

Chapter 11

Rain poured outside and dark clouds covered the sky as a summer storm swept through Sheffield. The odd thunder scared Lola, who followed Theta all over the apartment looking for comforting cuddles. Since Yaz was working late, she had her hands full packing both of them. The long-awaited vacation finally came, and they were both super excited. Especially Yaz who couldn't stop talking about it as the day approached.

"Hey, it's just a naughty storm. It'll pass besides, I'd never let the nasty thunder hurt you" Theta cradled Lola in her arms comforting her as she waited for the kettle to boil. She's almost at the end of her packing list. Another clap of thunder also made her jump, and Lola tore free from her arms and ran under the sofa.

"Fucking hell. Come ooon..." she looked outside as the rain hit the window wondering where Yaz was at the moment and hoped she wasn't soaking wet somewhere. Then her phone rang, and she reached for it across the kitchen counter.

"Oh, hello Nadjia"

"Hi honey, sorry to bother you. Yaz isn't picking up the phone."

"It's no bother. Everything alright?"

"Yes, I was just checking when is your flight tomorrow? I wrote it down and I can't remember where."

"Aaaa...11:45"

"Did you pack?"

"Getting there. We were both so busy this week it's sort of left for the last minute. I just hope I don't forget anything."

"Make sure you have some basic meds with you. Last thing you want is to look for a pharmacy there."

"I've packed loads, don't worry." She giggled "That's the first thing that went in that bag."

"And please make sure she wears a factor."

"I'll try.... can't promise. She's so stubborn."

"Alright, I won't keep you. Have a nice flight and please call."

"Absolutely"

"Bye honey"

"Bye Nadjia"

She hung up the phone and looked outside. The storm was passing, and the sky looked a bit brighter. She was relieved for poor Lola still hiding underneath the sofa.

"You can come out now sweetie."

....

Theta packed the last things while Yaz prepared dinner. She zipped up the suitcase and rolled it into the hallway, then walked over to Yaz who was setting the table. One of her favorite songs was playing on the kitchen radio and it brought a smile to her face. She leaned over Yaz's shoulder kissing her neck, her hands sliding down her waist as she swayed her hips to the music and Yaz turned slipping her hand around her waist.

"Hey beautiful" Theta smiled softly intertwining her fingers with hers and then laughed as Yaz tugged her hand and swung her across the living room. They laughed and danced until the music stopped and Yaz pulled her into a kiss.

"Where'd you learn how to dance like that?" Theta chuckled, draping her arms over her shoulders.

"My dad, he loves to dance. He and mum even went to some dance classes when I was little."

"Awww...that's so sweet. What's that smell?" She scrunched her face.

"Shit!...kesh"

.....

"It's fucked" Yaz laughed dropping the baking tray on the kitchen top.

"Still edible...We'll just scrape off the top."

"Are you trying to convince me or yourself?" She laughed.

"Suppose we could order pizza" she pouted "But I enjoyed that dance" she giggled kissing her cheek.

"Extra olives?"

"Yap"

.....

Yaz tossed and turned all night, unable to sleep from excitement. She reached for her phone and realized that it was almost six o'clock, and she was wide awake.

"You alright love?" Theta turned sleepy spooning behind her and draped her arm over her waist.

"Can't sleep, I keep thinking I forgot to pack something."

"You're just exited" she smiled kissing her shoulder "Try to get some sleep, you're gonna be knackered tomorrow."

"I knooooow" she chuckled "Night night...love ya"

"Love you too" she mumbled tucking her face in her hair.

.....

Everything was new for Yaz, the airport, the plane. Her heart was beating so fast that she didn't even feel tired despite her chronic lack of sleep.

"Wanna sit by the window?" Theta asked giving her the bag to put in the compartment above.

"Nooo...that just makes me nervous, I can see from here."

"Officer Khan, are you saying you're scared of flying?"

"Maybe" she giggled.

"You'll get used to it. You'll see it's nice" she said enthusiastically but Yaz wasn't convinced. She ignored the window for a good half hour into the flight pretending that she was on the bus.

"Why are you reading safety manual?" Theta chuckled.

