

## Chapter 14

As always Theta took time to pick her clothes and as usual Yaz would sit in front of the changing cubicles with a dog stroller next to her playing game on her phone waiting for her. But this time around she was taking forever.

"I want you to be honest" Theta said from the cubicle

"I always am" she said still looking down at her phone

"I'm serious...I don't wanna look like stranded whale"

"You can't...you got no tail"

The curtain finally opened, and Theta came out in a sweet cream dress just above the knee cut below the bust, with thin shoulder straps studded with diamonds.

"How do I look?"

"Like a cute marzipan cake pop"

"So, I look huge?"

"You look cute" she tugged her hand and pulled her close "Super cute" she smiled softly looking up at her and pressed a kiss to her stomach

"So should I get it?"

"Definitely"

"What do you think Lola?"

"I think she agrees"

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Theta finished her work and was bored in the office waiting for a call from her mother. She turned the chair towards the window, looked at her watch and pouted her lips. She waited for another fifteen minutes and checked her phone for messages.

"Maybe I should just...Yeah, fuck it" she grabbed her bag and left her office

The small bell on the corner shop rang and Malik sighed, leaving the box on the floor of the tiny storage in the back. He moved the curtain and saw Theta trying to get a packet of crisps from the bottom shelf.

"You need help with that mummy?" he laughed

"Aaaa hiya...Yeah...I think I do actually" she giggled

"Which once?"

"Vinegar please...I'm in my pickled faze at the moment."

"Here you go"

"Thaaaaank youuuu" she took the crisps and kissed his cheek

"What brings you here?"

"I'm waiting for mum."

"I'm confused...Aren't you two working together?" He grabbed the chair from behind the till and placed it in the corner for her

"We dooo...aaa thanks for that..." she made herself comfy and opened the crisps "She's on a meeting with a client. We're going to the pedicure"

"What's wrong with your toes?"

"Why would something be wrong with my toes?" She frowned scrunching her nose

"Want one?" She shook the bag in front of him

"No thanks, all yours...Dad goes when he's got an ingrown toenail"

"OMG" She burst out laughing "I'm gonna have them painted silly...Can't reach my feet"

"Can't Yaz do that?"

"She can...she has done...but it's not one of her best talents...Besides, my mum's taking me so it's fun"

"I don't know how you women carry those babies. Is it heavy?" He asked as he was filling the fridge with juices

"It wasn't before...but now it's like carrying a watermelon"

"Bloody hell" he laughed "Is it scary...you know...knowing where it must come out?"

"God yes...I just don't wanna think about it...I swear I'll pay extra for them to drug the shit out of me"

"You get high as a kite and they just wake you up when it's all over"

"Something like that" she laughed "Oh...What's happening with a club?"

"Oh I dunno...He's been to three banks and they turned him down"

"Nooo...come oon...poor guy"

"I did tell him not to get his hopes up.... don't get me wrong, I want him to get it..." he shook his head "...but you know what is like...money glues to money and he's got none"

"Maybe his business plan needs more work. Banks can be tricky with that. People get money for all kinds of shit just because they have a good business plan"

"I dunno..." he shrugged "I don't know how these things work."

"Hey...tell you what.... I'll give him a call, maybe my financial advisor can help him"

"You're sweet..."

"It's no hassle...I hope I can help..." her phone rang, and she dug through her bag "Hey mum.... I'm in a store with Malik...alright, just give me a call when you're outside."

"Is she done?"

"Yeah, she'll be here in a minute...." she got up and went to the magazine section "Do you have new House & Garden?"

"Should be on the second from the top" he pointed

"Aaaa...Goodie...What do I owe you?"

"Forget it"

"Oi...if you don't take my money I'll never come again"

"Is that a threat?" He laughed getting up

"Yeah, serious one" she raised her brow offering the money "Come oon...don't piss off a pregnant woman. You have no idea what those hormones do." she shook her hand

"Crisps are on the house..." he laughed taking money "...consider it me feeding my nephew"

"I don't believe this" she laughed "...Aaa...wait...!" she opened the fridge and grabbed the juice "Add this as well"

He rolled his eyes chuckling

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Yaz had one of the worst days ever. One of those that made her reconsider her decision to change the course of her career. She was waiting for her superior in the corridor, emotionally preparing for the interview with the rape victim. A young woman accompanied by her colleague passed by her. Her eyes met Yaz's as she passed inches away from her. They were empty as if the life had been squeezed out of them. As she followed them into the room, she felt a moment of nausea, her fingers gripping the doorknob as she closed the door, then composed herself as she sat down, reminding herself that she had a job to do and that this fragile, broken women's life depended on how she does it.

