EXCLUSIVE

BONUS Epilogue

FOR

Forever Yours

SOME LOVE STORIES ARE WRITTEN IN MOMENTS. OURS IS WRITTEN IN FOREVER.

ALISON REID

Exclusive Bonus Epilogue

Forever Yours

by Alison Reid

Five Years Later…

The Beaumont estate had always been impressive, but on Father's Day, it felt like home.

Children's laughter drifted across the sprawling backyard as the spring sun cast a soft golden glow over the perfectly manicured gardens. A barbecue sizzled nearby while music played quietly through hidden outdoor speakers, blending with the cheerful chatter of family.

Andrew leaned back in his chair on the stone terrace, his fingers intertwined with Celeste's as they watched the scene unfolding before them.

Their daughter. Their beautiful little girl.

Two-and-a-half-year-old Samantha Carter squealed with delight as she chased her cousin, Daniel, across the enormous lawn. Daniel—Kathleen and Trevor's energetic two-year-old son—looked over his shoulder, laughing so hard he could barely run in a straight line.

"I'm gonna get you!" Samantha declared.

"No!"

Daniel shrieked with laughter before deliberately slowing enough for Samantha to catch him. The pair collapsed into a giggling heap on the grass.

Hope Beaumont and Judy Carter, seated only a few metres away, both leaned forward simultaneously.

"Careful!" they called in perfect unison.

The two grandmothers exchanged amused glances before immediately returning their full attention to the toddlers, neither prepared to let the children venture more than a few steps without supervision.

Andrew smiled.

Some things apparently never changed.

Across the outdoor entertaining area, Jonas Beaumont and John Carter stood beside the barbecue, each holding a beer as they debated something with the seriousness only retired lawyers and successful businessmen seemed capable of managing.

Trevor suddenly burst into laughter.

Kathleen had obviously delivered another perfectly timed sarcastic comment because even Jonas stopped talking long enough to grin.

The afternoon felt effortless. Warm. Safe. Peaceful. Andrew turned toward the woman beside him.

Five years.

Five years since she'd walked back into his life wearing that green silk dress and turned everything upside down.

She was even more beautiful now.

Pregnancy had softened nothing about her elegance. If anything, it made her even more breathtaking. Her long blonde hair rested over one shoulder, catching the afternoon sunlight, while one hand rested protectively over the curve of her very pregnant stomach.

She was only weeks away from giving birth to their second child.

His son.

The thought alone filled him with a happiness so profound it was almost difficult to comprehend.

Without thinking, his thumb stroked the back of her hand. She squeezed his fingers in return. For several long moments, neither of them spoke. Andrew simply watched his family. His daughter chasing butterflies. His sister laughing with her husband. Their parents happily arguing over absolutely nothing. The woman he loved carrying their second baby.

Five years ago, he couldn't have imagined this life.

Back then, Father's Day had been nothing more than another painful reminder of everything he'd never had.

Sarah had always found an excuse. Not now. Maybe next year. The timing isn't right. My career comes first. For years he'd believed her. Believed they were building toward something. Believed the promises. He'd wasted so much of himself trying to save a marriage that had only existed in his imagination.

Now he realised something. Sarah had been part of his past. Celeste was his future. Sarah had given him years. Celeste had given him a life. There was a difference. A very big difference.

His gaze drifted back to Samantha as she came running toward them, tiny arms stretched wide.

"Daddy!"

Andrew laughed as she launched herself into his lap.

"There you are."

"I caught Daniel!"

"I noticed."

"I won."

Daniel immediately protested from halfway across the lawn.

"I let you win!"

Samantha gasped dramatically.

"You did not!"

The adults erupted into laughter.

Hope called the children over for juice while Judy followed close behind carrying napkins, both women fussing over them with the devotion only grandmothers possessed.

Andrew watched Samantha disappear between them. Completely adored. Completely safe. Completely loved. Exactly as every child deserved.

He felt Celeste shift beside him before she rested her head lightly against his shoulder.

"What are you thinking about?" she asked softly.

Andrew looked down at her. Those hazel eyes still held him captive after all these years.

He smiled.

"I was thinking about how lucky I am."

She frowned slightly.

"Lucky?"

"I spent years believing I'd lost everything."

He glanced across the yard.

"But the truth is... I had to lose that life to find this one."

Her fingers tightened around his.

"Any regrets?"

He didn't even need to think about it.

"Only one."

Her eyebrow lifted.

"I wish I'd known how you felt about me before I married Sarah. It would have changed everything."

Emotion shimmered in Celeste's eyes. She reached up, brushing her fingertips against his cheek.

"Then we might not have Samantha."

Andrew looked toward their daughter again. She was now trying to convince Daniel that butterflies could understand English.

He laughed quietly.

"No," he admitted. "You might be right."

