

## won't want for love

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# won't want for love

by [tziporim](#) ([ferns](#))

## Summary

"Stay still, okay? There's something important I want to ask you about."

"...Okay." Courtney cranes her neck so she can look up at him better. At the eyes, where the cameras he can see out of are. "Shoot."

"How would you feel about your mom and I having a baby?"

## Notes

This is a lighthearted fic but it still has some things to watch out for, primarily implications of past parental/spousal death, issues with parental favoritism, and since this is a "let's have a baby" fic there's lots and lots of talking about pregnancy. However, if the tags worried you, there is no trans pregnancy in this, even though one half of the primary pairing is a trans man. (Courtney is also trans, it's just more of a side note.)

# Chapter 1

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“You’re going to get a cold,” Pat says through STRIPE’s speakers, holding out one giant hand to block the wind.

“The staff’s keeping me warm.” Courtney repositions it on her knees as it glows brighter, like it’s proving to them both that it’s keeping the cold from sinking into her bones. The metal of the water tower is freezing enough to stick to the heat of her skin. “And I’m pretty sure that’s a myth, anyway.”

“Well, even if it is, hypothermia sure isn’t.” He keeps moving the hand, cupping it to protect her from the cold better like he’s afraid the staff will falter in its bubble of warmth. “You should really wear more when the weather’s like this. At least put on a jacket.”

Right then and there Courtney decides to never, *ever* put on a coat in front of him if she can help it. Spite is the best motivator, according to Mike and sometimes Rick. “I’m fine. Worry about yourself, you’re always complaining about how the cold sticks up STRIPE’s controls.”

Courtney can practically hear the exhausted expression from the outside. “It’s all good in here. Just—stay still, okay? There’s something important I want to ask you about.”

“It wasn’t me,” Courtney says immediately, flashing back to the day before when she’d made the mistake of telling Mike to babysit the artifacts that hadn’t been moved back to the old Justice Society hall yet. He’d somehow managed to destroy the entire bathroom during the whole two hours she’d been gone.

“Nice try. Mike ratted you out immediately.” Nuance doesn’t come across very well through the speakers, but he’s definitely laughing at her. “But that’s not what I wanted to ask about.”

“...Okay.” She cranes her neck so she can look up at him better. At the eyes, where the cameras he can see out of are. “Shoot.”

There’s a brief burst of static like Pat just sighed into the microphone. “Just be honest, alright? Just think about it and then tell me how you really feel, okay?”

“No problem.” It must really be serious. He wouldn’t wind her up this much if it was actually nothing, would he? Well, maybe he would. Last time he was talking like this he just wanted her real opinion on whether or not she actually liked his brisket, with the answer being yes, because if she didn’t, he’d absolutely know by now, no asking of opinions necessary.

The pause is so long she wonders if he accidentally broke the speaker setup somehow.

Then—

“How would you feel about your mom and I having a baby?”

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“Like, a *baby* baby? A human person baby?” Mike says, damn near echoing how Courtney had responded earlier that day.

They’re all sitting in the living room, or at least Courtney, her mom, and Pat are. Mike is laying on the couch with his feet slung over the side of it. Technically, Yolanda, Rick, and Beth are still here, but the three of them are in the backyard, watching Beth run Hootie through some drills. That’ll keep them occupied for a little while longer at least. Especially since Beth said she’d start a snowball fight if their confidential family talk wasn’t done by the time Hootie got tired of showing off for them.

“A human person baby,” Barb confirms. She squeezes Pat’s hand. “It’s... it wouldn’t happen for awhile. And I’m obviously not pregnant. But it’s something we’ve been talking about, and we didn’t think it was right to leave the two of you out of it.”

Courtney thinks. She hadn’t exactly been thrilled about the prospect of getting a little brother when she’d first realized that her mom and Pat were actually in it for the long haul. Sure, she likes Mike *now*—loves him, even, as much as she’d love a brother she’d known all her life—but at the time it’d been foreign and uncomfortable.