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"Home & Garden?" Ashley laughed at Theta sitting in a chair, feet dipped into a foot bath filled with bubbles reading the magazine "You don't have a garden"

"Maybe I will one day" she smuged "In a mean time I might get some ideas for yours.... Like these tablets and chairs for example. They're beautiful. You could do with a new set"

"I was just telling your father that the other day."

"See...told ya...Also I love this spice rack...Wonder where I can get that, Yaz mentioned the other day she was struggling with spices...Look it's beautiful"

"I saw something like that recently...."

"Where?"

"Can't remember"

"Well, that's helpful" she laughed

"I forgot to ask you. Have you decided on a holiday this year?"

"We have actually. Brighton...The doctor doesn't recommend me flying anywhere. So, we thought we keep it simple"

"Brighton is lovely. Did you book it?"

"Yes. Yaz found us a really cute apartment. Wait, I'll show you"

"Oh, that's nice"

"It's stones throw away from Brighton Palace Pier. Look at the view" she explained excited showing the photos

"And when are you going?"

"From July 21st to 27th. It's the only time Yaz could take time off work"

"That's a nice time to go."

"It is...our last holiday before the baby" she smiled

"OMG so it is"

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After the pedicure they visited a baby store. There were still so many things they needed the list was never-ending.

"What the hell is this? Looks like a coffee machine" Theta asked confused lifting the lid of the machine on a display

"Baby formula dispenser?"

"What does it do?"

"It measures perfect dose of the formula, heats the water and makes it exactly like the coffee machine"

Theta frowned "250 quid! Do I get a nanny with it as well? Surely, I can do that by hand?"

"Of course, you can...What you do need is this" she pointed "Bottle warmer"

"Alright...that makes sense"

"Which one do you want? Let me guess, the one with little bears on it"

"Yees" she smiled cheeky

"I knew it."

"Sterilization machine is next...Honest, sometimes I wonder if we're buying junk we won't even need. Like this..." she picked up a breast pump from the shelf "Do I need that?"

"Yes, you do...you should definitely get that."

"That's huge...I can shove both of my boobs into one of those."

Ashley laughed "I think this comes in sizes. I'm not sure to be honest."

"Oh, I was gonna say...Maybe we should just ask...With the size of my tits this baby will be starving"

Ashley burst out laughing "No it won't, it's got nothing to do with size. When I had you I had milk dripping into my pants"

"OMG" she laughed "Let's go and ask someone"

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Yaz finished the interview and rushed to the toilet. She splashed water on her face, grabbed a stack of paper towels to dry her face with, then stretched her arms over the sink craning her neck. Having to ask the hardest questions and listen to the gruesome details of this case was the hardest thing she had ever had to do. Her mind was racing and her heart beating so fast she could feel it in her mouth. The images flashed in her head as if her mind was playing some sadistic game with her. Then the bathroom door swung open, and she flinched.

"Hi!" the female officer smiled at her

"Hi!" She replied shortly looking in the mirror

"You alright?"

"Yap" she threw the paper towels in a bin and rushed out leaving her colleague vividly worried about her

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It was late and Theta wondered where Yaz was, anxiously checking the time on the kitchen clock. She took the plates out of the cupboard with a deep sigh and proceeded to set the table, then took the cutlery from the drawer thinking maybe she should call. But before that thought had a chance to brew in her head, she was relieved to hear the keys in the door.

"Heeeeey...I was about to call you"

"So sorry..." Yaz bend down cuddling Lola then walked over to her and kissed her gently "I should've let you know, I just didn't know how long it would take then my phone died."

