooooh! I've never been to one before."

Theta raised an eyebrow. "Wait, really? Never?"

"Nope," Yaz grinned, leaning in to get a better look. "I mean, I've seen fish and stuff at pet store, but never a proper aquarium."

"Well, then we gotta go." Theta set her phone down, sipping her tea. "I remember going as a kid. Thought it was the coolest thing ever. It's mad that it's still here after all these years."

Yaz nodded enthusiastically. "I'm in. Let's do it."

Theta chuckled, her eyes soft with affection. "You're like a little kid sometimes."

"Says the person with a Hello Kitty keyboard," Yaz teased with a wink.

"Excuse me...Kawaii custom soft keyboard," Theta corrected, waving her fork for emphasis. "There's a difference."

Yaz smirked, feigning a cough. "Right... Excuse me...custom infantile keyboard with flashing lights."

Theta gasped dramatically tossing a piece of bread at Yaz. "Blasphemy! Take it back."

Yaz caught it, taking a triumphant bite. "Never."

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The drizzle had eased by the time Yaz and Theta stepped out of their Uber, the salty sea air mixing with the fresh scent of rain on warm pavement. The sky remained overcast, casting a silvery glow over the Brighton coastline, but the slight dampness in the air didn't bother them. If anything, it made the day feel cozier.

Yaz stretched as she looked up at the grand Victorian-style entrance of the Brighton Sea Life Centre, giving an old-world charm.

"Wow," Yaz breathed, taking in the details. "I was expecting a big glass box, not something that looks like a fancy old train station."

Theta grinned, linking her arm through Yaz's. "It was built in the 1800s. It's actually the world's oldest operating aquarium."

"Someone did her research," Yaz teased, nudging her lightly.

"Of course! How else would I impress my very tough, very not-at-all-sentimental wife?" Theta smirked.

Yaz rolled her eyes but couldn't hide her smile. "You think facts about fish are gonna win me over?"

"No, but maybe glowing jellyfish will," Theta countered. "And giant turtles. And sharks."

"Sharks?!" Yaz raised an eyebrow. "You're telling me this place has actual sharks?"

Theta nodded. "Yap... A whole tunnel where they swim over your head. It's quite amazing"

Yaz's eyes lit up with childlike excitement, and Theta felt a little flutter in her chest at seeing this side of her.

"Alright," Yaz conceded. "I'm sold."

They approached the ticket counter, Theta eagerly stepping forward to pay before Yaz could argue.

"Don't even start," Theta warned, handing over her card. "This is on me."

Yaz huffed but let her. "Fine. But lunch is on me."

Theta smirked. "We'll see."

With their tickets in hand, they stepped through the grand entrance and into the magical, blue-lit world of the aquarium.

The moment they stepped inside, the world shifted. The bright, cloudy day outside was replaced by a dimly lit corridor bathed in shades of blue and green, the soft glow of illuminated tanks casting rippling reflections on the floor. The sound of gently bubbling water mixed with the quiet murmur of other visitors.

Theta immediately grabbed Yaz's arm. "Oh my god, look at the size of that fish!" she gasped, pointing at a massive grouper floating near the glass.

Yaz squinted. "That thing looks like it's seen things... been through a war."

"I feel him, look how he wobbles" Theta muttered, resting a hand on her belly.

Yaz smirked. "You're comparing yourself to a fish now?"

"Absolutely. I waddle, I eat constantly, and I make weird faces when I have gas."

"You forgot being dramatic," Yaz added, grinning.

Theta poked her side. "Rude."

They strolled along the corridor, stopping to admire the smaller exhibits, delicate seahorses swaying in their tanks, playful clownfish darting between anemones, and a sleepy octopus curled up in a corner, its tentacles draped over itself like a blanket.

"That's a whole mood," Theta said, pointing at the octopus.

"That's literally you at seven in the morning," Yaz teased.

"Oi!" Theta gasped, placing a hand on her chest. "You wound me."

"You wound yourself when you set ten alarms and still ignore all of them."

Theta rolled her eyes but couldn't help but laugh.

The real magic came when they reached the Ocean Tunnel, a long, curved walkway where the glass arched above them, creating the illusion of being completely submerged. Schools of silver fish flashed by in synchronized movements, while graceful stingrays drifted over their heads like eerie, underwater birds.

They both stopped for a moment, eyes wide. Above them, sea turtles, and schools of fish glided effortlessly, their shadows casting rippling patterns over the glass walkway. Yaz tilted her head up, watching a massive sea turtle float by, its old, wise eyes peering down as if judging them.