"It's interesting"

"Really?" She laughed "So what does it say?"

"Dear passengers, in case of emergency landing put your passports into your mouth for easier identification."

"Fuck off!" Theta burst out laughing nudging her shoulder "You silly sod!"

"Seriously, this is rubbish.... look" she pointed "As if you have time to do all that when you're plummeting million miles an hour. Who are they kidding. You head be literally stuck in your ass when you hit the ground."

"Honest, I literally never even opened it. I'm toast if anything happens. Besides, I'd be just screaming anyway...Arrrrh...fuck sake how do you open this" she fiddled with the little fruit yogurt trying to open the lid. And as she yanked it and finally managed, the yogurt sprayed all over the window "Fuck!"

"Fucking hell babe!" Yaz burst out laughing.

"Shit! Give me the tissue..." she flapped around panicking "Quickly" she shook her hand as Yaz was opening the wet wipe they got with the food.

"You're making it worse."

"Shut up!" She was trying to clean it but somehow just ended up smearing it even more all over the window.

"Be fast the stewardess is on her way."

"I need another tissue" she panicked as she was literally two rows in front of them.

"I don't have one babe."

Theta quickly grabbed the blind and pulled it down then turned towards the stewardess with a massive grin across her face "Hiya!"

"Excuse me, could we have some more of those wet wipes please?" Yaz asked

"Of course, ma'am"

"Thanks"

When the woman left, they looked at each other for a moment then burst out laughing.

.....

A few hours later they finally arrived at the hotel. As they rolled the suitcases in the room Theta threw herself on the bed

"Finally...I need a shower" she lifted her t-shirt sniffing herself.

"We have a pool" Yaz said looking through the balcony door.

"Eeeeww" she scrunched her face discussed.

"Whaaa?"

"It's probably full of kids piss and ten different kinds of STD."

"You just killed my mood."

"Sorry. There's the beach" she smiled rolling over the bed and reached for Yaz's hand pulling her on the bed. "And nice bars" she chuckled wrapping her legs around her.

"With cocktails that have those little umbrellas" Yaz giggled.

"Mmmm..." she nodded with a smile draping her arms over her shoulders "And ice-cream and ice coffee."

"And then we can go for a romantic dinner" Yaz smiled kissing her neck.

"We could, definitely could."

"Can we...you know...be our gay as fuck self's here?"

"Arrrr...not sure" Theta scrunched her nose "Shit, I didn't really think about that when I booked it."

"Maybe we should Google that one before we get arrested."

"Yeeeah...maybe we should" she laughed and pulled her into a kiss.

.....

"Spain is one of the most culturally liberal and welcoming countries for LGBTQ+ travelers." Yaz was reading out loud whilst Theta was taking a shower "People in large cities and in most of the country are very open-minded and accepting. You might not find this in some small villages or with the older generations, however, that is not the norm."

"So, in short I can hold you hand without getting a mugshot?" She leaned from the shower cubicle.

"Yap"

"Goodie"

"Bloody hell, it's so hot."

"I feel human again" she said walking out of the bathroom wrapping a towel around herself.

"We can have a walk around and have some food I'm starving" Yaz said taking her top off. She was overheated, and lack of sleep was catching up with her. So, she hoped a shower would wake her up.

"Me too, that food on the plane wasn't enough. We can walk up to the old fortress."

"Oh yeah...saw the photos in that brochure on the table. I keep forgetting the fucking name of this place. I sounded like a right idiot when my mum's friend asked me where I was going...I had no fucking clue."

"Barri Vell -Santa Creu or just El Barrio babe...easier to remember."

"I'll just think about the bar" she laughed "El bar."

"El pub" Theta chuckled.

....

Yaz quickly got ready. Cargo trousers and a tank top seemed like the most reasonable and comfortable choice considering her whole body ached after a long day and no sleep. She braided her hair in two French braids and when she was done, she sat down at the small table waiting for Theta. She took her time in the bathroom, so Yaz read brochures while she waited for her. By the time Theta finished, she felt well informed about where they were staying.

