

The first time Ellie ever thought about what it would be like to marry Mia Sharpe, they weren't even dating yet.

Which, Ellie knew, was illogical and ill-advised, and if she was entirely honest, the idea of marriage wasn't even necessarily one she'd ever believed in, in the first place. *Love*, in a romantic sense, was an unstable, unmeasurable force, and pinning so much of your security in life on such a gamble had always seemed fairly inconceivable to Ellie, before.

Then again, falling in love at all, before knowing Mia, had always felt out of the realm of possibility, and still, there she was. Knowing Mia had thrown a lot of her very logic-based life assertions and beliefs into question, so Ellie supposed the thought of marriage shouldn't be that absurd.

But it *was* absurd, because even if marriage itself was a notion Ellie could wrap her mind around, she wasn't even *dating* Mia.

In fact, Mia was in the process of welcoming Kristin back into her life and Ellie was... doing her best with that information.

Which mostly meant forcing as much of a smile as she could – even if it probably looked like a grimace because it felt like her heart was being painfully squeezed whenever her best friend mentioned her ex-almost-fiancée. Who just happened to move across the country to be around her again. No big deal.

They were having one of their movie nights, filled with their horror films, and they were both sitting on Mia's couch, shoulders leaning into one another. It always tended to happen halfway through the first movie.

Ellie gestured to the television, after finishing her five minute rant about biology, and huffed out a sigh. "I'm just saying, on the scale of realism, Frankenstein's monster – and his bride – are higher than Dracula."

"In your scientific opinion?" Mia asked, and Ellie could hear the teasing note in her voice.

But it only served to make her feel more validated. "Yes! In my scientific opinion – I'm not saying I would, or *could* at this point in scientific advancements, reanimate a body." Though, it would be very, very cool. "But I'm saying I could believe it, given the right circumstances."

She finished her impassioned her statement and turned her head just enough to look at Mia. She expected her to be watching the TV throughout her minor rant, because it wasn't like Ellie venting about the science behind a lot of the things they saw in movies was something new.

But Mia wasn't watching the movie, at all. Her eyes were on Ellie, and they had that *look* in them. That one that was full of affection and was so warm and that made her eyes sparkle in that way only Mia had, while there was a dimpled smile playing at her mouth.

Ellie never knew eyes could be warm, before. She'd never understood the idea that eyes could be anything other than... eyes.

But Mia's look was enough to take the wind out of Ellie's sails, so to speak, and instead, she just felt her cheeks heat up and her heart pound in her chest. It was something only Mia had ever made her feel, and it gave Ellie this... this rush of *love*.

She mostly wished it all could make sense. She wished she could take these feelings and relegate them down into their natural chemical states – serotonin, dopamine, oxytocin, phenylethylamine. Those made sense. But *feeling* them was... different than simply *knowing* them.

And *feeling* it all made her hurt, so she instead turned her attention back to the movie, which was winding to an end.

Instead of watching the end of the movie, though, her eyes drifted downward and she watched the way Mia's fingers tapped lightly on the couch cushion that they were both leaning into. The way her pinky absentmindedly stroked Ellie's with the movement.

She could feel that light touch. It acted like a burst of static electricity, sending a spark up her nerve receptors, and she knew Mia didn't feel it the same way she did, which made the enjoyment she had from the feeling feel inestimably far dimmer.

Instead of focusing on that, she deliberately forced her gaze back to the television as the credits rolled and the title of the movie appeared at the top of the screen. Immediately, her eyes fixated on the word *Bride*.

And before she could really think about it too much, she found herself asking, "Do you ever... think about it?"

"Reanimating a corpse? I think that's more your wheelhouse, mad scientist Beckett." Mia scoffed and nudged her with her shoulder. "I'll come in and save you when the creation ends up destroying the property and killing people."

Rolling her eyes, she corrected, "I was talking more about the whole, you know. *Bride* aspect."

When Mia was quiet for a few long moments, Ellie looked at her and saw the way her eyebrows were furrowed in that serious way, and her heart skipped a beat in her chest before Mia quirked an eyebrow and looked up at her. "Sort of a random thing to bring up, given the fact that the *Bride* in this movie rejected the *Monster* as soon as they met."

It was the same kind of deflection Mia was great at, Ellie had come to learn.

"Not exactly what I was thinking about, but never mind." Ellie shifted slightly, not enough to pull away from Mia, and she just – she couldn't stop thinking about it. Especially because, "I just mean. Well, Kristin's back in your life. And you were going to – you wanted to marry her, before."