The thought of getting a younger sibling now is... strange. Weird. But it wouldn’t be... bad, would it? They’d probably be annoying sometimes, like Mike is, but that wouldn’t be the worst thing in the world. She’s not a little kid, it’s not like she thinks they’d take attention away from her—or maybe they will, and Pat won’t be constantly looking over her shoulder and asking if she’s *sure* she should be encouraging Rick to throw Yolanda as high into the air as he can, which would be a *good* thing—or that they’re trying to replace her or Mike.

It might be nice. To have a little sister or a little brother or a little something else. Even another little monster like Mike wouldn’t be terrible. Though, to be fair, he has been better lately, now that they’ve come clean to him about everything and he’s decided that his one and only goal in life is to become a superhero like his dad.

Wait, could they even trust a little kid to keep their secret identities, well, a *secret*? Or would they have to go back to hiding it until they were old enough to understand that they couldn’t tell anybody about it? That wouldn’t be fair, but it would be safe. That’s why they didn’t tell Mike for so long. That’s what they’d have to do, right? To make sure nobody got hurt?

And, hey—“How’re you gonna have a kid, anyway? I mean, like me? Or like Mike?”

“Oh, I wasn’t born,” Mike corrects. “I spawned in the front yard like a Minecraft zombie and they had no choice but to let me inside and raise me as their own.”

“That’s another thing we’ve been talking about,” Pat says, ignoring that. Good choice. “It’ll probably be like Mike, just to be safe. We’re still figuring it out. We’d probably use the same service we—I mean, that I used for Mike, because they were great last time. If that’s what we decide to do, I mean.”

He looks at Barb for help. She nods. “I’d like to see if I could do it myself. But... I don’t know, I’m not in my thirties anymore, there are risks... But I’d still like to.”

“There’s still a lot to work out,” Pat says. “A *lot*. Like she said, it wouldn’t happen for awhile. If we decide we want to.”

“I think you should,” Courtney blurts out.

She immediately cringes. Not even because what she said isn’t true. It *is*. She just probably shouldn’t have said it like that.

But it’s *true*. She thinks they should. It’s a huge risk to the safety of their superhero identities, or whatever, but it’s also... it’s... Pat makes her mom happy. And her mom’s the best mom. And he’s the best dad. She knows that from experience. Having a baby sibling would be nice. That’s what she’s been thinking about since they flew back from the water tower. Every time she tries to talk herself out of it by remembering one of the reasons it should be a terrible idea, she just thinks about how badly she suddenly wants it. And how badly her parents must want it to get as far as bringing it up to them.

“Really?” The hope in Pat’s voice is only outmatched by how much it shines in her mom’s eyes.

Courtney scuffs at the living room floor with the toe of her bright blue sock. “...Yeah. Really.”

“I was destined to be a middle child,” Mike says mournfully. Courtney’s pretty sure it’s just an affectation. Wouldn’t he be in his room by now if he really didn’t want them to have another kid? That’s usually his go-to response when he doesn’t want to hear something. “I guess I could teach her to swear.”

Courtney lightly elbows him. “You don’t know it’s going to be a girl.”

“Of course I do,” Mike scoffs. “You’ll see. Twenty bucks says it.”

Courtney bumps him harder. “You don’t *have* twenty—”

“Kids,” Barb interrupts, “is that a yes from both of you?”

Courtney nods, growing more confident in her answer. There’s suddenly a rush of excitement going through her at the thought of it. Mike gives a thumbs-up, not totally sure what else he’s supposed to do. It’s not like it’ll really happen anyway. It’s just a *what-if*. His dad is really good at those. Never mind that the last few *what-ifs* turned out to come true.

( *What if* I met someone special, while I was on that trip to Blue Valley a week ago? *What if* you had a step-sister? *What if* we moved with Barbara and Courtney to Nebraska? *What if* we had to pull you out of school just before Thanksgiving for reasons I’m not going to tell you about—)

Really, if it turns out to be true, he doesn’t think he’d mind. It’d be less attention on him, but in the good way that meant he could do whatever he wanted at home and his dad wouldn’t even notice enough to get mad at him for it. Not the way it was before, when all anybody cared about was Courtney and how cool and special she was compared to him.

Pat beams, squeezing Barb's hand tight. Her smile is a little more restrained, but no less genuine.

"We can't tell you how much that—" She starts, only to be cut off by the back door getting flung open.