"Ready?" Theta emerged from the bathroom wearing a floor-length, floaty turquoise paisley dress. She reached out for Yaz to fasten her bracelet.

"Yeah, like an hour ago" she chuckled getting up.

"Sorry..."

"But you look gorgeous, so it was worth it." she passed behind her dropping a kiss to her neck and grabbed her wallet from the table.

"And you look super hot" Theta brushed her hand over her bum as they left the room. She found it hard to keep her hands away from Yaz so that was it until they came back to the hotel.

By the time they hit the streets, the sun was already setting, and a light breeze was bringing cool air from the sea. The winding narrow streets of the small town were

teeming with people, and the smells of different food from the restaurants filled the air and made them even hungrier.

"Tapas!" Theta tugged on her hand pointing excited towards the cute restaurant at the end of the narrow street.

"Let's hope we get the table."

....

"That's a lot of food" Yaz laughed as the waitresses filled their table with all sorts of food. It all looked delicious, and she had no idea where to start.

"I'm hungry" Theta shrugged.

"I can see that" she laughed "I still want that ice cream."

"I'll make room, don't you worry" she laughed "Gotta try this, it's gorgeous" she grabbed some tiny bruschetta and popped it in Yaz's mouth.

"Mmmmmm...oh. That's yummy."

"Told ya...uuuu nice wine. Might get merry tonight."

"You help me get some little presents for my family tomorrow?"

"Yeah, sure"

"And my mum wants a postcard" she laughed.

"Really? Do they still have those?"

"I hope so. Bloody hell look at the size of that olive."

.....

One hour and half a bottle of wine later Theta leaned into her chair and signed looking around haply "When's the last time you did this?"

"You mean going for a holiday with my girlfriend?"

"Yeah"

"Four...five years ago I think...can't remember to be honest. We went to Scotland...You?"

She twirled the wine glass in her hand and reached for olive from the table "Never."

"Are you fucking kidding me? But you had longer relationships? I was just flapping around most of the time."

"Yap" she nodded "But never had a vacation. I was supposed to go on one...Rome. It was all booked, and I got it in my mind how it's gonna be super romantic...Then we fell out and I got a black eye instead."

"Shit...Mark?"

"Yap...I went with my mum in the end" she laughed.

"How romantic"

"I know, right...Can't believe I went back to him...Anyways...I'm planning to make the most out of this one" she grabbed her glass and knocked it down.

"Me too baby" she reached for her hand across the table and brushed her fingers between hers.

Theta smiled lovingly and hooked her pinky to hers "Love ya" she whispered.

"Love you too."

.....

"You don't need a sombrero" Yaz laughed.

"I knooooow...but I want one" she giggled looking in the mirror "Does it suit me?"

"You look like a cute mushroom" she couldn't stop laughing and gave the vendor money.

"Thank yooooou" Theta kissed her cheek and hooked her arm into hers as they proceeded down the street.

"I really wanna know how you will pack that."

"Don't care, it's going with me.... It's good for the beach."

"Definitely, it's like having a parasol on your head" she laughed.

"Ice-cream?"

"Yeeees!"

"Aaaa... look postcards! " Theta pointed to the souvenir store.

"So, they do sell them." She laughed.

"Yeah look, there's loads. That's a nice one and look this is our hotel."

While Yaz was choosing a postcard, Theta saw some beautiful bracelets on another carousel. Yaz wasn't much of a jewelry person, but a cute summery beaded bracelet with a leather strap seemed like something she'd love to wear. So, she quickly picked one and paid before Yaz noticed. She found it delightfully sweet how her girlfriend's big brown eyes sparkled with wonder as they walked the streets. How she stopped at every store and how excited she was for a simple scoop of ice cream.

They took the postcard and sat down for ice cream. Yaz ordered a large fruity one with chocolate topping, but Theta ate too much food and after almost four glasses of wine she only had room for one scoop of vanilla to keep Yaz company.

Yaz wrote the card - Dear mum and dad, We're having a blast, wish you could see this place. It's absolutely amazing. Love you all and don't really miss you if I'm being honest. Lots of love Yaz-

"Wanna write something?" Yaz asked.