Celeste smiled.

"Everything happened exactly the way it was supposed to."

Andrew kissed her forehead, lingering for a moment.

"For the first time in my life," he whispered, "I actually believe that."

As if on cue, Samantha came sprinting back across the lawn.

"Daddy!"

"What is it, sweetheart?"

She climbed onto his lap once more before wrapping both arms around his neck.

"Happy Father's Day."

Andrew closed his eyes for just a second, holding his little girl tightly while his free hand remained clasped around Celeste's.

Five years ago, he'd thought his greatest achievement would be winning impossible court cases.

He'd been wrong. His greatest achievement was sitting right here. His wife. His daughter. His son waiting to be born. His family. Everything he'd once dreamed of. Everything he'd once believed he'd never have.

And now...

Everything that mattered.

Celeste slowly pushed herself to her feet, one hand instinctively supporting the underside of her swollen stomach.

“I’ll be back,” she said with an exaggerated sigh. “If this little boy doesn’t stop using my bladder as a trampoline, I’m going to lose my mind.”

Andrew chuckled as he stood long enough to help her up.

“You want me to come with you?”

She smiled, leaning up to kiss him.

“I think I can manage a trip to the bathroom by myself.”

He watched until she disappeared through the open French doors before settling back into his chair.

Kathleen laughed.

“I don’t miss that part.”

“Oh?” Judy asked.

Kathleen rolled her eyes dramatically.

“One night I got up twenty times.”

Trevor burst out laughing.

“Twenty?”

“I counted.”

“Surely not.”

“I swear.” Kathleen pointed accusingly at her husband. “You slept through every single trip.”

“I was exhausted.”

“You were snoring.”

Everyone laughed.

“I should have just fallen asleep in the bathroom,” Kathleen continued. “It would’ve saved me the walk back to bed.”

Hope chuckled knowingly.

“Pregnancy certainly isn’t glamorous.”

"No," Kathleen agreed. "People tell you how magical it is. Nobody tells you you'll spend nine months needing the toilet every fifteen minutes."

Jonas grinned.

"I'm suddenly very grateful I never had to experience childbirth."

Hope shot him a look.

"Very wise answer."

John raised his beer.

"To women."

"Hear, hear," Trevor agreed, clinking his bottle against John's.

Andrew smiled as he listened to the easy banter around him.

Samantha had convinced Daniel that they were now explorers searching for hidden treasure beneath the rose bushes. Hope and Judy followed close behind, making sure neither child wandered too far or attempted to dig up the expensive landscaping.

Everything felt perfect.

Then the French doors opened. Andrew immediately noticed the expression on Celeste's face. She wasn't smiling. She wasn't frightened exactly...

But there was a mixture of surprise and disbelief that instantly made his stomach tighten.

He was on his feet before she'd even crossed the terrace.

"What's wrong?"

Every conversation stopped. Jonas lowered his drink. Hope stood. Judy's smile disappeared. Celeste looked directly at Andrew. Then she smiled—a calm, almost amused smile.

"Our little man..." she said softly, "...has decided today's the day."

Andrew blinked.

"What?"

She let out a small nervous laugh.

"My water broke."

For one heartbeat...

Silence. Complete silence. Then absolute chaos erupted.

"What?" Kathleen squealed, jumping to her feet.

"Oh my goodness!" Hope gasped.

Judy clapped both hands over her mouth before breaking into the biggest smile Andrew had ever seen.

John was already reaching for his car keys.

"Hospital," he announced unnecessarily.

Trevor scooped Daniel into his arms before the toddler could run toward the adults. Samantha looked around in confusion.

"Mummy?"

Andrew was frozen. Not because he was scared. Because his brain had simply stopped functioning. Celeste reached for his hand.

"Andrew?"

He stared at her.

"Our baby..."

She nodded.

"Our baby."

His eyes dropped to her stomach before lifting back to hers.

"Today?"

"I believe that's how labour works."

Despite everything, he laughed. A shaky, breathless laugh.

"Right."

She squeezed his hand.

“I need you to be the calm one.”

“I’m calm.”

She raised an eyebrow.

“Andrew...”

“I have absolutely no idea what’s happening.”

She laughed.

“Neither do I.”

That seemed to snap him back to reality. He immediately wrapped an arm around her waist.

“Hospital.”

“Hospital,” she agreed.

Hope was already hurrying inside.

“I’ll grab the hospital bag.”

“I packed it last week,” Andrew said automatically.

Hope smiled proudly.

“Good man.”

John jingled the car keys.

“I’ll drive.”

Andrew shook his head.

“No.”

Everyone looked at him. He looked at Celeste before smiling.

“I’m driving my wife to meet our son.”

Tears immediately filled Judy’s eyes.

“That’s exactly how it should be.”

