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Author's Notes: Thanks to Beth and a_bit dotty for pushing (yes, I said pushing!) me to write something. A special thanks to dotty for helping me get Lee's chin off his elbow!

Feedback: Absolutely, but if anybody feels the need to hurl after reading this, email me privately. :-)

W is for Wishes

"Good morning, Mother," Amanda called out cheerfully as she made her way into the kitchen. "Sleep well?" She kissed Dotty on the cheek as she passed her and headed straight for the coffeepot.

Dotty rolled her eyes at her daughter. "As well as can be expected," she replied and took a deep drink of her coffee before adding, "for a woman of my age."

Amanda was glad her back was to her mother, because she couldn't suppress the grin her statement had triggered. Dotty's birthday was just around the corner, and she had been making age references for the past week or so. After filling her coffee cup, Amanda turned and leaned against the counter. "You know, Mother, they say that you need less sleep as you get older." She took a sip of the hot liquid and smiled innocently. "By now, I would think that you could get by on just a few hours."

"Oh, what do 'they' know? Who..." Dotty broke off when she realized what Amanda had just implied. "Very funny, young lady. It's not nice to make fun of your elders."

"Oh, come on, Mother." Amanda walked across the kitchen and placed her arm across Dotty's shoulders, giving her a small hug. "You have been acting like an old lady. You're still a beautiful and vibrant woman."

"Thank you, darling. I needed to hear that. It's just," Dotty sighed and took another sip of her coffee. "Well, it's just that I've been *feeling* old. I mean, how can I feel like a spring chicken when I have nothing exciting to do? Now, if I had something to look forward to, like, oh, I don't know, say a wedding...?"

This was a subject Amanda definitely did not want to discuss. Keeping her secret marriage from Dotty was not easy, especially when her mother was determined to bring up marriage on an almost daily basis. To put Dotty off one more time, Amanda simply smiled and said, "Mother, I really think Phillip and Jamie are too young to be thinking about marriage." She raised her coffee cup to her lips to finish the warm liquid.

Dotty raised her eyebrows at Amanda. "Don't play games with me, Amanda. I'm your mother, and I can tell you and Lee have deep feelings for one another. I wish I knew exactly what his expectations are."

Amanda walked to the sink and rinsed out her empty coffee cup. She knew she had to escape quickly or Dotty would spend the next hour or more asking detailed questions about Amanda's relationship with Lee. "Lee's primary expectation at this moment is probably for me to arrive at work on time. I have to run or I'll be late." Amanda picked up her purse from the counter and, with a reminder to "Tell the boys to be good in school today and I'll see you at dinner," she slipped out the kitchen door.

"Getting information out of that girl is like getting blood from a stone. I don't know when she became so secretive." Dotty shook her head and sighed.

"Is something bothering you, Amanda?" Lee looked at his wife with concern. "You seem preoccupied this morning."

Amanda looked up from her paperwork at Lee. "It's nothing, really. Well, it's something, but it's something I expected, so it's really nothing."

Lee thoughtfully rubbed his chin and tried to process what Amanda had said. Over the years he had gotten pretty good at translating 'Amanda-ese,' but he wasn't sure what to make of this particular statement. "How about you put some nouns into that sentence and try again, because I have no idea what you're trying to say."

"Oh, Lee. Mother is dropping more and more hints about you and me and our future. This morning, she said she wished she knew what your expectations are."

"So, I should expect the 'What are your intentions toward my daughter?' question sometime soon?" He stood and walked over to Amanda's side. Capturing her hand in his, he pulled her out of her chair and into his arms. "Would she be shocked if I told her my *real* intentions?" he asked, and leaned forward to whisper something in her ear.

Amanda blushed slightly. "Not much shocks my mother, but that might do it." She pulled back a little to look Lee in the eyes. "Seriously, Lee. We have to make a decision, and we have to make it soon."

"You're right, Amanda. You're absolutely right."

Phillip and Jamie leaned on opposite sides of the dining room table, eyeing Dotty's birthday cake with anticipation. They wished she would stop talking about her early birthday present from Captain Kurt - boring dinner and dancing - and get on with the ceremony of cutting the cake!

"Grandma, why is there only one candle on your cake?" queried Jamie. "Shouldn't you have a lot more than that?"

Dotty glared at Jamie over the rim of her wine glass. "Once a woman reaches a certain age, she no longer wishes to be reminded of that age."

Phillip elbowed Jamie in the ribs. "Nice going, dog-breath. Now she probably won't want to blow out the candle and cut the cake!"

"She will too!" argued Jamie. "Grandma likes cake too much to skip that part of her birthday."

"You're absolutely right, Jamie. I wish Amanda would just hurry up and light the candle, so we could get on with it." Dotty looked toward the kitchen, where Amanda and Lee had gone after clearing the dinner table. Winking at the boys, she loudly said, "I can't imagine what Lee and Amanda are doing in the kitchen when there are people hungry for cake out here!"

Lee walked into the dining room and stood between Dotty and Phillip. Amanda trailed a few steps behind him holding a small glass of water and waving a book of matches. "Sorry, Mother, but I couldn't find the matches." She smiled at Lee as she passed by him to stand on Dotty's other side next to Jamie. "Lee was kind enough to help me look."

Dotty looked from Amanda to Lee and back to Amanda again. "Matches. Right. How odd that it took you close to fifteen minutes to find the matches, when I saw you put them on the kitchen counter right before dinner." She smirked knowingly when her daughter and Lee exchanged a guilty glance. "Mmm-hmm. I guess they just got up and walked away."

Before Amanda could say anything, Jamie grabbed her arm. "Light the candle, Mom!" he urged.

"Just a second, sweetheart," Amanda laughed. "The cake isn't going anywhere."

"I don't know about that." Dotty remarked. "The matches did."

Letting out a deep sigh, Amanda shook her head and lit the solitary candle. She blew out the match and dropped it into the glass of water she was holding. "Go ahead, Mother. Make a wish." Setting the glass on the table, she took Jamie's hand and led the group in a loud rendition of "Happy Birthday."

As she leaned forward, Dotty said softly, "I wish..." then closed her eyes and blew out the candle.

Phillip and Jamie clapped as the smoke from the burned out candle rose to the ceiling. "All right! Cake time!" Phillip shouted.

Lee cleared his throat. "Not just yet, Phillip." All eyes in the room focused on Lee. He leaned down and withdrew a brightly colored box from under the table and turned to Dotty. "I have a special present for you, Mrs. West."

Dotty placed one hand over her chest and took the box with the other. "For me, Lee? You shouldn't have, I mean, I didn't expect..." She set the box on the table and ripped the paper off it in one swift motion. Lifting the lid off the box, she encountered tissue paper, which was quickly pushed aside to enable her to reach her goal. Her eyes filled with tears as she slowly pulled the white sweatshirt out of the box and read the embroidered words. "World's Greatest Mother-in-law" was emblazoned across the front in large red letters. "Oh my gosh, Lee!" She hugged the garment to her chest and turned to look up at the handsome man who had captured her daughter's heart.

"Mrs. West," Lee began then stopped and swallowed hard, suddenly finding it difficult to speak around the lump in his throat. Over Dotty's head, Amanda looked into his eyes and smiled, giving him silent encouragement to continue. He took Dotty's hand in his and smiled down at her. "Mrs. West. Would you do me the honor of becoming my mother-in-law?"

With a big grin, Dotty answered, "Of course, I'll be your mother-in-law!" She threw her arms around Lee and hugged him. "Who says wishes don't come true?"

The End