"That's alright." Theta chopped tomatoes and watched as Yaz took her boots off, and then the jacket. She was unusually quiet, and her face spelled a sort of sadness Theta couldn't explain

"You're just in time for dinner"

"I'm sorry babe...I'm not hungry" she left her jacket on the chair and went into the bedroom leaving Theta confused. She pursed her lips worriedly and left cutlery on the table following her to the bedroom where she found her curled up on the bed.

"Yaz....What's wrong love? Are you alright?"

"I'll be fine...I just need a minute"

Theta walked over to the bed and sat on the edge. Yaz brushed a tear and buried her face into the pillow.

"Baby..." she reached out stroking her hair gently "What's going on? Why are you upset?"

Yaz wiggled over the bed and laid her head into her lap.

"Please talk to me honey" Theta brushed her knuckles over her cheek

"I'll be alright in a minute...It's just the case I'm working on. I just had 40 minute interview with a woman who was brutally raped"

"Jesus..." she said horrified debating whether to ask any more questions but then decided to let Yaz talk about it on her own terms

"She doesn't know who it was...So we had to ask her all these questions and details...it just made me feel sick. I know it's a part of my job, but I just felt like I'm violating her even more by asking her to fucking describe everything in a smallest detail...It just made me feel sick to my stomach." She turned in her lap burning her face into her stomach and wrapped her arms around her

"Oh baby...I'm so sorry...But you are doing it cause you care darling, cause you're trying to help. And I feel sure she understands that."

"I still feel like just tortured someone. I'll be fine, I just need a cuddle"

"Alright baby...I love you...so much"

Thetas fingers trailing gentle lines down her back and feeling her stomach rising as she was breathing felt like a soothing blanket. They fell silent for a long moment, and she slowly started calming down.

"I love you" Theta whispered, her fingers running down Yaz's braids

"Love you too" she murmured and kissed her stomach

"I admire you...and I am so, so proud of you, you know that? I could never do what you do."

"I will get him"

"I know you will... I don't doubt it for a second." she gently stroked her hair, but her heart ached for her at the same time. "Heeey... Wanna take a little walk? Maybe you need some fresh air?"

"Mmmmm...That be nice"

"Alright baby...We can take Lola to the park. It's a nice evening, I tell you what...How about I make us some popcorn later and you pick a movie. Would you like that?"

Yaz shifted and sat on the bed "Yeah, I'd like that" she smiled a little

"You know you can always talk to me" she said gently moving little curls from her forehead "Whatever it is...I'm always here for you, no matter how hard it gets"

Yaz reached for her hand and kissed her knuckles "I know you are...C'mere" she tugged her hand and pulled her into a kiss

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Theta was right, she needed some fresh air to clear her head. And the evening was beautiful with a full moon shining brightly in the sky and a gentle early summer breeze brushing against her back felt soothing after a hot summer day. She draped an arm over Thetas shoulders and kissed her temple.

"Did you meet up with your mum?"

"I have...and Malik"

"Malik?"



"Yeah" she giggled "Mum was stuck at the meeting and I was bored senseless in the office. So, I popped over for a packet of crisps and had a nice chinwag with him...Oh god I have to show you what I bought" she laughed

"What did you buy?"

"Breast pump" she laughed

Yaz burst out laughing "I gotta see that"

"It's literally like one of those things they use on cows. But I'm sure it'll be useful."

"Couse it will...you pump, and I can feed the baby whilst you're taking a kip"

"Aaaaaa...seee....Haven't thought of that" she smiled looking up at her softly "Feeling better?" Theta asked worriedly brushing her hand over her stomach

"Much better" she smiled tightening her arm over her shoulder and popped a small kiss to her lips "And I'm a bit peckish now..."

"Goodie...I made chicken in breadcrumbs and mashed potatoes...just need to finish a salad"

"Yummy...come on snuggle bug...Let's go home and you can show me the pump"

Theta laughed and leaned her head on her shoulder relieved she was feeling happier.

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As the evening wore on, a great weight fell off her shoulders and she felt much lighter. Although the whole thing was still in the back of her mind, she felt comfort in having someone to share it with and couldn't imagine it any other way.