"This is amazing," Yaz murmured.

Theta turned to her, smiling softly. She loved seeing Yaz like this, genuinely in awe, her usual teasing demeanor replaced by something childlike and open. "I think we should get a fish tank at home," Theta announced suddenly.

Yaz shot her a look. "Oh yeah? And who's gonna clean it?"

Theta grinned, linking her arm through Yaz's. "Well, That would definitely be your job babe."

Yaz rolled her eyes but couldn't hide her smile as they continued exploring, stopping every few feet. She paused, taking in the dim lighting, the soft glow of blue-tinted water, and the rhythmic swish of fish gliding through their tanks. The air smelled faintly of salt and the cool, aquatic stillness made her feel like they had stepped into another world.

Theta, however, had no such moment of quiet contemplation. She squealed in delight, grabbing Yaz's hand as her eyes darted across the first exhibit. "Oh my god, Yaz! Look at that stingray, he's smiling!"

Yaz squinted at the large, flat-bodied creature floating against the glass, its mouth curving in an unintentional but oddly cheerful expression. "I dunno babe, looks more like he's planning world domination."

Theta gasped dramatically. "How dare you! That's the face of an angel!" She pressed her hands against the glass, mesmerized as the ray fluttered by like an underwater bird.

Then came the sharks.

Yaz stopped in her tracks as a sand tiger shark glided overhead.

"Bloody hell," she breathed. "Waaw" she gasped, her eyes wide in awe

Theta hummed, linking her arm with hers "Told ya"

"Babe...this is..." she trailed off losing herself completely

Theta smiled lovingly, enjoying in every moment of Yaz's excitement.

A few kids nearby giggled as a massive sea turtle floated lazily past them, its gentle eyes watching the visitors below.

"Hey look that's you" Yaz pointed with a grin "Slow. Hungry. Frequently needing naps."

"I can relate.... And that's you," Theta said without hesitation pointing at shark "All cool, all tough... secretly a total softie."

Yaz scoffed. "Excuse you, I am very intimidating."

Theta gave her a once-over. "Mm-hmm. Super scary. Terrifying, even."

Yaz narrowed her eyes but couldn't keep a straight face.

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After exploring the tunnel, Theta let out a dramatic sigh. "Okay, I love this, but I need a snack before I pass out. The baby demands it."

Yaz laughed. "Sure, blame the baby."

Theta placed both hands on her belly. "He's in charge now, babe. I'm just here for the ride."

Yaz rolled her eyes fondly. "Alright, come on, let's find the café before you start chewing on the exhibits."

They made their way to the on-site café, which was designed to look like a submerged stone castle with arched ceilings and beautifully carved supporting pillars. Theta ordered a gigantic slice of cake alongside a sandwich she already ate and her tea, while Yaz settled for a coffee and a croissant.

"That's a lot of cake," Yaz noted, watching Theta take a heavenly first bite.

Theta moaned in delight. "We watch and don't judge. This is a spiritual experience."

Yaz chuckled. "I wouldn't dream of coming between a pregnant woman and her cake."

"Too right," Theta muttered, taking another bite.

They sat by a large aquarium, where small fishes swam lazily by. Yaz rested her chin on her hand, watching as Theta happily devoured her snack.

"You know," Yaz murmured, "I like seeing you like this."

Theta blinked, mid-bite. "Like what? Stuffing my face?"

Yaz smiled. "No... just happy."

Theta swallowed, her cheeks warming. "I am happy," she said softly. "You make me happy."

Yaz reached over, linking their fingers together. "I really love you."

"Love you too" Theta smiled

For a moment, they just sat there, watching the sea creatures drift past.

Then Theta pointed at Yaz's croissant. "You gonna finish that?"

Yaz burst out laughing. "Of course you'd ruin the moment."

Theta grinned. "I told you, the baby's in charge now."

Yaz shook her head fondly and slid the croissant over.

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After a short break they continued through the exhibits and reaching the interactive rockpool, Theta was first in line to touch a starfish, giggling as its tiny, tube-like feet clung to her fingers. Yaz watched, shaking her head with amusement.

"You love this, don't you?" she murmured.

Theta beamed at her. "Best date ever."

Yaz leaned in to press a quick kiss to her temple. "Yeah... it really is."

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The moment they stepped into the souvenir shop, Theta gasped dramatically, eyes going wide as she took in the sheer adorableness surrounding her. Plush toys, tiny sea-themed clothes, colorful trinkets, it was like stepping into a wonderland of cuteness.

