

Chapter 34

With Alex sick at home, Yaz's daily rhythm had changed, splitting her time between her work and caring for her wife, who was steadily feeling worse. She stood in the kitchen, brewing fresh tea, listening to the steady drumming of rain against the window.

"Bloody hell, It's coming down out there!" she chuckled as one of their cats darted in from the garden, not wanting to be outside even for a moment. "Right then, let's get this to her...fancy coming?" she said to the cat, lifting a tray with tea and a few biscuits.

When Yaz entered the bedroom, she found Alex getting out of bed, her face flushed and her eyes heavy with fever.

"Blimey, love... it's got you good, hasn't it?," Yaz said gently.

"I feel rough " Alex murmured, her voice hoarse as she pushed her hair behind her ear.

Yaz placed the tray down and picked up the thermometer from the nightstand. "Shit," she muttered, worried. "You need to see the doctor."

"I am a doctor," Alex replied with a faint smile, pulling her dressing gown tighter.

"Yeah, not that kinda doctor," Yaz teased. "I think you need something a bit stronger than paracetamol."

Alex waved it off. "I'll be fine... just need a kip" she said, reaching for the tea.

She held the cup for a moment, letting its warmth soothe her.

“Careful...it’s real hot,” Yaz reminded.

“Nah, it’s all good,” Alex murmured, smiling slightly. “Ta, sweet pea.”

Yaz returned the smile, stroking Alex’s hair and placing a soft kiss on her head.

“Ugh... my throat feels like it’s full of razor blades,” Alex said, grimacing as she swallowed. She reached for the paracetamol in the drawer. “I need to call Sonya and check on Prem.”

“I already did,” Yaz reassured her. “He’s got a fever, too.”

Alex’s face fell. “Oh no... I feel dead guilty now.”

“Oh, don’t be daft...it’s not your fault,” Yaz said, brushing it off.

“Yeah, but still... I think I need a shower,” Alex mumbled, lifting her pajama top to catch a whiff of herself. “I think I stink.”

“Oh, yeah, I can smell it from here!” Yaz laughed. “Go on, take a shower. I’ll change the bedding.”

Alex wrapped her arms around Yaz, resting her head on her shoulder. “Thanks for looking after me,” she whispered.

“Going all soppy on me,” Yaz teased, giving her a gentle squeeze. “It’s kinda nice having you home, even if you’re proper poorly....Mental I know” she chuckled

“Cute mental?” Alex chuckled rubbing her face into her shoulder and pressed a long kiss to the side of her neck

“Now go on, get in that shower” Yaz grinned, giving her bum a playful tap
“I’ll change the bedding whilst you’re at it”

Alex dragged her feet to the wardrobe grabbing some fresh pajamas and

the clean underwear. Her whole body ached and head felt like it's going to explode.

"Are you hungry?" Yaz asked

"No... and don't fret about cooking babe" Alex added, "We'll get a takeaway. You've done enough...I can't face food right now anyway...feels like eating nails," she said, heading to the bathroom.

"Alright baby"

As soon as Alex stepped out, Yaz got to work, stripping the bed and replacing the sheets.

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Alex made herself comfortable on the sofa, bundled up in a thick blanket with a steaming cup of tea in hand. It was about all she could manage, even the thought of a proper meal felt heavy, so she stuck with biscuits, dipping each one into her tea as she nibbled on them. She lazily flipped through the TV channels but found herself too tired to commit to anything. Eventually, she settled on scrolling through TikTok for some distraction.

Just then, her phone rang. She glanced down, seeing her mum's name on the screen.

"Hi mum" she answered, her voice a bit raspy

"Hey baby, how are you doing?" Charlie's voice came through the other end filled with concern and Alex wondered how did she even know

"How the hell..."she chuckled "Yazee called you didn't she?" Alex laughed, though it turned into a coughing fit that left her catching her breath.

"Course she did," Charlie replied with a smirk in her voice. "You really don't

sound well... Have you seen a doctor?"

"I am the doctor" she whined "What is it with everyone today"

"Not that sort... There's nothing wrong with your bits, Alex..." her mum teased.

"Muum!" Alex rolled her eyes, shaking her head. "Seriously?"

Charlie chuckled. "I think you need antibiotics...You know how your temperature can spike and Yaz told me you're burning up since last night. "

"I'm fine...stop fretting"

"You don't sound fine..."

"I knooooow...I just need a rest...that's all. I'll ve fine in few days. I'm more worried about Prem."

"Oh nooo...Did he get it as well?"

"Yeah...not sure if it's from me or this is just something going around...But I feel bad cause I was there yesterday..."

"God...there's nothing worse than when babies are sick. I remember you lot just dropping like flies one after another when one of you get ill"

"Remember when we had that stomach flu?" Alex chuckled

"Jesus don't remind me...I hope Yaz doesn't get it."

"I hope not. She's taking paracetamol just in case."

"You don't think it's COVID?"

Alex laughed "Noooo...Bloody hell mum. You'd think after having so many

kids you'd be immune to this kinda stuff."