The apartment was still hot, so after a much-needed shower, Yaz just pulled on a pair of boxers and a sports bra. She walked in on Theta standing by the stove in a short frilly nightie, barefoot with a frying pan in her hand, fiddling with popcorn and it made her laugh.

"Aaaa!!!" Theta screamed as popcorn started popping out of the pan as soon as she lifted the lid and Lola immediately ran for it picking it up from the floor.

"You got a Hoover" she laughed

"Quickly...give me bowl! Aaaa!" She screamed laughing as popcorn flew out again

"They smell gorgeous" Yaz laughed "And Lola says they taste great"

"Mmmm...they do...here" she popped one in Yaz's mouth "The butter is in the microwave. I got salted one this time"

"Oh did ya..."

"What are you gonna drink?" She opened the fridge door and lifted her dress

"What the fuck are you doing?" Yaz burst out laughing

"Aaarhh...this is bliss" she huffed as the cool air hit her stomach and she wanted to make a home for herself there for a while

Yaz couldn't stop laughing "I'll have a bear please...I need something cold. Is it just me or it suddenly feels hotter"

"It does...Like the air just stopped. There was a nice breeze when were out but now it seems to have gone. Or maybe because of stove...I dunno" she said passing her bear, opened up a can of coke for herself and settled on the sofa resting her feet on Yaz's lap

"Butterfly's " Yaz lifted her eyebrow just now noticing her freshly painted toenails

"Like them?" She smiled silly

"If it makes you happy" she laughed wiggling her big toe

"Neah...Tickles....Oh...oh...that feels nice...you can do that" she said as Yaz stared massaging her foot

"So, what are we watching?"

"Dunno....I said it's your pick today"

"Umbrella Academy?"

"Yeah...that's fun..."

An hour into it Theta was falling asleep leaning over Yaz's chest lulled into it by her hand making lazy lines over her stomach.

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The weekend came and Theta was getting ready to go to a club. Yaz left earlier so she had to get ready alone. She sat on the edge of the bed struggling to put her shoes on when she got a call from Pam who was picking her up.

"Hey....you're ready?"

"Nooo...I can't put my shoes on..."

Pam burst out laughing "Bloody hell.... Wait...I'm coming up"

She hang up and grabbed her bag and shoes.

Pam pissed herself laughing seeing her standing on top of the stairs with shoes in her hand "Now that right there is a reason why pregnant women don't go clubbing"

"Piss off" she laughed

"Give it here you silly cow"

"I got myself a milk pump" Theta laughed like crazy holding on to a door frame as Pam was putting on her shoes.

"You daft cow...Keep still, I can't buckle it" she pissed herself laughing "There...you're done"

"Thanks honey" she kissed her cheek and hooked her arm at hers

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They met up with Amal and Jane in front of the club. The atmosphere inside was electrifying and vibrant. The pulsating beat of the music vibrated through the air. Neon lights flashed in rhythmic patterns, casting dynamic shadows and illuminating the crowd. Conversations a mix of shouts and laughter, barely audible over the bass. The girls pushed their way through the crowd towards the bar where bartenders moved swiftly, mixing drinks and serving tons of people.

"Here you go mate" Yaz pushed the drinks across the bar and took the money

"Can I have a nonalcoholic cocktail please" Theta shouted and Yaz smiled as she closed the cash register

"We don't serve pregnant customers"

"Shame...I was gonna buy you a drink"

Yaz laughed and leaned over the bar kissing her "You should not be here missy...someone can push you"

"Yes ma'am" she giggled

"Wait over there. I'll take a break. What will you have?"

"Vodka Red Bull, Margarita, Mojito and something sparkling for me...Use your imagination"

"I can certainly do that" she winked "Go...I'll come in a minute"

Theta moved away from the bar barely managing to push through the crowd and joined her friends.

"You alright honey" Pam asked

"Yap...it's crazy today."

"Are they serving free drinks or something?" Jane commented

"Wouldn't you like that" Amal laughed

"Jane, have you done something to your face?" Pam asked

"I have babe...Botox...Fantastic stuff I just can't move my forehead...But it irons everything perfectly"

"Jesus Jane" Theta laughed "Aren't you worried about shooting yourself with that stuff?"