She didn't *mean* to say it, because she wasn't sure she wanted to hear the answer, and she wasn't even sure it was an okay topic to discuss. Even if it happened years ago and even if Mia had said she's over it, it could still be off-limits, right? She wished she understood those unspoken social codes more, in moments like these.

Ellie could both hear and feel the sharp intake of breath Mia took in before she shook her head.

“Ah. No. No, no, I’m definitely not thinking about marriage in any way, in terms of Kristin or otherwise. Not since then.” She let out an uncomfortable laugh, before she sunk into the couch, seemingly impossibly closer to Ellie. She swore there was a tension in Mia then, even though her face looked relaxed, as she stared straight ahead at the TV. “And it’s not something I really was sure I saw for myself, anyway.”

Ellie furrowed her eyebrows together at *that*, because... it didn’t make sense.

“If you didn’t see it for yourself, then why were you going to propose?”

And it just made no sense because Mia was the person who always talked about how she wanted to find *that person*. Even if Ellie couldn’t necessarily understand or entirely believe in it herself at times, she wanted it for Mia. Even if it wasn’t going to be Ellie, she wanted it for Mia.

Mia paused for a beat, before shaking her head. “I guess – I *wanted* it for myself. But at the end of the day – I just,” she bit at her cheek, before tilting her head up at Ellie, speaking quietly, “After Kristin ended things and I really had to take some time to think I just... I wonder if that’s ever going to be a feasible option for me.”

There was that pain in her voice that Ellie hated to hear, and – that wasn’t right. It wasn’t right for Mia to feel that way about herself and –

Mia stroked her finger against Ellie’s again and it brought her jumbled thoughts to a pause, as she asked, “This could be very stupid, given our conversations around relationships, but... what about you?”

And – Ellie had never thought about marriage before. As a concept, yes. But never, ever in terms of something for herself.

But it was in that moment that she looked down at their hands and she could imagine what it would be like. Having these nights, leaning into each other’s warmth, and not having to stop herself from wanting to be even closer.

Having actual rings on their fingers.

For someone who didn’t often have a very vivid imagination in terms of her interpersonal relationships very often, it was thrilling.

And terrifying.

She felt herself blush even as her throat constricted tightly and she shook her head. “No. Not – not really.” She rushed out, before taking a moment and – god, okay, maybe she could see herself spending a forever with...

“But – maybe, one day. It would be nice. To be understood like that,” she admitted, softly, unable to help the words with the vision still in her mind’s eye.

Mia was quiet and Ellie wondered if it was her imagination that Mia fell even more against her, her body solid and warm.

She could feel when Mia took in a deep breath, before she murmured, “Yeah, it would be. I think, with the right person, I could... see it. I’d like to, anyway.”

Ellie cannot let herself think about the *right person* for Mia, because everything inside of her wanted it to be *her*. Even though she knew, based on all evidence, that it was not. And Ellie was not one to bet against the evidence.

And yet...

She still couldn’t help but turn her head to look at Mia. Once again, she’d expected her to be looking at the TV or – somewhere else. Instead, they locked eyes and everything inside of Ellie froze up in the best and worst of ways.

She couldn’t think of a single thing to say in response to that.

//

She thought about it again three months into their relationship.

Ellie woke up in Mia’s bed.

She knew exactly where she was, and not just because of the fact that she could smell Mia all around her, but because in the last months since she and Mia have started to have sex, she’d become intimately familiar with the feeling of waking up in this bed.

She blinked slowly, still a little sleepy, which wasn’t surprising when she thought about how many times Mia had made her come the night before, watching every release greedily, like it gave Mia her own pleasure to see Ellie orgasm. Which, maybe it did, in a way.

Still, Mia’s arm was slung over her hips, as she slept on her stomach with her head turned in Ellie’s direction. It wasn’t how they always woke up, but it also wasn’t uncommon. Ellie had never co-slept with someone as frequently as this, but she’d already started to grow very used to the familiar weight of her girlfriend’s arm around her in some way.

Like Sleeping Mia liked to have her close, no matter position they found themselves sleeping in at night.

She rubbed at her eyes, before she trailed them over her Mia’s softly sleeping face.

She loved seeing Mia like this. Vulnerable and open with her in a way that she *knew* was something only she got to see. Even more so, now that Mia had truly opened up to her, and told her everything about her past.