"You'll see when you have your own kid, you're never immune"

"That's sweet...Honest don't worry mum. I'll be fine and if I see my temperature is not dropping I'll get antibiotics..Promise...I just don't wanna shove them down my throat for every little thing, that's all...How's everyone?"

"We're fine I suppose ... Ollie's car finally died, so now he's hunting for a new one."

"Oh no!"

"Well, it was bound to happen," Charlie said. "I'm just surprised it lasted this long!"

Alex chuckled, taking another sip of her tea. "I need to call Annie and check in on Ruby, too."

"She's fine," Charlie replied. "She's got a checkup next week. Oh, talking about it... what's the latest with the court?"

Alex's face grew more serious. "I spoke to the police. I applied for special measures, so I'm just waiting on them to assess whether it's viable. If it goes through, I won't have to go to court. I can give a statement via video... So hopefully, I won't have to see him."

"Let's hope so...God I just want that piece of shit to be put away for good."

"Me too," Alex murmured, her voice barely audible as her stomach twisted at the thought.

"Alright, love, I'll let you rest... But please, take it easy."

"I will, mum, I promise. I've got the best carer, so don't worry."

“I don’t doubt that. Love you both.”

“Love you too, mum. Bye.”

Alex ended the call and let herself sink back into the sofa, taking another small sip of her tea. The warm cup soothed her hands as she nestled deeper into the blanket, letting the quiet hum of the house ease her mind.

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Yaz’s day dragged on slowly, the quiet punctuated only by the gentle tap of rain against the windows and the occasional car passing down the street. Sleep-deprived and drowsy, she struggled to keep her eyes open; the dreary weather didn’t help. But at least her project, a website for a children’s entertainment center brought a bit of color to the day. The bright, playful hues on her screen felt like a small spark in the grayness around her.

As her stylus moved across the tablet, her mind drifted to the plans she and Alex had made for a baby. The thought filled her with equal parts, joy and unease. She wanted this so deeply, but a mix of doubts and insecurities swirled beneath that desire, leaving her uncertain. Motherhood felt like a vast, uncharted space, and Yaz couldn’t shake the feeling that she might not be enough to fill it. Passing children on the street rarely sparked any real warmth in her, and she wondered if this detachment hinted at something deeper, a lack of the natural maternal instinct she felt she should have.

It unsettled her. If she couldn’t feel that instant connection with other children, she worried that same detachment might extend to her own child. The idea felt both strange and frightening. Her own standards loomed large in her mind, high expectations she wasn’t even sure she could meet, let alone Alex’s. And with that thought came a darker fear, a feeling that perhaps one day Alex would see her shortcomings too clearly, that her hesitation and self-doubt might fracture the vision they had of their future

together.

Anxiety coiled in her chest, an almost physical weight pressing down.

She set down the pen, unable to focus any longer, needing a moment to breathe and clear her head so she headed downstairs, hoping a snack might clear her head.

In the kitchen, she found Alex wrapped in her cozy dressing gown, her curly hair messily tucked behind her ears from sleep. Alex was steeping a tea bag in hot water, her voice a low rasp as she greeted Yaz.

"Hey, sweet pea, what's up?" Alex's voice cracked as she tried to speak.

"Just need a break," Yaz replied, rubbing her eyes as she opened the fridge. "Want a sandwich?"

"I might actually... I'm starving, but I can barely swallow," Alex admitted, wincing a bit.

"Tell you what...how about pumpkin soup? We've got a few in here."

"Yeah... that sounds perfect. Thanks. I feel like a wreck," she sighed, taking a careful sip of her tea. "I can heat it up, though, Yazee. You're working."

"Don't be daft." Yaz frowned, setting the soup on the counter. "You're not doing anything today, missy, except resting on that sofa."

Alex wrinkled her nose in mock disappointment. "And here's me thinking about some quality time." She teased, giving Yaz's bum a light squeeze and brushing a kiss to her neck. "I could whisper sweet nothings in this sexy, raspy voice."

"Silly cow," Yaz laughed, shaking her head.

Alex gave in, sinking into a chair at the kitchen table, knowing Yaz wouldn't let her lift a finger today.

"Oh, I didn't tell you," Yaz said as she popped the soup in the microwave. "I got a text from my mate Layla. She wants to meet up Saturday. If you're feeling better, it'd be nice if you came."

"I'd love to. Who's Layla? I don't think you've mentioned her before."

"She moved to London a couple of years ago. We grew up together. But, y'know, since she moved, we kind of drifted." Yaz's tone softened as she placed the hot soup in front of Alex.

"That's a shame... Thanks, babe." Alex took a spoonful, savoring the warmth on her sore throat. "So, what's the plan for Saturday?"

"Lunch, probably. We haven't decided where yet."

"Sounds nice. Tell me more about her."

"We actually met through Sonya one night out, and we just hit it off. Been close ever since. But she got a better-paid job in London, so she moved. She's in sales now. It's a shame, really... Seems like all my mates either moved away or kind of drifted off after my breakups." Yaz's voice trailed off.

"I know, sweet pea. But real friends stick around. The ones who disappeared? Probably weren't meant to be in your life anyway."