"Neah...Something's gonna kill us eventually. I might as well look fabulous when it happens"

"My mate put some fillers in her lips" Pam said "...and now she looks like someone stuck a baboon's ass on her face"

"Hiya" Yaz smiled balancing the drinks

"Bloody hell babe...Give us that" Jane jumped to the rescue

"Hey baby...Thanks for that" Theta smiled lovingly

"And something sparkling for you" she kissed Theta passing her some pink cocktail with a strawberry stuck on the top.

"Uuu lovely.... Thaaaaank youuuu" she smiled

"Come on...let's go upstairs" she nodded and reached for her hand "By the way you look stunning...I love the hair"

"And you always look gorgeous" she smiled demanding a kiss and as always Yaz obliged finding the gesture adorably cute

"I couldn't put my shoes on by the way"

"Oh shit" Yaz laughed "I didn't think about that"

"Me neither..." she giggled " Pam came to the rescue"

They settled upstairs at their usual table. Theta relaxed into a sofa resting her feet on Yaz's lap enjoying gentle strokes of her fingers down her legs

"Yaz...Theta says your brother might be buying this place?" Amal asked

"Well, it's what he wants to do but he was turned down in three banks when he tried raising a loan"

"Damn...What the hell." Jane frowned

"I knooooow...Now he's losing his hopes"

"It might be his business plan" Pam said

"That's what I said," Theta added "My financial advisor is looking into it. Hopefully it's just that"

"Is he planning renovation?" Jane asked

"Yes...not full on. Just partially"

"See if he's asking money for buying and renovating it might be he is just asking for too much"

"You got a point there" Theta said

"When I asked for money for my business, I was turned down twice. Then a banker friend of mine said I need to lower the amount for 20 grand and when I did, I got it straight away. Maybe if I give him a call"

"You would do that for my brother?"

"Course I would...I know we broke up...but I'd help if I can..."

"That's really nice of you...Thank you" Yaz said

"Maybe get together again...ha?" Amal chuckled

"I knew there's an agenda there" Pam laughed

"Why did you break up in a first place?"

"I'm all ears" Yaz laughed "Fucker never speaks to me about anything"

"Time...between my work and his we hardly saw each other. Shame...Great sex"

"Ok...too much info" Yaz laughed

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After a short break to Thetas dismay, Yaz returned to the bar. The girls went downstairs for a while, but suddenly it seemed that even more people crowded into the club.

"I think we should go up. And you shouldn't be on your feet that much either" Pam said

"Yeah...maybe we should" Theta agreed "I do feel a bit tired"

"How's your blood pressure babe?" Amal asked

"Like a yo-yo" she laughed

She followed the girls upstairs looking down watching her steps over the metal stairs and suddenly bumped into a man spilling her drink.

"Jesus, I am so sorry." He apologized as she was looking down her dress and shaking juice from her hand

"That's alright, my bad. Didn't look where I was going" she looked up

"Theta?"

"OMG Filip!"

"Bloody hell, what are you doing here?"

"I could ask you the same. Aren't you meant to be in Australia?"

"I came back last year. Here, let me help with that" he took the glass out of her hand so she can take a tissue out of her bag

"Thanks. Waaaw...Never thought I'd see you again"

"Same here...So how have you been? Married I assume?" He asked looking at her stomach

"Getting there, you?"

"Divorced"

"Oh, sorry"

"Don't be. I do have two kids though. Twins."

"Aaaa, that's nice"

"I'm glad you settled...who's the lucky fella?"

"Girl...actually" she giggled

"Waaaw...things have changed"

"I know right" she laughed

"You still didn't say what you're doing here"

"Oh, my finances brother is a manager here. She's helping out tonight, so I came with my mates. And you?"

"My mate is having birthday due."

"Oh, I see"

"Hey, I was looking for you" Yaz came up behind her

"Hey babes...Having a break?"

"Yeah"

"Let me introduce you. This is Filip, Filip my finance Yaz"

"Nice to meet you" he held out his hand

"Likewise,"

"So, I hear your brother holds this place."

"Yes"

"It's nice...Good music...Must be busy at the bar"

"Oh, it's maddening" she laughed

"I'm not gonna hold you up. I'm glad I saw you."