"Yeeeah I do actually" she smiled "Can't remember when's the last time I wrote a postcard. We need to find a post office tomorrow."

"Don't we need a stamp?"

"I don't fucking know" she laughed "I suppose so. But we should send it tomorrow if we want it to arrive before we do."

....

After two hours of walking, they both felt exhausted. It had been a long day, and they still had a whole week ahead of them, so they decided to go back to the hotel. But before the evening ended, Yaz wanted to do one more thing.

"Hey...Let's go to the beach."

"Now?"

"Mmmm"

"Alright baby"

A fresh breeze brushed Yaz's shoulders. She kicked off her shoes and let her feet sink into the warm sand as she stood by the water in silence, watching the tiny waves crash against the shore and the reflection of the city lights on the surface of the water. Sea salt mixed with the smell of something sweet like honey filled the air and the sky sparkled with thousands of stars. It was more beautiful than she could have ever imagined. Theta came up behind her, brushed her back with a hand and pressed her lips to her shoulder.

"Heeey" she whispered into her skin and wrapped her arm around her.

"It's soooo stunning babe" she said quietly.

"Wait until you see the sunset" Theta said resting her head on her shoulder and squeezed her tight then after a long moment Yaz inhaled deeply turning in her arms.

"What baby?" Theta smiled softly and reached out tucking a loose curl behind her ear.

Yaz gazed at her without saying a word. She cupped her face, gently brushed her cheek with her thumb and Theta closed her eyes, falling into her girlfriend's lips gently pressing hers. She reached to the back of Yaz's neck deepening the kiss. Then some children's voices from a distance separated them. Yaz picked up her shoes and draped an arm over Thetas shoulder and Theta wrapped hers around her waist hooking her fingers into the waistband of her trousers as they slowly walked back to the hotel.

"I'm tiered" Theta sighed and rested her head on her shoulder "I need a cuddle."

"Me too, I'm knackered." She kissed her head gently "Snuggle bug."

"But we had a grait day. And I got my sombrero."

"You mean a parasol" she giggled.

....

Back at the hotel, Yaz reclined on the lounge chair with a bottle of cold beer in one hand and a cigarette in another watching stars from their balcony while Theta changed into something more comfortable. The lack of sleep had taken a serious toll on her, and she was almost asleep when she heard footsteps behind her.

"Hey" She reached for Thetas hand as she straddled her lap "Don't tell me you're cold" she giggled at her fleece top.

"A little," she laughed, taking the bottle from her hand, and moving it to the floor. "Give me your hand," she asked as she was already taking it, so it wasn't a request but a statement and Yaz accepted it amused.

"Is my hand in high demand" she laughed.

"Always" she grinned cheeky "I got you something" she said as she was taking a small paper bag out of her pocket and taking the bracelet out.

"You got me a present?"

"Mmmm...I hope you like it" She said as she was tying it to her wrist.

"Is that your way of claiming me?"

"Haven't thought about it that way, but now when you mentioned I love the idea" she smiled glancing at her then refocused on adjusting the length "There..."

"I really love it."

"The bracelet or me claiming you?"

"Both" she brought her hand to the side of her neck, brushing her finger over the small hollow near her ear, and Theta leaned into the touch "Thank yooooou snuggle bug. It's beautiful"

"You're beautiful" Theta ran her fingers down her arm as Yaz pulled her into the kiss.

.....

Despite the heavy heat, they decided to go sightseeing the next day. Lots of ice cream, stop gaps to have a cold drink and staying in the shade kept them going. Theta enthusiastically took photos while Yaz enjoyed the scenery taking it all in. She had never seen another country and the architecture fascinated her. She absorbed every little detail of the winding streets and small windows with wooden shutters, the random pots of flowers outside the doors and the worn stone steps. She fell behind Theta looking at the cute windows in one of the streets.

"Smile" Theta chirped haply taking a photo of her.

"Hey, look how cute this is, let's take a picture together" Theta pointed to the stone stairs leading to the door of one of the houses "Excuse meeee" she stopped the random couple "Would you mind taking a picture of us?"

Lady haply agreed and she pulled Yaz's hand.