"Sorry, Mr. and Mrs. Whitmore!" Beth calls. "It started pouring and Rick's not wearing a raincoat!"

The confidential family meeting disbands immediately at the interruption. Courtney goes to join her friends, while Mike rushes to the now mostly empty and very wet backyard, probably to see if he can climb whatever tree Hootie's likely still roosting in to pet him. He's been unsuccessful thus far in his efforts but has apparently made it his goal in life to touch his little owl head at *least* once.

There's still one big question they haven't brought up, but Courtney figures that if they're serious about this, they'll just tell her—and Mike—when the time comes to get it all squared away. Pat's too anxious not to already have all of that figured out, if they were far enough that they asked her and Mike for their opinions, but if they were still early enough to ask then there's no way anything is finalized. They'll cross that bridge when they get to it. It's too early now to talk about who would be the baby's biological father.

None of her friends ask her what the talk was about while they try to convince Rick to at *least* use a dish towel to dry his hair—Beth wasn't kidding about it starting to dump buckets. He looks like he fell headfirst into Davis Creek. They're all a part of her family, but... they don't need to know everything yet.

She watches her mom and Pat talk to each other in low voices in the corner, both of them still smiling.

Maybe she shouldn't have said it because of all the risks running through her head, but Courtney knows it was the truth when she told them yes.

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Two weeks later, Courtney opens the front door and stops.

"Uh, hey. How long have you been on the porch?"

Justin looks different now that his beard is shorter and his eyes are brighter. And he's wearing different clothes, not his janitorial uniform. Courtney also doesn't see Excalibur. She'd guess it's in his car. That shows... a lot more progress than she'd been subconsciously expecting. Last time he came over he was practically cuddling with it on their couch.

He shrugs. "Not for more than a few moments."

"I'm heading out to meet everyone at Beth's house, but Mom and Pat and Mike are home," Courtney says. She awkwardly steps around him to get out of the house before pausing. "There's not a supervillain attacking the town or anything right now, is there?"

Justin shakes his head and holds up a torn envelope. Courtney recognizes her mom's handwriting on the outside. And the stamps from the bowl sitting by the dining room table. "I received this letter asking me to return."

"...Oh. Then I'll just, um..." Courtney turns and shouts back into the house. "Mom, Justin's here to see you, I'm letting him in!" She lowers her voice again. "Did she say there wasn't an emergency here we needed help with? Because there's not one, everyone is fine. If you were worried."

"So she said. Many times. But I was told it was important." Justin shifts nervously and Courtney realizes she's blocking the door again and moves aside a second time. "Thank you."

Courtney waves goodbye to him and then to her mom as she comes rushing down the stairs with Pat in tow. "You're welcome. See you in a bit."

It's not that she's forgotten Justin is at her house by the time she gets to Beth's, because she *does* let everyone know that he's back in town for some reason but that he said it's nothing to worry about. She just puts it in the back of her mind and leaves it there. If there's no emergency on either side then it's not really a big deal that he's here, is it?

So she jumps all over again when she sees Justin kneeling on the floor in the living room. Especially since at some point he went out to get Excalibur and has laid it across the floor, looking solemnly up at her parents, hands clasped between her mom's. Barb's face is full of emotion and she looks like she's been crying.

Mike gestures to her from the top of the stairs, and she carefully creeps up them so she can sit down next to him. The candy Beth bought for just Mike that Courtney was the carrier pigeon for is handed over and he grins before nodding back down the stairs in the direction of the living room.

"They're really serious about this whole baby thing," he whispers, hand cupping his mouth.

It clicks. "Oh. They want Justin to..."

It makes sense. She should've guessed. Justin is kind of the only person they know who *could* fill that role. She knows when Mike was born they just had his other dad be the biological father and found a surrogate to carry him, so they didn't even have to think about who it would be that time. Although they probably didn't need to think about it very much this time, either, considering the limited options.

(She does get a sudden hilarious flash of a world where her mom and Pat had to talk to *Crusher Crock*, who is still constantly following them around and swearing revenge while he and his wife pretend that nothing ever happened because there's absolutely no way any member of the Justice Society could pin what was publicly labeled as an earthquake onto them without seeming insane, about being the donor. She would've paid to see that happen.