"Me too"

He leaned over and gave Theta a big hug

"I hope I bump into you again."

"It would be nice" Theta said

"Nice meeting you Yaz"

"Same here"

"Have a nice party" Theta said as he was leaving

"Friend?"

"Noooo" she giggled hooking her arm into hers "That is my ex"

"Oooh...But he seems nice"

Theta burst out laughing "Well the odd one wasn't an idiot. Remember when I told you about the guy I dated for a very short time and then he had to leave for work?"

"Yeah...one of the nice guys"

"Yes... Well, that's him"

"I see...So will you date him again?"

"Oi!" She tugged her arm "Apparently he had two kids, got divorced and came back last year"

"He does seem ok"

"He is very nice"

"Did you sleep with him?"

"Excuse meee...What is this?"



"I can ask" she laughed

"If you have to know...nooo I didn't"

"Just checking"

"Jealous much?"

"Maybe just a little" she laughed and kissed her temple "Hey...I fancy a smoke...wanna catch some air?"

"Yeah, I do actually.... Let me just tell the girls"

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Two women stepped out of the club into the back alley, the pulsating music fading behind them. The warm summer evening wrapped around them like a gentle embrace, the air filled with the scents of night-blooming flowers from the trees and city life. Theta laughed as she kicked off her shoes, opting to walk barefoot on the cool, smooth concrete.

"You're crazy" Yaz laughed "You shouldn't be doing that...there might be glass"

"I'll risk it...the straps are cutting off my circulation"

"Maybe that's because you're wearing high heels" she laughed taking her cigarettes out

"It's a beautiful night...I love summer nights."

"Me too but I would prefer it on the beach" she laughed leaning on the wall and puffed a cigarette

"Soon...Hey...this is where we met"

"So, it is" Yaz smiled

"Seems so far away now...You were so charming that night"

Yaz laughed shaking her head "Seriously?"

"Yeeeah...the way you took control...made me feel so safe.... gave me your jacket...took me for a meal...It was a perfect date" she reached for her hand lacing their fingers

"I didn't know it was a date" she chuckled

"It felt like it...I just had to see you again...I didn't know why at the time...I just knew I couldn't let you go"

"So was a jacket just an excuse?"

"Came in handy... I was gonna call you anyway" she chuckled "Make some excuse"

"So, I was being pulled without knowing?" She laughed

"Unintentionally, I suppose you were" she giggled "You were a perfect gentleman"

Yaz threw her cigarette and pocketed her IQOS then pushed herself off the wall and tugged on her hand pulling her in. Her fingers reaching for the lock of blonde hair tucking it behind her ear while Theta gazed at her with so much adoration it melted her heart.

"I fell for you in a heartbeat. But I never thought you'd be mine." She brushed her thumb over her cheek "I thought I'd have to watch you go off with another dipstick"  
"But you didn't" she smiled

"No... I didn't" she ghosted her fingers down her spine

"Are you charming me?" Theta giggled stroking gently nape of her neck

"Seems to me like it's the other way around" she smirked and brushed her fingertips down her bare arm, the other hand wrapping around Thetas cheek.

"Am I ...." Theta gazed at her softly getting closer. So close she could feel Yaz's breath on her lips that gave her shivers down her spine "Charming you...?" her other hand palming her behind

Yaz didn't answer that, instead she leaned in and melted their lips in a soft intimate kiss gently pushing Theta against the wall. They kissed unhurried for a long moment, the world around them disappearing as Yaz's hands traced every inch of the other woman's exposed skin, her hand slipping underneath her dress running down her sides swallowing a soft moan from Thetas lips as her fingers wrapped around the back of Yaz's neck.

Both caught up, forgetting for a moment where they were, until the metal doors swung open jolting them. The two young women giggled without noticing them and continued down the alley

Theta laughed, resting her head on Yaz's shoulder, her fingers hooked into the belt loops of Yaz's trousers. Yaz shook her head smiling, her fingers tangled in Thetas hair and she kissed the top of her head gently.

"I think we should go inside" she chuckled

"Definitely" Theta laughed looking up at her

"C'mere...let's put your shoes back on"

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