"Oh my god, look at these!" she squealed, darting straight to a massive display of stuffed sea creatures. "Babe, babe, look! Tiny jellyfish plushies!"

Yaz chuckled, watching as Theta picked up one in each hand, squeezing them against her chest. "And now you won't be able to buy just one...admit it," she teased, folding her arms.

"Nooo...Cause he needs a mate...Look at their little faces!" Theta turned them towards Yaz, wiggling them as if the tiny jellyfish were saying hello.

Yaz smirked. "They look like they've seen things they can never forget."

Theta pouted and hugged them tighter. "I need to give them names...Jiggle and Jello?"

"I give up," Yaz said, shaking her head fondly. But just as she was about to step closer, something caught her eye across the shop. Her teasing smirk faded, replaced by wide-eyed fascination.

Without another word, she bolted toward a nearby rack.

Theta, still cuddling her plush jellyfish, blinked. "What the..." She turned, watching in disbelief as Yaz practically lunged for a row of tiny baby-sized T-shirts.

Yaz yanked one off the rack, her expression the definition of joy. "Babe. Babe." She held it up like it was the Holy Grail.

Theta tilted her head, stepping closer. "What's got you?" Then she saw it. A tiny white T-shirt with a grinning cartoon shark on the front, underlined with 'Baby Shark (But Way Cooler)'.

Theta's jaw dropped.

Yaz clutched the shirt in her hands, practically vibrating with excitement. "Are you seeing this?" she demanded.

Theta gawked at her. "Who are you right now?"

"I love it," Yaz declared dramatically. "This is the coolest thing ever."

Theta burst out laughing, covering her mouth. "Okay, but can we go back to you losing it over baby clothes?" She shook her head in disbelief.

Yaz looked down at the shirt again, her expression softening. "Babe, just imagine him in this..."

Theta melted. She reached out, cupping Yaz's cheek. "You're adorable."

"I am not adorable," Yaz said firmly. Then she held up the shirt again, pointing. "This is adorable."

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As they left the shop, the door chimed behind them, and Theta was grinning like a Cheshire cat as she clutched her jellyfish plushies. Yaz, however, was practically buzzing swinging a bag with the tiny shark T-shirt, her eyes lit up like Christmas lights.

"You know what we need to get next?" Yaz asked, her voice filled with that excited edge. "Some proper cool sunglasses for him. He's gonna look well the part." She waved her free hand in front of her face, making a motion like she was already adjusting them. "Be a little baddie baby."

Theta laughed, shaking her head, already picturing their little one strutting about in his shades. "Blimey, you're setting him up to be well cool, aren't you?"

Yaz flashed her a cheeky grin. "You bet, babe, by the time he's two, he'll be strutting around in his little leather jacket, looking all cool"

Theta snorted, amused at how seriously Yaz was taking their future child's wardrobe. "You've already got his whole life planned out, haven't you?"

"Oi...We need to get him started on the cool stuff, or it's a life of socks and sandals for him."

"What's wrong with that?" Theta frowned

"Everything" Yaz giggled "And you know that motorbike we saw. Too big for him now, but he'll be tearing round on that thing in no time."

Theta raised an eyebrow. "Proper little rebel, eh?"

"Exactly," Yaz said, grinning. "He'll be the boss from the start, no questions asked, looking all mint"

Theta shook her head with a smile. "You're gonna spoil him rotten, aren't you?"

"Oi, it's not spoil, it's just giving him the best, innit?" Yaz shrugged, giving a playful nudge. "Can't have a baby shark without the full kit, can he? Can't be having him look basic"

Theta softened, gazing at Yaz with affection. "Spoilt rotten"

"Two mamas madly in love with him." Yaz replied, giving a soft laugh as she kissed Theta on the cheek. "What more could he want?"

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The room was bathed in the soft glow of the bedside lamp, casting golden light over their tangled limbs and the gentle rise and fall of their breath. The world outside was hushed, the quiet rhythm of rain tapping against the window, but inside, within the warmth of their bed, there was only the steady pulse of love between them.

Theta lay nestled in Yaz's arms, her fingers tracing slow, idle patterns against the bare skin of her shoulder. There was something about this moment, about every moment with Yaz that made her feel unlike anything she'd ever known. Safe. Held. Loved beyond reason.

Yaz brushed a strand of hair away from Theta's face, her touch featherlight, reverent. Her dark eyes roamed over her, taking in every detail, the flush of warmth against her cheeks, the way her lips parted slightly as she breathed, the way her eyes, filled with something deep and unspoken, held her in place as if she were the only thing in the world.