Honestly, considering Sportsmaster's... *everything*, Courtney's not convinced he wouldn't be absolutely thrilled to be asked to take that position. She has to stifle her laughter with her

hand. Hey, if you can't laugh about the people who tried to murder you and your family, what *can* you do?)

So there's that big question answered. She may not be entirely sure what Justin's currently doing in the other room, but she'd hazard a guess at this being a part of him agreeing. That's—nice? Fitting. It's fitting. Even if he wasn't the only option, she thinks they'd probably have chosen him anyway. Courtney knows that he and Pat have some kind of... history, together. Justin's an ex-*something*, it's obvious. Well, teammate, yeah, but something else, too. She thinks it's kind of sweet. Someone from Pat's "old" life helping him and her mom with their new one. And she absolutely will not think about it beyond that, because *ew*.

"I can't believe they're really doing this," Mike says. He's still whispering. The low voices from the living room have faded out, but Courtney can't tell if it's her imagination or if they stopped because they heard them eavesdropping.

Courtney frowns and leans back on the top step, bracing her elbows against the floor. "I thought you said you were okay with it?"

"Are *you* really okay with it?" Mike rolls his eyes.

"Yeah, that's why I said I was...?" Courtney squints at him. "You're really not? Why didn't you say anything?"

Mike curls to put his chin on his knees. "I don't know." He hesitates for a long time. But his face is all screwed up like it is when he tries to do math homework in the kitchen so Pat knows he isn't just googling the answers. Like he's thinking really hard. Finally, he says, "Maybe I'm just tired of being the difficult one."

"What do you mean?" Courtney asks, but she's pretty sure she already knows.

It's not exactly a secret that Mike acts out at school. Apparently it's not nearly as bad as it used to be, he doesn't get in physical fights with people anymore and he hasn't been expelled or even suspended in at least a year and a half, but even though Courtney got detention on her very first day of school at Blue Valley High it's Mike who regularly gets sent to the principal's office. Pat says things have been better since they got Buddy to help Mike regulate and got a Vyvanse prescription from the child psychiatrist, but Courtney knows Mike still has it pretty—well, he probably said it best himself. Pretty difficult.

Yeah, he's annoying, and he goes out of his way to tease her, and once when he was really mad at her because she accidentally broke his phone he not only bit her but threatened to sell her clothes online and tell people they came from Stargirl's closet. He's also constantly trying to worm his way into her friend group because of how much he claims to want to be a superhero, which is more awkward than it is irritating. But he's *Mike*, he's supposed to do stuff like that. That's just what he does. It's what little brothers are meant to do.

This, on the other hand? This isn't what he's supposed to be like. Not to Courtney, anyway.

He taps his foot at a near-frantic pace on the stair. "You know. I'm not—*you're* the superhero. The good kid."



Courtney looks at him for a second before mirroring his position. Just with a little more room to poke him with her elbow. Gently, though. “I think if you said no and really meant it they wouldn’t do it.”

She’s *certain* of it. It’d break her mom’s heart, she knows it would, but they’d do it. They love Mike, and they really wanted to know what they thought, when they asked about going ahead. If they’re already certain enough to ask Justin for his help, just about the only thing that could make them change course is if one of them disagreed.

“I know.” Mike curls tighter and tugs on part of his hair to separate it before playing with only that piece repetitively. “But I don’t want them to get mad at me. And it might be kind of nice to have a little sister. I like having *you* around for the most part.”

Courtney opens her mouth to reassure him that her mom and his dad wouldn’t be mad at him (even though she knows they’d certainly be *upset* about it) only to stop and blink at him. Yeah, he still doesn’t know for sure that if this really happens the kid will be a girl, but more importantly—“You like having me around?”

“Don’t let it go to your head,” he sniffs, but the affectation of “snotty child billionaire” or whatever the hell it is he’s going for is ruined by the smile he’s struggling to keep off his face even as whatever it is he’s doing with his hair gets more intense. “I don’t know. How am I supposed to feel? I already thought Dad was replacing me with *you*.”