Ellie ran her gaze over Mia’s back. Over the shoulder blades that she’d scratched at last night, the marks only just visible still, now. She’d never truly thought of and appreciated all of the little muscles in someone’s upper back, she idly thought, slipping her fingertips up and over soft, warm skin.

Even though their relationship is still relatively *new*, there was no question in her mind that she could get used to this.

That she already *was* used to this.

“Are you staring at me while I sleep again?” Mia’s tired, sleep-rough voice that Ellie had gotten used to already even before they were in a relationship, almost made her jump.

Mia’s eyes were still closed, but her voice was teasing, and Ellie blushed as she settled back against the pillows with an embarrassed breath. “No. That’s – weird. According to you,” she mumbled the last part, mostly to herself.

It wasn’t like she woke up *every* morning that they spent together and merely laid in bed and looked at Mia. But... it had happened a few times, admittedly. The first morning after they’d gotten together, simply because she couldn’t believe she and Mia Sharpe were finally *together* in every way possible; that she had woken up naked, with Mia. And the last time this had happened – last week – was because she was marveling at the way she could see the exact place on Mia’s cheek where her dimples would be if she’d been smiling.

She’d never noticed that before. And Ellie liked to catalogue learning all new things.

Mia let out a sleepy sigh, her arm tightening around Ellie’s waist – as if she would possibly be moving away – before she informed her, “A little weird. But I never said I didn’t like it.”

She couldn’t help the smile that tugged at her mouth, as she turned her head against the pillow to actually face Mia. Her warm breath hit Ellie’s neck before those dark eyes opened fully. “Good morning.”

“Morning,” she whispered back.

The fingers against her hip stroke against her softly as Mia inched even closer. “What time is it?”

“Before your alarm,” she answered, because that was all she knew for sure, and she wasn’t willing to move at this exact moment.

Mia hummed softly under her breath and the sound of it gave Ellie goosebumps. “Works for me. I have the day off.”

Ellie was well-aware; she’d missed Mia during her most recent shift. Missed her enough to take a day off from the lab, herself.

Her girlfriend stroked her hand up her side, giving Ellie goosebumps, before cupping her jaw and leaning in. Their lips connected, and it started slow. Those slow, lazy morning kisses that she’d become achingly familiar with.

The ones where Mia’s lips – soft and warm with sleep – rubbed against hers, and Ellie swore she could feel the tingle from her lips to fingers to toes and everywhere in between, nerve connections be damned. She reached out to stroke her hand up the back her eyes had focused on only minutes ago, and Mia’s mouth slanted open against hers, capturing her bottom lip.

Sucking softly, making Ellie whimper into her mouth, and then she couldn’t wait anymore before and she deepened the kiss, coaxing Mia’s lips open with her tongue. The soft groan Mia let out as Ellie stroked firmly down her back again, until her hands landed on her ass, made Ellie both want to smile and devour her in equal measure.

She could quite literally spend forever waking up like this.

Forever.

It was much better this time, when it crossed her mind. Because this time, there was no heart-pounding *ache* that the thought caused. It wasn't daunting. Because Mia was *with* her, and that was all that was necessary to get rid of those aching years of wanting but not having.

But it was still – it had only been three months. Which was way too early to have thoughts like that and actually *mean* them.

And then Mia shifted to press more firmly against her and she couldn't think of anything at all.

//

Ellie did her best to not get ahead of herself and think of marriage possibilities for the next several months.

And it worked, for the most part.

She wasn't ever one to get caught up in fantastical whimsy, and even with Mia, that wasn't about to drastically change.

It wasn't until they'd been together for seven months that she thought about marrying Mia again in any *actual* capacity, and it was all because of a dog.

Their unplanned and unexpected dog.

Ellie grabbed her keys and slid them into her jacket pocket as Mia rinsed out her coffee mug, staring at Ellie over her shoulder, so incredulously, Ellie would have to be in space to misread the expression.

“Gertrude,” she said, her voice deadpan. “You want to call our dog... Gertrude.”

She brushed her hair out of her face, the curls feeling more untamable than usual – she needed a haircut – as she stared back at her girlfriend. “Well, we can't keep calling her “puppy”,” Ellie shot back, exasperated, as she gestured to the dog in question. Who was still a little skittish about affection, but watched them with a little more trust than before, Ellie thought.

They'd found her together, last week, outside of the MIT building that that housed Ellie's lab. Mia had taken to picking her up on nights she wasn't working, especially on nights where the weather isn't all that great.

