



Graphic by [Steph](#)

Rating: PG

Classification: vignette, romance (H/M)

Spoilers: U (i.e. the universal set, for my fellow math geeks out there)

Disclaimer: The characters, having now been retired from primetime, are still not mine.

Author's Notes: Two roads diverged in a yellow wood (gosh, I love that poem), and this time I *could* travel both ... so I did. This is the second of my two post-finale fics, and the one I'm unabashedly using to 'fix' some of the little things the devil on my shoulder wanted to see in the finale.

Harm came to see her in the hospital one day in April. He told her about his promotion and the associated transfer to London, looking deeply conflicted about the situation. Mattie nodded bravely, as if her life hadn't been upended yet again, and told him to take it. He immediately promised not to go anywhere that she couldn't follow. Just like that, a trans-Atlantic move was staring her in the face. It didn't scare her as much as she'd expected. She thought she might like life better in a new home for a while; this one hadn't done her any favors lately.

The very next night, he came back, but with Mac at his side, and together they told her about their joint epiphany and potential 'happily ever after.' Mattie listened to their tentative promises about becoming a family on her timetable, leaving it up to her. She was so happy for him in that moment that she would have agreed to anything if it would keep that smile in his eyes. He'd so rarely been truly happy during all the time she'd known him, and if Mac did that for him, then they had to be together. It was that simple.

He left soon after that, to start his new post and find them somewhere to live. Mac had to go to San Diego to fulfill her last obligations to her Marine service, and then she came back to help her new sort-of-daughter prepare for the move across the ocean. They talked about London for a while, and what Mac might do there, and it became clear that as hard as it had been to resign her commission, Mac had been fully prepared to do it. There were oblique references made to what Harm had done for her in Paraguay, and although Mattie had never been able to get the full story behind that disaster, spending this time with Mac helped them forge a bond, built on a foundation of common experiences and a shared fondness for a certain flying lawyer.

One morning in late May, they were reunited outside the customs area at Heathrow Airport. Harm stood there with a bouquet of flowers in each hand and the broadest smile either

of them had ever seen, and as they moved as a trio through the terminal, Mattie felt her trepidation begin to ease. This could work; this could be home.

For weeks in June and July, she learned why many people call physical therapy 'pain and torture.' The therapist drove her insane, smiling in an oh-so-friendly way while firmly insisting in that clipped British tone that she rise above the pain. So many times, the only thing that kept her out of full-blown misery was Harm's gentle voice, telling her about his recovery from his ramp strike and letting her know that she wasn't alone. Mac hung back from those tough nights, sensing that she couldn't relate in the same way, but she was always ready with a hot bath or a bowl of fudge-ripple ice cream before Mattie even realized she wanted either one.

One day in August, she took her first tentative steps with the crutches. She fell into Harm's waiting embrace at the end, allowing herself at last to hope that the life she'd once had might not be entirely out of reach. They sank awkwardly to the floor, and he held her for the longest time, stroking her hair and drying her tears and telling her over and over how proud he was of her. Only late that night did she hear Mac's low voice across the hall in their bedroom, soothing him in a similar manner as he cried out his overwhelming relief.

The next morning, Mattie awoke with the warm, secure sense that, nontraditional though it was, she had an incredible family.

One morning in September, she started attending the American school, restarting the eleventh grade because of all the time she'd missed. She was still using the wheelchair during the day, and Mac picked her up each day from school to take her to physical therapy. Mac had been able to enter the Marine Corps Reserves and was serving as an administrative officer for the embassy's Marine detachment. She joked that she sometimes felt as much like a parent to the nineteen-year-old corporals as she did to Mattie. There was something incredibly normal about all of it, and it was good to feel normal again.

For a week in October, they took a trip back to D.C., and she watched alongside Bud and Harriet as these two people whose lives had been so intertwined for ten years at last were united. It took weeks for both Harm and Mac to stop glancing at the rings on their left hands, as if they still couldn't quite believe it all. Mattie once caught them both doing it at the same time, and they jumped at her exasperated snort, then gave in and laughed.

For fourteen hideous hours in November, she and Mac sat in a small room in the American embassy as a gunman held Harm's office hostage. She watched Mac alternate between pacing and staring at the wall, and knew that it was driving the Marine insane to be dependent on the CIA station chief's periodic updates, powerless to take any action herself. But it was someone else's duty now, and so they suffered in near-silence until a combination of Harm's calm negotiating and the response team's actions resolved the situation without firing a single shot. That night, the three of them fell asleep together on their couch, none of them wanting to lose contact with the others.

One dreary morning in December, when things had been strained between Harm and Mac for a few days, she gave them an early Christmas present by walking across their flat entirely unassisted. They'd both watched with identical expressions of surprise and delight, finding each other's hands unconsciously, and as soon as they realized just how intertwined their reactions had become, the tension between them seemed to vanish into the winter air.

On a few afternoons in January, she rode the tube home from school with her friends, because Harm and Mac were at the doctor's office. She knew it was related to their desire for a baby, and realized for the first time that underneath the calm exterior, Mac was having a hard time accepting all the changes in their lives - questioning the identity she'd so carefully

crafted, feeling like less of a Marine and less of a woman all at once. So Mattie didn't press for details, knowing it would be exceptionally awkward and possibly painful, and instead simply got dinner ready for them when they returned.

One day in February, Harm was called out to the NLSO in Italy to smooth over some feathers ruffled by a brash young JAG on temporary assignment from Headquarters. It took him approximately six hours to size up the situation and put Lieutenant Vukovic on a plane back to D.C., accompanied by a recommendation for an Article 32 hearing for jury tampering. As he recounted the tale at the dinner table the next night, Mac flashed what could only be described as a devious grin and complimented his newfound abilities as a disciplinarian. Harm swiftly tossed back a comment about learning a thing or two from the Marines. Mattie looked from one to the other, felt the sudden spark in the air, and decided that this was an excellent time for her to go work on her homework. With her headphones on.

One weekend in March, Sturgis came for a brief visit on his way to an investigation in the Baltic. At first, everyone was uneasy, but over the duration of a Premier League football game, the frost that had formed between him and Harm showed signs of thawing. By Sunday, they'd agreed to meet up at the upcoming maritime law conference in Lisbon.

One uncharacteristically bright Saturday morning in April, Mattie found Mac frozen in place in their kitchen, staring at a white plastic stick in her hand, and she knew that the last detail of their 'happily ever after' had fallen into place.

*** THE END ***