"What?" Theta giggled moving strands of hair from her Yaz's face, her touch tender, filled with adoration

"You're so pretty," Yaz murmured, her voice soft but certain. There was no hesitation, no doubt. It was the most honest thing she had ever known.

Theta's lips curled into a smile, one that reached her eyes, brimming with emotion. "I adore you," she whispered, leaning in to capture Yaz's mouth in a slow, tender kiss. It was a kiss that spoke of everything, their longing, their love, the quiet understanding that had always been between them.

Yaz cupped Theta's face as they kissed, her thumb sweeping gently over her cheekbone. She deepened the kiss, not with urgency, but with quiet devotion, a promise in every touch. She wasn't just touching Theta's skin she was worshipping her in the only way she knew how.

Theta melted into her, her hands sliding up Yaz's back, nails grazing lightly over her skin, feeling the warmth of her. Yaz's body was firm and strong, yet her touch was the softest thing Theta had ever known. It was always like this, she was gentle with her in a way no one else ever had been, as if she were something precious, something irreplaceable and relished in every moment of it.

Yaz pulled away just enough to press her lips against Theta's jaw, then lower, trailing soft, lingering kisses down her throat. Theta shivered beneath her touch, a soft sigh escaping her lips as she tilted her head back, surrendering to the sensation.

"You're everything to me," Yaz murmured against her skin. The words came easily, a truth she had carried in her heart. She had never loved anyone like this before, never even believed she could.

Theta's fingers tangled in Yaz's hair, gently pulling her back up so their lips met again, desperate to taste the truth in her words. Yaz kissed her deeply, possessively, as if she needed her as much as she needed air.

They moved together with quiet understanding, as if their bodies knew the rhythm of each other's hearts. There was no rush, no need for anything beyond this moment, their lips, their hands, the slow, aching build of love between them.

Theta's fingers traced down the curve of Yaz's spine, pulling her closer, needing to feel her, needing to be as close as possible. Yaz shifted, pressing Theta into the mattress, her body fitting perfectly against hers.

Every touch was deliberate, every kiss a vow. Her hands explored every inch of her skin, relishing in the way she trembled at her touch, the way she gasped softly when their bodies aligned just right.

Theta's breath hitched as Yaz's lips traveled lower, leaving whispered kisses along the way. She felt cherished, adored, like she was something sacred in Yaz's hands. It was overwhelming, but she never wanted it to end.

Yaz returned to her lips, kissing her deeply as she tangled their fingers together, pressing their hands against the sheets. Theta squeezed back, holding on as if Yaz were the only thing keeping her tethered to the earth.

And maybe she was.

They moved together, a slow, deliberate dance of love and devotion. There were no words now, only the sound of their breath mingling, the quiet gasps and sighs that filled the room, the way they held onto each other as if they never wanted to let go.

And they didn't.

Theta arched against her, her body pressing into every touch, every caress, her heart pounding in time with Yaz's. It was intoxicating, the way Yaz loved her, completely, unconditionally. Her fingers tugged gently on Yaz's hair, strands sifting through her fingers as she pressed herself against her. Her cheeks were burning and her heart pounding in her chest. Once again Yaz returned to her lips, Theta's hand palmed her cheek, her lips curling into a faint smile, her eyes half open, cloudy with passion as she rolled her hips taking her deep inside her. She buried her face into the nape of Yaz's neck soft sigh leaving her lips and she slumped in her arms.

When the world finally settled around them, Yaz held Theta tightly against her chest, their bodies still entwined, their hearts beating in sync. She pressed a lingering kiss to her temple, brushing a hand through her hair, letting her fingers tangle lazily in the strands.

"You okay, love?" Yaz murmured, her voice thick with warmth.

Theta sighed contentedly, her lips curving into a sleepy smile as she nuzzled into Yaz's cheek. "More than okay," she whispered, pressing a soft kiss to her collarbone.

Yaz smiled, running a hand down Theta's back in slow, soothing strokes. "Good," she murmured.

Theta tilted her head up, meeting Yaz's gaze in the dim light. "I love you, so much" she said, her voice barely above a whisper, but carrying all the weight of her heart.

Yaz's eyes softened, her fingers tightening slightly around Theta's. "I love you more," she whispered back, pressing one last tender kiss to her lips before they both drifted into the safest, warmest sleep, wrapped in each other, in love, in forever.

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