The sun had just set, the rain was getting heavier, and they'd been about to get into the car when they'd heard the little sound coming from near the stairs. And there had been the dog in question – collarless, far too skinny, the black, gray, and brown fur damp and dripping, with big dark eyes that neither of them had been able to turn away from.

In the days since, they'd had her checked out by a vet, Ellie had walked around the college neighborhoods to check if there were any signs posted for a missing dog, and Mia had called in a favor at the police station to see if there had been any reports of a stolen dog.

And in that week, they'd also bought food and toys and a bed, even if she'd ended up at the foot of theirs in the last few nights.

In spite of not having a plan to get a pet together yet, when all their searches had turned up with the signs pointing to the girl not having a home... well, they couldn't *not* keep her.

Mia rolled her eyes, her own voice even more exasperated, "I know we can't call her puppy. But we aren't naming her Gertrude! What even is that?"

Ellie's mouth fell open in offense. "It's a solid name!"

"A dog. Named *Gertrude*," Mia stressed, dark eyes holding Ellie's and she frowned when she saw all of the laughter in Mia's face. "Come on. A solid name for a dog is... Bella. Or Mocha. Or Willow. Daisy," she ticked off. "Beckett, the other dogs in the dog park are going to make fun of her."

Ellie's frown deepened as she sighed, feeling insulted, as she looked across the room. Their dog, with her smart dark eyes, watched them with her head quirked. "I like Gertrude," she said, quietly.

It was hard for her to explain, this feeling of... she knew Mia wasn't *laughing at her*, but it rang very close in her heart to the many times she'd been laughed at by people who didn't understand her. Maybe that was why she felt the sting so much, in her chest, right now.

Mia gave an exaggerated groan as she slipped her arms into her own jacket, pulling it up over her shoulders. "Okay, we can table this for later when we get home. Little No Name has fresh water, right?"

She nodded, fidgeting with the ends of her sleeves while her stomach churned a little. "She'll be all set until you come home from your meeting."

They didn't speak on it again for a few hours. Not until Ellie felt her phone vibrate in her pocket, and she knew that Mia had waited until her office hours to text her. That alone gave Ellie a rush of affection – bad feelings from this morning moved on from – even before she saw the message.

Mia Sharpe – 11:19AM

Okay, I'll bite. Why Gertrude?

Ellie Beckett – 11:21AM

Gertrude Elion. She won the Nobel Prize the year I was born. She made so many advancements in developing medicines

Ellie Beckett – 11:21AM

Including the first drug used for AIDs treatment. Cancer treatments. Malaria...

Ellie Beckett – 11:22AM

She was my hero, growing up. And women in science rarely get the credit they deserve for all of the things they've given us

She blew out a breath, sort of regretting that message. Because when she read it over to herself, she could already hear the way Mia was reading it and calling her a nerd.

Mia Sharpe – 11:24AM

Aw. Nerd.

Mia Sharpe – 11:25AM

*You definitely did some book reports
on good old Gertrude, didn't you?*

She rolled her eyes, feeling her cheeks heat up even as she typed back.

Ellie Beckett – 11:26AM

Shut up. Only once.

Ellie Beckett – 11:26AM

*But still. She just seems like a Gertrude.
Reserved. Intelligent. Unique.*

Mia Sharpe – 11:30AM

Cute nerd.

The rest of her day went by quickly, despite a distinct lack of messages from Mia for the rest of the day. Quickly and busily. And by the time she headed home, it was after nine at night, her day started before eight, and she was dragging her feet.

When she opened the door, she could smell immediately that Mia had made dinner; the scent of her homemade pasta sauce was in the air and already warming Ellie from the inside out, easing those dregs of exhaustion from her shoulders.

She placed her keys into the bowl near the door, shucking her jacket as she walked farther inside. Only to find the kitchen and living room devoid of her girlfriend, and her eyebrows furrowed together in confusion. “Mia?”

“Bathroom!” Came the somewhat muffled reply from down the hall.

Momentarily mollified, she walked closer to the kitchen table, drawn to the new bright blue collar with silver tags set out. The set of tags that, she realized, were engraved with Mia’s phone number and the address of her station, and she was already feeling that affectionate warmth settling in her stomach even before she flipped the tag around and read *Gertrude*.

She shook her head, breaking out into an unstoppable smile, as she was hit with a rush of love so intense it made her *need* to see Mia. Just because.

