

Sam hadn't had a thing to drink in years. It had taken her so long to get rid of the nasty habit, and yet it was so easy to fall back into it. She felt guilty ordering the first drink at the bar, but as soon she brought the glass to her lips, she gave in completely.

"What's going on?" Kiara asked.

"Something's happened with Sam," Adam replied, rummaging through Kiara's drawer and tossing her clothes at her.

"But it's the middle of the night, what- " Kiara started to say before Adam cut her off.

"Are you coming or not? She's in the hospital, and the only thing she's said to anyone is your name," Adam turned and left Kiara to get dressed.

*Fuck*, Kiara thought to herself. She didn't really want to see Sam hurt, but this was not the time to be selfish. She got dressed as quickly as she could, leaving her hair in its usual nighttime braid for time's sake. If Sam needed her, she'd do anything to be by her old friend's side.

Kiara and Adam rode on Onie, the giant winged capybara flying as quickly as he could. When they finally arrived at the hospital, Onie landed on the side of the street.

"Onie, you fly back to the island, we'll take the ferry back," Adam told the air bison as he slid down after Kiara.

Onie launched himself back into the air, leaving Adam and Kiara standing on the cold, dark sidewalk. The siblings stood in silence for a moment before both turning to enter the hospital.

The woman at the front desk seemed to recognize them right away, flagging one of her colleagues to bring them to Sam. They were taken up to the third floor, down several hallways, and finally to a closed door to a corner room. A nurse opened the door just as they arrived, nearly crashing into Kiara.

"I-I'm so sorry," she muttered before looking up to meet Kiara's eyes.

"Are you Kiara? She's been asking for you since she regained consciousness. She's awake now, and doing reasonably better, I think she'd appreciate it if you came to see her," The nurse glanced at Adam.

"Maybe give us a moment before coming in," Kiara said gently to her younger brother. "I'll come out in a minute and give you some time alone with her as well, alright?"

Adam nodded and Kiara pushed the door open.

Sam had several IVs plugged into her left arm, and there was a sleeve around her right arm monitoring her blood pressure. The upper half of her bed had been raised to keep her in a comfortable sitting position. She looked weak, but didn't appear to have any physical injuries. Her head turned to Kiara as she closed the door behind her, and it suddenly hit her.

"You've been drinking tonight, haven't you?" Kiara said after a long pause.

Sam turned her head away, looking out one of her many windows at the night sky. Kiara's heart ached for the younger woman. She'd stayed with Sam for several weeks after something similar happened, many years ago. She'd helped Sam to quit drinking after that night.

But she had plenty of bad habits of her own. She knew how easy it was to fall back into them. How much shame came after a relapse, and how much harder it was to stop the second, third, hundredth time.

Kiara grabbed the small chair sitting next to the door, bringing it around Sam's bed to sit between her and the windows. She took Sam's right hand in hers, rubbing her thumb slowly back and forth. Sam looked down at her, guilt straining her expression.

"Kiara..." Sam choked on her words.

“Hey, it’s alright. You don’t have to talk now. Or ever, but I think talking at some point would be good,” Kiara mustered up a small smile, and Sam chuckled weakly.

Sam drew a deep breath and closed her eyes, resting her head against the back of her bed.

“You’re probably confused about why you were the one I was asking for,” Sam started, her hand lightly squeezing Kiara’s.

“You’ve always been here for me. Even when you were travelling, you’d write to me, and you came back when I needed you. You helped me stop drinking, helped me survive the last time this happened,” she stopped for a moment, looking Kiara in the eyes again.

“Kiara, I... I love you,” her last words came out as barely a whisper.

Kiara stared at Sam in shock for a moment. Suddenly everything made sense to her. She’d always felt especially drawn to Sam, but never thought it was because she had *feelings* for her. Every goodbye between them had hurt more than the others, and she felt so safe with Sam. She’d had partners on her travels, but this... this was different. It was so deep, so raw, so *right*.

“I love you too,” she breathed. It was something she’d never expected to say to anyone really, but it was true. She couldn’t believe how blind she’d been, not noticing her own feelings, and completely ignoring Sam’s.

“I love you too,” she repeated, the corners of her mouth lifting.

A tear slipped down Sam’s cheek, but a smile decorated her face too. She leaned her head back again, letting out a sigh. A small laugh escaped her throat, delicate and musical. Kiara wanted to keep the sound forever, to keep Sam forever.

They sat quietly for a moment, Kiara still stroking Sam’s hand gently. They’d get through this, together. Everything was wrong, but perfect at the same time. The moment shattered when Adam came in and started asking Sam an ungodly number of questions, but after answering a few, Kiara kicked him out, telling him to go back to the island.

Kiara stayed in the hospital room with Sam until the next morning when she was given the all clear to go home. Instead of going back to Instin Island, though, she went to Sam’s apartment with her. She’d finally found her home.