"Suppose you're right." Yaz sat down across from her with her sandwich. "Anyway, I'm looking forward to it. Lunch, a few drinks... it'll be good to catch up."

"Definitely." Alex took another spoonful, pausing to breathe in the steam. "I just hope I'm better by then. This is really dragging me down," she said with a sniffle, looking wearily at her tea.

They both settled into the comfortable silence, each lost in their own thoughts, grateful for the small comforts shared between them.

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Yaz stretched her arms over her head, glancing at the clock, just a few more minutes, and she'd be done with work for the day. She heard soft footsteps behind her, and before she could turn, she felt a familiar warmth press into her back. Alex wrapped her arms around her, nuzzling her face into Yaz's shoulder, her cheek feverishly hot against Yaz's neck.

"Hey, mushy pants," Yaz teased, turning to face her. "What's all this, hmm?"

Alex looked up, her cheeks flushed and eyes hazy with fever. "Just need a cuddle," she murmured, tightening her hold around Yaz. "My head is pounding."

Yaz softened, brushing a hand over Alex's messy curls. "Aw... You're burning up, babe." She pressed a gentle kiss to Alex's temple. "I really think it's time you see a doctor? Or at least let me get something stronger than tea and soup."

Alex scoffed weakly, though her voice was barely above a whisper. "I am a doctor...."

"Baby please.... Pretty sure you need something more than your usual paracetamol for this one."

Alex sighed, stubbornness flaring in her eyes even through the fever haze. "I don't need antibiotics. Just a kip and a cuddle."

Yaz wrapped her arms around Alex, keeping her close. "I swear doctors are the worst patients." She gently brushed her thumb along Alex's cheek. "Come on, just this once, listen to me, yeah?"

Alex groaned, burying her face against Yaz's shoulder again. "I don't want to go out... don't make me," she muttered.

Yaz chuckled, pressing another kiss to her temple. "Fine, I'll make you a deal. Call one of your colleagues to write you a prescription, and I'll go get

it for you. You don't even have to leave the house."

Alex hesitated, chewing her lip. "I'll think about it..."

"Think fast, 'cause I'm not letting you go until you do," Yaz teased, holding her even tighter.

Finally, Alex relented with a soft sigh. "Alright...fine, I'll call" she murmured, a small smile tugging at her lips.

"Good girl," Yaz smirked, giving her a playful squeeze. "Now, go snuggle up on the sofa while I finish up here, and I'll be down in a bit with your meds, deal?"

"Deal," Alex whispered, giving Yaz one last cuddle before shuffling off to the sofa, a little smile on her flushed face.

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Yaz pushed open the doors to Boots, letting the warm air wash over her as she made her way to the pharmacy counter. The store was busy, with customers milling about and pharmacists moving quickly behind the counter. As she waited for Alex's antibiotics, she heard a familiar voice.

"Yaz, love!"

Turning, she saw her dad standing there, holding a small bag. He looked tired but managed a smile when he saw her.

"Dad! What are you doing here?" she asked, surprised.

"Picking up something for Prem," he replied, running a hand through his hair. "He's really poorly, poor lad. We just got back from the GP. Got a fever and all sorts, he won't eat or sleep."

"Oh no," Yaz said, frowning. "Poor little guy. Must be so hard for Sonya too."

Her dad nodded. “She’s exhausted. But don’t worry about her, love, she’s got us helping out. Just like you’re looking after Alex, eh?”

Yaz smiled, though her heart ached a bit for her sister. “Yeah, Alex is feeling really rough, Dad. She’s stubborn, though.... wouldn’t even let me take her to the doctor. Finally managed to get her to let one of her colleagues prescribe something. That’s why I’m here.”

He chuckled. “Stubborn as they come, isn’t she? But at least she’s got you to fuss over her.”

Yaz laughed. “Oh, I’m fussing, alright. I think she’s secretly loving it.”

They chatted a bit longer, exchanging updates on the family, then her prescription was ready. Yaz said goodbye to her dad, giving him a quick hug before heading home with the antibiotics in hand.

When she got home, she found Alex curled up on the sofa, a blanket pulled over her head like a little cocoon. Yaz couldn’t help but laugh softly at the sight, her heart swelling with affection.

“Alright, you little blanket gremlin,” she said, sitting beside her and tapping her shoulder. “Got your meds here.”

Alex peeked out from under the blanket, eyes bleary but managing a small smile. She took the water and tablets Yaz offered and swallowed them, then, with a mischievous glint, tugged Yaz down onto the sofa.

“C’mere,” Alex murmured, wrapping herself around Yaz like a koala, nestling her head against Yaz’s shoulder. She was all soft warmth and feverish cuddles, her grip firm but affectionate.

Yaz chuckled, stroking her back. “You’re so mushy today,” she teased, though she snuggled right in, more than happy to play nurse. “I should make you another tea.”

“Don’t care,” Alex mumbled, nuzzling into her. “You’re comfy.”

Yaz’s heart melted, and she wrapped her arms around Alex, not minding one bit if she caught whatever Alex had. In that moment, she was exactly where she wanted to be.

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