"Thanks for that" Yaz chuckled as Theta dragged her to the stairs.

"Say happy cheese!" Theta giggled.

"What if I say Gorgonzola?"

"Noooo" Theta laughed.

"It came up really nice" the woman said

"Thank you so much. Have a nice day"

"You too"

"I love it. We should frame it" Yaz said

"You know what, we should"

Suddenly someone ran next to Theta ripping a bag off her shoulder. Her phone fell on the floor, and she screamed.

"Oi!!" Yaz shouted.

"He just took..." she hasn't finished her sentence before Yaz ran after the person "Yaz nooo!" She yelled, but Yaz disappeared around the corner, chasing the guy through the crowd.

He turned into one of the streets, and she followed him, then along the stairs and turned again. She ran after him and then lost him in a small alley that split in two ways at the bottom. He could have gone either way.

"Shit" she sighed annoyed then heard a ceramic pot smash and ran towards the sound.

There he was, stuck in a cul-de-sac trying to climb the stone wall that led to another courtyard, but it was too high, and she grabbed the back of his trousers pulling him down. He fell to the floor and quickly got up. But she already had Thetas bag in her hand. He mumbled something in Spanish that Yaz couldn't make out and pulled out a pocketknife.

"Hey...easy." she reached her hand out "Police. I'm a police officer. You don't wanna do that. Easy...I just want the bag...Understand?"

But he looked at her in panic, his eyes darting between her and the small space between her and the wall. He couldn't have been more than 16 years old. Just a scared kid.

"Take it easy... I'll move away slowly, and you can go. I just want the bag," she slowly moved to the side, and he took his chance running past her pushing her into the wall as he ran away.

Theta picked up her phone from the floor, the screen was broken but the phone was working, and she called Yaz. "Come ooon, pick up baby...pleaseeee pick up...Fuck"

"Hey!" Yaz shouted from the distance.

"OMG!"

"I got your bag" she waived haply.

"Jesus, babe. You're bleeding"

"Am I? Oh, fuck. He pushed me into the wall. But I got your bag" she smiled.

She had a gash on her forehead, and it was bleeding a lot making Theta dizzy.

"Fuck the bag now you're bleeding" she scrambled panicked taking tissue out of her bag
"Come on, let's get some help."

"It's not that bad, is it?"

"Yes, it is, don't touch it. You're gonna get it infected" she slapped her hand and pressed the tissue to her wound. "Come on"

She took her to the first restaurant she found, and the staff were extremely polite and helpful. They had a first aid kid in the kitchen, and they quickly put a bandage on her wound. The owner then drove them to a local emergency room where Yaz received a few stitches, a tetanus shot, and some antibiotics and pain medication to take home. In about two hours they returned to the center and sat in the shade with a cold drink.

"It's really swollen."

"Do I look like Sloth?" She laughed.

"Fuck off! ...You scared the shit out of me. I rather cancel my card than have you being stabbed in some fucking alley."

"He didn't stab me" she chuckled.

"He could've done."

"But he didn't. He was just a kid."

"Oh, and you know that he's not the kind of a kid that would stab you...Because you know everything about him."

"Heeey chill out. I'm fine. I'll have a cool scar on my forehead that's it"

"Pleaseeee...can you forget you're a cop when you're not a cop in your free time?"

"I'm always a cop babe. But yes, sorry." She reached for her hand and pulled her across the table kissing her hairline "I'm sorry babe."

"I'm glad I got my bag back but there's only 30 euros in my wallet and my debit card. It's not worth it."

"I knooooow. It was automatic."

"Can you switch to manual please?"

"Yes" she chuckled.

"Good...cause I can't deal with this shit. It's totally different when you're at work. You got your gear on and a camera and Jack's there. As it is your work is giving me cramps."

"Alright...point taken. Love ya" she brushed her fingers over hers

"Love you too...Xena..."

"Now that's a fucking compliment" she laughed "Does that make you, my Gabrielle?"

"More Joxer" she laughed.

"It sounded more romantic the other way around" she giggled.

"You silly sod"

"Come on...Let's do something nice...I'll get you castanets with that sombrero" she laughed.

.....