Clutching the collar in her hand, she made her way into the bathroom, hearing Mia speak in low soft tones to their dog – to Gertrude. “I know you don’t like this bath, Gert. I don’t really like having to give it to you. Truth be told, you’re kind of making a mess on the bathroom floor with all that...” She could hear water splashing, as Mia sighed, “Moving around.”

She quietly turned the corner, seeing Mia kneeling on the floor next to the tub. Her shirt and jeans were completely soaked through, even as she scrubbed at Gertrude, who was panting and looking livelier than she had for most of her time with them. Mia was laughing in that soft way she had –

And Ellie could *feel* it, wrapped around her heart, as she leaned against the doorjamb.

This woman, this strong, ambitious woman, who made her dinner because she had a long day at work, and was willing to name their dog Gertrude for her, was going to be her wife.

It just hit her, in that moment, as she watched Mia laugh, dimples popping, while her arms were soaked and sudsy from the water as she gave their dog a bath.

This was it.

This was going to be the rest of her life. The feeling nearly made her stumble where she stood, in a good way. The weak in the knees kind of way, that didn't make scientific sense, but Ellie *understood* it anyway, when she was with Mia.

Mia tossed her hair over her shoulder, her smile impossibly brightening when she saw her. "Your dog got into some of the leftover pasta. Sauce everywhere."

It was almost hard to speak with her own smile so big. "My dog, huh?"

"Well, I certainly didn't pick the name," Mia teased, groaning when she got splashed with more water as Gertrude noticed Ellie.

She pushed herself out of the doorway and made her way toward her girlfriend. "I'll deal with the other dogs at the park if they tease her."

When she got close enough, she ignored the water on the ground and knelt, capturing Mia's grinning mouth with hers. The kiss wasn't long, but it was passionate and lingering and wanting, and Ellie just needed Mia to feel how much she loves her.

And when she drew away, Mia looked kind of dazed for a moment, before she shook herself and cleared her throat. "I, uh... well, I can help. At the dog park."

"I love you," she murmured in response, fervently. What she didn't say, was that she was going to love Mia for the rest of their lives. That this, right now, was what she wanted for the rest of *her* life.

But she felt it.

//

She knew that it was time – that they were *there* – almost a year into their relationship.

It was the holiday party at Mia's firehouse, and Ellie had never actually attended the party, before, even though it was an annual event.

Mia was so good at keeping the divisions in her life very clear – work was work, and her personal life was personal. It was how, after being so close to Mia for years, she still only knew one person Mia spent half of her week with, and she only knew Flores so casually, at that.

And, now that Ellie knew everything about Mia's parents and her past, she found that the carefully divided sections of Mia's life made sense to her. The organization... well, that would help Ellie process her life easier, too.

She only found out about the party when Mia mentioned it off-handedly as they had dinner the week before.

“Do you have anything going on next Wednesday?” She asked, so casually.

Ellie thought over her schedule before shaking her head and it was only then that her eyes caught on the way Mia’s fingers fidgeted in that way that she had when she was very nervous or uncomfortable. The concern was already sliding through her before she answered, “No, not that I can think of. I mean, Gianna and Riley might want help preparing whatever we’re doing for Christmas, but I can’t imagine they’d want my culinary assistance. Why?”

Mia took in a deep breath and blew it out, tapping her fingers against her fork before rolling her eyes at herself. “There’s a party that night. My station’s Christmas party, where everyone, you know, brings their spouses and kids and drinks shitty eggnog and does a Yankee swap. The commissioner usually makes an appearance and we review big moments in the year and do a little – honoring ceremony, kind of thing. It’s nothing big.”

She knew that her confusion was on her face and narrowed her eyes slightly. “You usually… don’t like to attend these things, though?”

“I don’t,” her girlfriend was quick to assure, before she shrugged. “But I’m… you remember that night with my heroic injury?” She asked, her dimples flashing quickly, having taken to referring to the night she’d nearly *died* – the night they’d officially gotten together – as her “heroic injury” when she’d noticed how many times Ellie would kiss or lightly stroke her scars.

Ellie nailed her with a look. “Of course.”

“I’m – it’s going to be a whole *thing*, apparently,” she said, biting her lip as she looked up at Ellie through her lashes.

She had to take a second to process, before she started to smile, the pride sweeping through her. “It is? Like, you’re being… honored?”

Mia shrugged, even as the corner of her mouth tilted into a grin. “I mean, I was just doing my job.”

Shaking her head, she leaned in and pressed her lips to Mia’s cheek, grinning when she felt the dimple form against her mouth as Mia’s smile deepened. She whispered, “You are better at doing your job than anyone else.”