Courtney winces. Yeah, that was... a whole thing. A whole thing that she still isn’t sure him and Pat properly dealt with. They all probably need family therapy. She knows Mike went to occupational therapy when he was younger but that’s *different*, and Courtney only went to counseling for the bare minimum amount of time needed to get her blockers prescribed. Her mom’s for sure never been to therapy—barring aforementioned sessions with Courtney that were really just means to an end—and Pat freaks out about the idea of it for himself sometimes, so it’s not like any of them are practiced at it.

“I don’t think they’re—” She starts, only to be cut off by a voice from the bottom of the stairs.

“Kids?” Her mom says, looking up at both of them. Pat stands next to her, fingers laced with hers, eyes big and concerned. “Let’s have a talk. Just the four of us.”

Mike hesitates and, to Courtney’s surprise, looks at her like he’s waiting to see what she’s going to do. She tries to smile. It’s weird, having him act like he genuinely looks up to her for guidance.

“Yeah,” she says. “Let’s do that.”

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A tingling feeling of déjà vu settles over Courtney’s chest. Yeah, her friends aren’t trying to distract themselves in the backyard this time, but Justin being somewhere in the house (probably with his ears pointedly covered to give them some privacy) is close enough. Mike’s even sitting in the exact same position as last time.

“We could, uh, hear you,” Pat says as an explanation for why they’ve organized this little conference. Which is obvious, but hearing it still makes Courtney flush and duck her head down into her shoulders.

“Sweetheart, why didn’t you say anything?” Her mom asks Mike. “Like what Court said?” Courtney knows she’s only here out of formality. This isn’t *really* a family meeting. It’s a meeting between their parents and Mike that she gets to also be there for. “We didn’t know you—”

“I didn’t want to tell you because I knew you’d be all weird about it!” Mike scowls. “You were just supposed to—I dunno, figure it out!”

“Mike, we’re not mind readers,” Pat says, struggling to keep the exasperation out of his voice. “If you don’t tell us then we don’t *know*.”

“But if I told you then you would get all pissy and do that thing where you act like it’s a big deal that you need to explain something to me when I *know* all of it already! I know you and Barb want to have a kid, and I guess now I know you’re really serious about it, and I’m not *stupid*, okay? I know you don’t really want to replace me with a kid that’s—” His eyes shoot to her and his face changes until it looks like it does when he accidentally tastes avocado. “With a kid that’s more like *Courtney*. But that’s what it *feels like*.”

Pat looks indescribably sad and Courtney feels crushingly guilty. “Oh, Mikey—no, no, you’re not *replaceable*. I love you— *we* love you so much. We’d never try to—”

Mike cuts him off. “I just told you I know that!” Frustration sparks through his voice. “Don’t talk to me like I’m a baby, because I’m *not*, even if only little kids worry about that, or something, I’m *still not*! Just tell me why you want a kid like you’d normally tell someone! Tell me like you’d tell Courtney!”

Courtney feels even guiltier. Pat looks like Mike just picked up a pair of scissors and stabbed him. Barb looks very sympathetic. This isn’t really her cross to bear. She’d only known less than two and a half days longer than Mike, really. He’d been marginally less angry when he’d found out that the whole family wasn’t lying to him. Just his dad. The one constantly telling him to trust him about how good things would turn out. And the stepsister he’d initially outright refused to move in with in the first place. Still, though, this *is* her family. That makes it her problem.

Pat takes a deep breath. It shakes a little. “You’re not a baby, Mike. I’m sorry. We want to have a kid because we know we’d love them. We... really want to add to our family. Because we love each other. That’s all it is. It’s not about replacing anybody.”

“Here,” Barb says. She leans forward. “It’s like this. There’s a lot of love in this family. A *lot*. We love you both so, so much, and you will always be the most important people in the world to us. Nothing will change that. And there’s enough love for someone else, too.” She looks at Courtney. “Even more than just your friends, Court. It’s not a finite thing. It’s not being taken away. There’s going to be *more* of it.”

Mike swallows. Looks Barb up and down. Scratches Buddy behind the ears where he's pushed between Mike's legs at some point, probably when he started yelling. And then he nods. Stiffly, but it counts.