Andrew slipped one arm around Celeste, holding her a little closer as they walked toward the house together.

Behind them, Samantha called out in her tiny voice.

"Can I come meet my baby brother?"

Andrew glanced back at his daughter and smiled.

"Very soon, sweetheart."

Very soon...

* * * * * * * *

Three hours later, Andrew stood beside the hospital bed with his son sleeping peacefully in his arms.

He still couldn't quite believe he was here. The birth had been... fast. Much faster than Samantha's. The midwife had laughed afterward, saying some babies simply knew where they wanted to be.

Andrew had smiled and replied, "I think my son was just in a hurry to meet his parents."

She'd laughed, agreeing that he certainly hadn't wasted any time.

Now, as he gazed down at the tiny face nestled against his chest, he couldn't imagine a more perfect explanation.

The little boy had a full head of dark blond hair, impossibly tiny fingers wrapped around Andrew's little finger, and the softest little sigh escaped him as he slept.

He was perfect.

Andrew looked across at Celeste. She looked exhausted. She also looked more beautiful than any woman had a right to after giving birth. Her golden hair was a mess, there wasn't a trace of makeup left on her face, and yet Andrew had never loved her more.

She caught him staring.

"What?" she asked softly.

"I was just thinking..."

"What?"

"I didn't think it was possible to love you more."

Her eyes immediately filled with tears.

"Andrew..."

"You gave me everything I'd stopped believing I deserved."

She smiled through her tears.

"We gave each other everything."

A gentle knock sounded on the door before it slowly opened.

"Can we come in?"

Kathleen's voice.

Celeste's face lit up.

"Of course."

The door swung open and the entire family quietly filed into the room. Jonas and Hope. John and Judy. Kathleen and Trevor.

Little Samantha walked carefully between her grandparents while Daniel held tightly to Trevor's hand, looking around the hospital room with enormous curious eyes.

The adults instinctively lowered their voices.

"Oh..." Judy whispered, one hand covering her heart.

Hope's eyes immediately filled with tears.

"He's beautiful."

Andrew smiled.

"He definitely gets that from his mother."

Celeste rolled her eyes affectionately.

"Liar."

"It's true."

Samantha spotted the tiny bundle in Andrew's arms.

"Baby!"

She hurried across the room before stopping exactly where Andrew had taught her to stop around newborns.

"Can I see him?"

Andrew knelt beside her.

"You certainly can."

He carefully lowered the blanket just enough for Samantha to see her baby brother's face.

Her little mouth fell open.

"He's so little."

"He is."

She looked at Andrew with wide eyes.

"Is he ours?"

The room erupted into gentle laughter. Andrew kissed the top of her head.

"He's ours."

Samantha smiled proudly before gently reaching out one finger.

"Can I touch him?"

"Very gently."

She carefully stroked her brother's tiny hand. Almost instantly, his little fingers wrapped around hers. Samantha gasped.

"He likes me!"

"I think he loves you already," Celeste said softly.

"I'm a big sister."

"The best big sister," Andrew replied.

She beamed so brightly Andrew thought his heart might burst. Daniel edged closer beside Trevor.

"Baby sleeping?"

"He is," Andrew answered.

Daniel nodded thoughtfully.

"My baby cousin."

"That's right."

John looked over at Andrew, smiling.

"You've done well, son."

Andrew glanced around the room. Jonas had an arm around Hope. Judy was quietly dabbing at her eyes with a tissue. Trevor had his arm around Kathleen while Daniel leaned sleepily against his father's leg. Samantha refused to take her eyes off her little brother.

Celeste watched all of them with the peaceful smile of a woman whose heart was completely full.

Andrew had once believed success was measured by court victories...

By promotions...

By wealth...

By prestige.

Standing here now, surrounded by the people he loved most, he finally understood how wrong he'd been.

Success wasn't found in boardrooms or courtrooms. It was found here. In this room. In tiny fingers. In sleepy newborn sighs. In his daughter's excited smile. In the woman lying in the hospital bed who had changed his life forever.

He looked down at his son sleeping soundly in his arms.

"You were definitely in a hurry to meet us, weren't you, little mate?"

The tiny baby yawned.

Everyone laughed quietly.

Andrew smiled.

"Yeah..."

He looked at Celeste, who smiled back with all the love in the world.

"...I'd have been in a hurry too."

* * * * * * * *

The hospital room had fallen into a peaceful silence.

Only minutes earlier, it had been filled with laughter, happy tears, and the excited chatter of proud grandparents. Now, after countless cuddles and promises to return first thing in the morning, the family had reluctantly gone home.

Samantha had been more difficult to convince.

"I want to stay with Mummy and Daddy," she'd insisted, clutching Andrew's leg.