“It’s not – it’s not like a big, formal thing, or anything. Just the holiday party.”

Which Ellie had never been invited to, before. Or even really told about, beyond a casual mention of the evening. But Mia’s lines were blurring, and Ellie was becoming a part of her life in its entirety, the way Mia had been a part of hers for years now. And that thought electrified her in the best way possible.

She trailed her lips to the edge of Mia’s mouth. “And we are going, and I don’t want to hear another word about it.”

Mia turned just enough so that they could kiss for real, and there are no more words.

She wore a dress that night. It wasn’t often that Ellie found a cause to dress up – only banquets and ceremonies that she, herself, was being awarded at, typically.

But it was Mia's holiday celebration, where she was going to be honored, and even though the idea of it terrified Ellie, in a way – because when she actually started to *think* about it, she realized... she was not great in social situations. She wasn't Riley or Gianna; she didn't do well meeting new people – she wanted to make a good impression, on these people.

She wanted the people who knew this part of Mia to know that Ellie was worthy of being with her.

Her dress was a black velvet and it fell to mid-thigh, with a plunging neckline – it was new, picked out with every assurance from Gianna, and she bought it mostly to see the way Mia's eyes would darken when she saw Ellie in it for the first time.

She wasn't disappointed.

"I thought you said there was no skipping out on the banquet?" Mia's voice dipped, and Ellie could feel her gaze like an actual touch.

But – god, Mia in the suit she was wearing... Ellie felt the desire like a rush through her veins. "Tonight, your valor will be very much rewarded."

A very fun part of being in a relationship, Ellie had realized, was that the flirting part came much, much easier.

And even though they both were people who tend to avoid these kind of events for different reasons – Mia because even though she was capable of getting along with everyone, she tended to avoid making strong personal attachments, and Ellie because she was neither good at nor typically wanted to make those attachments – she couldn't help but feel a thrum of excitement as they walked into the party.

It was an unfamiliar feeling for Ellie, to be walking into a social situation with confidence. But there was a Christmas song playing in the background, the firehouse was so warm in comparison to the nipping cold air outside, and she had Mia's hand in hers as they paused to slip off their jackets.

"I feel like I'm with a celebrity," she murmured, looking around at the people milling around, several of whom were grinning or waving or nodding in their direction.

Mia ran her eyes up over her body, before their eyes met. "Yeah, it's actually you they're all looking at in that dress, Beckett."

There's no way she looked better than Mia right here, right now, but her compliment warmed Ellie from the tips of her fingers down to her toes.

"If it isn't the woman of the hour!" Flores's familiar voice came from behind them. "You never come to the holiday party, Sharpe. It's good to see you here."

Mia shoved at his shoulder, that beautiful, warm smile pulling up at her lips. "Yeah, well, I finally have someone I want to bring, so..."

His grin grew even bigger, "I know. I was a little worried you weren't going to actually make it; I've been looking for you and the wife for almost an hour."

Mia said something back, but it was white noise to Ellie in that moment.

Because she felt that word like a punch to the stomach. It knocked the air out of her lungs, and it wasn't the first time he'd referred to her as Mia's wife; he's been doing it for years.

He first did it before Ellie even realized she was seriously in love with Mia. He jokingly referred to her as "the wife" and Ellie, with her crush, before the first time she'd ever even kissed Mia, blushed and stuttered for a several moments.

And he'd done it handfuls of times since then. When Mia had been dating other people, and Ellie felt like the word was taunting her and it would make her flinch. At the start of their relationship, when it made her stomach flutter with nerves and would make her laugh awkwardly because it just *wasn't time yet*.

But, in this moment, she was frozen.

Because it didn't feel like that right now. She didn't feel like it was *not the time yet*. Here, in this room of people, she wanted to be known as The Wife. As Mia's wife. She wanted – she wanted that.

"You okay?" Mia's voice pulled her out of her thoughts. "I'm not going to drag you around and make you talk to a thousand new people," she softly assured, as she squeezed Ellie's waist.

And she nodded, distractedly, and thought – Mia's ring size is a 5.5, before she nodded. "Uh, I'm good. Really good."

The smile she gave was genuine because she *was* – really good.

Her girlfriend is heart-stoppingly, mouth-wateringly gorgeous, and she made Ellie forget everything that made logical sense. She made Ellie want to forget every rule of science she'd ever learned.

And she wondered, since Christmas was in only two days, if it was far too illogical to buy a ring.