Pat still looks somewhat sorrowful. Courtney's pretty sure he's contending with his son trusting his stepmom more than he trusts his dad. She won't say he deserves it because it's as much her fault as it is his. But... it's not... unsurprising. Things between the two of them are still weird.

"Maybe it's okay. I guess." Mike bends so Buddy can lick his face. He hates this. The whole talking about feelings thing. It'd all be so much easier if they just *guessed* how he felt. Or if he was still allowed to kick walls (well, less *allowed* and more *not expressly forbidden*) over it. "As long as it's not because you just want a kid like Courtney and not me."

"Of course that's not why," Barb says firmly. "Neither of us want you to be more like Courtney. We love Courtney for who she is, and we love you for who you are."

"If they turn out half as good as either of you, then we'll have done a good job," Pat says. Earnest. "If you two weren't as good as you are, we wouldn't even have started considering it. We certainly wouldn't have gotten this far."

Mike pets Buddy in silence for a little longer, clearly thinking hard. "...Alright."

"Do you really mean that?" Barb asks. For the first time there's a little shake to her voice. She wants this *badly*. It's important to her that Mike—that *both* of the kids—can at the very least accept it, too.

Mike bites his lip. "I think so." Buddy licks his hand. "I want to be okay with it. I think I *will* be. Is it okay if I'm not now?"

"That's fine," Pat assures him. "There's lots of time. We only just talked to Justin about it, there's still so much to figure out before it's even time for someone to get pregnant. We haven't told anybody we know except for the two of you and him that we've even been thinking about it. There's plenty of time to adjust. You can take as much as you need."

"I'm going to my room now," Mike announces after about a minute of thinking that over. "Come on, Buddy, let's go." He stops when he gets to the stairs before going up and looks back at them in the living room. "You guys can keep talking to Sir Justin or whatever, I'm gonna be in my room. Um, thinking."

Great, that's enough thinking about feelings and experiencing emotions for the day. Now he can just go sit in his room and play Minecraft and see how many times he can explode the aquarium and zoo Jakeem keeps trying to build before he accidentally blows himself up again. He waves to someone—Justin, obviously—Courtney can't see from where she's sitting, and then he's gone.

"When *are* you gonna tell people?" Courtney speaks up for the first time now that Mike has left. "Are we waiting? Because Beth is gonna figure it out eventually, and then she'll tell everybody else, so maybe it's good if we get ahead of everything."

Her mom and Pat exchange looks. “Hold off on it for a little while longer,” her mom says. “Like Pat said, there’s a lot of time. We don’t need to jump into telling people. We can tell them in a few months, when stuff is finalized.”

Courtney nods. “I won’t say anything. I promise.”

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Courtney leans into Yolanda’s side hug. “You made it!”

“Sorry it took so long, Alex had to turn his music up to cover me climbing out the window.” She smiles and Courtney’s stomach feels fluttery. “What did I miss, except for most of those marshmallows?”

“Nothing,” Rick says, clearly contemplating throwing the glass bottle in his hand into their little campfire, which Beth made sure was following local burn notice regulations.

“Baby,” Courtney says at the same time, entirely by accident.

Maybe she could’ve gotten away with saying that she was calling Yolanda that, as mortifying as that might be, but it’s ruined by Beth clapping her hands and jumping up. “I knew it!”

Dammit. Her mom is going to kill her.

## Chapter End Notes

Now that most of the Injustice Society is gone there are only, like, 5 adult cis men in Blue Valley at most. 4 whenever Justin isn't there. Really stretching the options as far as friends go.

Chapter two of this is a "bonus scene," not really a full-fledged chapter.

# "Deleted" Scene

## Chapter Summary

This bonus scene contains a lot of anxiety about worst-case scenarios during pregnancy and childbirth. However nothing like that actually occurs and none of the discussion of it is graphic.

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“Shouldn’t they have called by now?” Mike asks. He’s laying on the floor with his face covered in cheese dust which Buddy is attempting to lick off.

Courtney taps her foot nervously. “I think everything’s okay. Pat said he’d text me if they got attacked or something, and Justin’s supposed to be ‘patrolling’ around the hospital, and they probably can’t get past him *and* Beth...”