It had taken Judy's promise of homemade pancakes, a movie night with Grandpa John, and the assurance that she could meet her baby brother again first thing tomorrow before she'd finally agreed.

Andrew smiled to himself. She was already proving to be a fiercely protective big sister.

Their son slept peacefully in the clear hospital crib beside Celeste's bed, one tiny fist tucked beneath his cheek. Every now and then, he'd sigh softly in his sleep, making little noises that neither Andrew nor Celeste could stop smiling at.

Andrew looked from his son to his wife.

The room was dimly lit now, the afternoon sun beginning to disappear beyond the hospital windows, leaving the room bathed in soft amber light.

Carefully, he reached for Celeste's hands. She instinctively intertwined her fingers with his. He lifted her hands to his lips, pressing a slow, lingering kiss across her knuckles before resting them against his cheek.

"I love you, sweetheart."

Celeste smiled, the exhaustion still evident in her eyes, but so was the overwhelming happiness.

"I love you too."

Andrew looked at her for a long moment, his blue eyes shining with emotion.

"You mean the world to me, you know that, Celeste?"

She gently stroked his face with her thumb.

"You've made me the happiest man alive."

A tear escaped the corner of her eye. He caught it before it reached her cheek.

"No," she whispered. "We've made each other happy."

Andrew slowly shook his head.

"I spent the last couple of years of my first marriage believing my life was over. Believing I'd never be able to trust another woman after the way Sarah hurt me."

His voice was quiet, reflective.

"I thought I'd already had my chance at love. At marriage. At having a family." His eyes drifted to the tiny crib beside the bed. "I convinced myself some people just weren't meant to have those things."

Celeste squeezed his hand but remained silent, letting him speak. His gaze returned to hers.

"Then I came home."

A small smile touched his lips.

“And there you were.”

She laughed softly.

“Wearing that green dress. I noticed.”

“You tried very hard not to.”

“I failed miserably.”

She smiled.

“You certainly did.”

Andrew laughed quietly before his expression softened once more.

“I used to think losing my marriage to Sarah was the greatest tragedy of my life.”

He reached up, gently brushing a loose strand of blonde hair away from Celeste’s face.

“But it wasn’t.”

She frowned slightly.

“It turned out to be the greatest blessing.”

Fresh tears welled in Celeste’s eyes.

“Because if my marriage hadn’t fallen apart... if I’d stayed in New York... if I’d kept trying to save something that was already beyond saving...”

He glanced lovingly at their sleeping son before looking back at her.

“...I never would have come home.”

His thumb brushed across the back of her hand.

“And I never would have found you again.”

The room fell silent.

Only their son’s soft breathing filled the space. Andrew leaned forward until their foreheads touched.

“You gave me a reason to believe again.”

He smiled through the emotion tightening his throat.

“You gave me a woman who loves me completely.”

He kissed her forehead.

“You gave me the most incredible daughter.”

He looked over at the crib.

“And now you’ve given me a son.”

His voice cracked slightly.

“Every dream I ever had... every single one... is lying in this room.”

Celeste reached up and cupped his face with both hands.

“And do you know what you’ve given me?”

Andrew smiled.

“What?”

“You.”

He blinked.

“You’ve loved me in a way I never thought was possible.”

She smiled through her tears.

“I spent years believing I was in love with the idea of you.”

She laughed quietly.

“I was a silly fifteen-year-old with the biggest crush imaginable.”

Andrew smiled.

“I remember.”

“No, you don’t,” she teased.

“You barely knew I existed.”

He winced dramatically.

“I’ve apologised for that.”

“Not enough.”

He laughed.

“I’ll spend the rest of my life making up for it.”

"You probably will."

His smile softened.

"I'll happily spend forever trying."

Celeste leaned forward, kissing him with all the tenderness of the last five years wrapped into one gentle moment.

When they finally pulled apart, Andrew rested his forehead against hers once again.

"I've won some big cases in my career."

"I know."

"I've made partner."

"I know."

"I've earned more money than I'll ever need."

"I definitely know."

He smiled.

"But none of that matters."

He looked around the quiet hospital room.

"My greatest success..."

His eyes settled first on the tiny crib.

Then back on Celeste.

"...was becoming your husband."

A quiet sob escaped her before she smiled through her tears.

"And mine..."

She squeezed his hands tightly.

"...was becoming your wife."

At that exact moment, their son let out a tiny contented sigh in his sleep. Both of them turned instinctively to look at him.

Andrew slipped an arm around Celeste's shoulders, drawing her gently against his side as they watched their newborn sleep. For several peaceful minutes, neither of them spoke.

There were no more words to say.

Everything that truly mattered was already here.

Together.

—The End—

Ready for another happily-ever-after?

Discover more emotional, feel-good romances by Alison Reid on Amazon.

👉 **Browse my books on Amazon**