Beth had offered to be secondary security detail since she could easily make up an excuse for why she was at the hospital so late at whatever time it was that Barb’s water broke as long as her mom was working at the time. She’s there now, though her updates mostly consist of the words “no danger yet!” at regular intervals. Which *is* helpful, sure, but Courtney still feels sick with anxiety.

There’s a lot of stuff that could go wrong. A *lot* of stuff. They could get attacked by Sportsmaster and Tigress while they’re vulnerable. There could be an emergency in town like a major fire that they wouldn’t be at maximum strength to help with. Grundy could decide he’s done living passively in the tunnels and enjoying Beth’s company when she goes down to visit him and decide to destroy the town’s physical infrastructure.

And that’s just external things. Something could go wrong with her mom, like on the inside, like what Cameron told her happened with his mom when he was born, and even though things were fine for him until his mom got sick later what if her mom isn’t? What if something really bad happens with the baby? Her mom’s not *old*, it’s not like she’s the first woman her age to get pregnant, but Courtney panic-read a bunch of stuff about all the worst-case scenarios when the doctor confirmed (multiple times) that her mom was successfully pregnant and it was all really bad and scary stuff.

Yeah, most of it happened before people were actually ready to give birth, but not all of it! It was terrifying! Why would anybody use their body to have a kid, ever?

“It feels like it’s taking too long, right?” Mike frowns. “Right? Are we supposed to go over there? How long is too long?”

“I don’t know, I’ve never done this before.” Courtney’s foot tapping upgrades to full-on rapid leg bouncing. The staff pushes up under her arm and ripples a little with heat. She brought it up when she first started thinking about emergencies that would mean she’d have to get going fast. “Our parents are the only ones who have and they’re the ones doing it!”

“I’m googling it,” Mike announces, flipping onto his stomach and stowing away his Switch so he can look it up on his phone. “How old is Barb again?”

“She’s your stepmom, you should know how old she is.” Courtney rolls her eyes.

“How old is my dad?” Mike counters.

Courtney opens her mouth to tell him that they both know damn well Pat is approaching his one-hundred and first birthday before her phone starts buzzing loudly. She snatches it up immediately and her chest feels tight when she sees Pat’s the one calling.

She frantically waves at Mike to shut up and answers, pressing her phone to her ear so tightly it hurts. “Is Mom okay?” She demands, springing to her feet just in case they have to take off. “What’s going on?”

Pat’s definitely crying on the other end of the line, which makes Courtney’s heart rocket into her mouth and do jackknives at the back of her throat. Her fingers feel cold.

Hearing her mom’s distant voice makes the blood come back to her hands and face a little bit. “*Honey, you can’t just call Court and cry at her—give me the phone—oh, ow, ow, that hurts. That really—nurse? I, um, I need—ow, ow, ow—*”

“*Girl,*” Pat chokes out, and Courtney realizes she’s shaking a little. “*She’s a little girl, Court, she’s beautiful, she looks just like you.*”

“Oh, shit!” Courtney’s sure her smile is wobbling, but it’s still so wide it hurts her cheeks. Pat doesn’t even make an effort to correct her for swearing, just laughs wetly into the phone. She can easily picture him gripping her mom’s hand so tightly his knuckles are white. “Send a picture! Use Mom’s phone!”

“Barb’s okay?” Mike says, sitting up. “Courtney?”

Courtney nods fast. “She’s okay, I think, she was talking, Dad didn’t say anything, but it’s a girl, and he’s going to send pictures. We—oh, wow.” She tries to sit down in the chair she’d been sitting in for the first four hours and misses by a mile, landing hard on the floor. The accidental pain in her tailbone makes her forget that she just called Pat “*Dad.*” Like, for real this time, not as a joke, the way she’s said it before. “We’ve got a *sister.*”

Mike grins at her from the floor. It looks... really genuine. Courtney can’t help but feel warm, even if he’s probably making fun of her for taking the fall. “You know what this means, right?”

Courtney rolls her eyes at him again, but hands over the twenty dollars all the same.

## Chapter End Notes

You can find me @augustheart on tumblr, where I consistently refuse to stop using Decemberists lyrics as fic titles.

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