

Just a flicker

A modded Stardew Fanfiction

Von Calyses

Kapitel 1: The Girl and the Author

"Is this seat taken?"

Sam stopped reading and looked up. The guy in front of her was sporting a questioning smile.

"No, you may sit here. Just let me..."

She began to shift her luggage around.

He watched a moment as she struggled with a heavy suitcase and helped to put it in the luggage space above their heads.

"I wasn't aware, the train would be so cramped", she said apologetically, as he slumped in the seat beside her. He shrugged.

"It is Saturday and it is the last train. This route is the main lifeline of the valley. What did you expect? Er... forgive me or being so forward, but may I ask what brings you to the valley. I have not seen you before and you have packed for either a very long vacation or you are on the move."

"No Problem, I start a new job on monday, so unfortunately I have to move to the countryside, but on the upside my new home will be by the sea. I love the ocean.", she answered his question, adjusted her glasses slightly and looked at him.

The man tugged an astray strand of his auburn hair, he had otherwise neatly tided back into a ponytail, behind his ear.

"So it is either Pelican Town or East Scarp I assume?" he asked.

"Very acute, Watson!"

He laughed about her comment. Sam continued:

"I will answer that, but please tell me something about you. The whole questioning is going a bit onesided for me."

"Oh, I am prying again. One of my not so prestine characteristics."

"I don't mind, as long as you're telling me stuff, too. So, you live around Pelican Town?"

He smiled sheepishly.

"It is my humble home for almost two years now." His expression grew a little distant.

"So you seem to like it there?"

"Ah, yes. It was one of my best decisions to move there." A thought crossed his mind.

"If you will work in Pelican Town, there are not many places that offer jobs. Please do not tell me you are going to work for Joja."

"I'd rather be unemployed than working for them!"

"Glad to hear. So, where will you move to and what will you do exactly?"

"Oh no, you go first!"

He looked at her dead serious and pulled a small well worn notebook out of his pocket.

"There is not much to tell about the lonely and uneventful life of an aspiring author."

Sam wasn't sure if it was the statement at that or the manner in which he had told her, but she had to laugh hard:

"Don't be mad, but are you serious right now or are you trying to mess with me?"

He looked shocked, almost hurt even, but before he got the chance to say anything Sam talked again:

"Author? That's one of the most exciting ways of life I can imagine. If you can pull it off, of course. Don't get me wrong. I know it's hard and frustrating, but it's also so rewarding. How can being an author be uneventful and boring? If you can pull it off you are able to create something to reach other people. To touch their hearts. To create something you can be proud of."

"I think your ideas of being a writer are a bit too fantastical. Most of the time I am sitting in my cabin all alone and write till the day is done, only to throw out everything in the end and to begin anew the next day. And I have deadlines. There is no time for leisure or to meet up with people. It is one of the reasons why I moved to Pelican Town. To deprive me of everything that will steal away my time and pull the attention away from my writing."

"Frustrating..., yes I said so. But self-imposed loneliness? I'm not a fan of that. I think it's a wrong-headed and completely unnecessary mindset."

"What is wrong about that? The lonely author is able to fully concentrate on his work and can bring all his feelings and hardships into his work without being superficial. How should I know how to write about that without experiencing it myself?"

Sam looked at him closely. He showed an honest interest in what she had to say it seemed, despite being hit by her words.

"I won't tell you to stop if this method works for you. After all it's only my opinion, but I think writers who go out to experience things, those who can make and collect memories are more successful and live a happier and healthier life in the long run.

Stories are a vessel to transport feelings, personal experiences, internal and external conflict and interpersonal relationships, so there is so much more, other than loneliness to write about. And if it comes to loneliness and it's really the thing you want to write about, it hits so much harder in contrast to the happy things in life. Almost everybody experiences loneliness at some point in their life. There are so many things one can only work through by oneself that anybody should be able to relate. There is no need to force that feeling onto yourself to cultivate it even further. Am I wrong with that?"

The man was thinking, looking down to the small notebook, shifting it from one hand to the other. A few moments of silence passed before he looked up again. He looked Sam right in the eye and smiled faintly, but said nothing.

It was only then that Sam noticed how exhausted he looked. The charming smile, the twinkle in his green eyes, as he first spoke and his questions about her journey had diverted her attention from the latent fatigue lingering beneath that smile. She held his gaze.

"I hope I haven't overstepped my boundaries here. By no means I meant to hurt you. It's just... it's so much fun to discuss and debate viewpoints with other creatives. It's been a long time I was able to do that and I probably got carried away", she closed her previous statement and waited for a response.

His smile grew a bit wider as he brushed the hair out of his face again, but now she was aware of the worry and maybe some kind of sadness hidden behind it.

"Thank you", he said after a while. His voice more hushed and a bit softer than before.

"I appreciate those honest words, although I have to admit they were quite painful. Between either those who butter me up or those who do not believe in me and belittle my dreams, an honest opinion, a constructive critique is a rare gem. I will take your words into consideration, but I will not promise anything."

"That's okay. I don't expect anything of that sort from a travel acquaintance. A nice conversation, sometimes a bit deeper if the topic is of interest to all parties involved, is all I'm in for." Sam said.

His expression had reverted back to the genuine interest he'd shown, before her punching him in the gut verbally, as he continued the conversation:

"Okay, but now you have to tell me what your deal is. See it as compensation for the emotional stress you put me through right now. You will stay in Pelican Town?"

"Yes."

"Then tell me. Where will you work, if it is not for Joja. there are not many places left. Stardrop Saloon? Pierre's? Will you be the carpenter's apprentice or will you become a farmhand for one of our local farmers or on Marnie's Ranch?"

Sam laughed: "Are you sure you're an author. The questioning rather says reporter. But I've to tell you neither guess is correct, although waitress could be an alternative if my future boss doesn't pay me well enough."

"If that is so, I would have to go more often to the...", his phone began to ring and cut his words short. "I have to take this call", he said after a short glance over the display, his mood changing visibly in the fraction of a moment and not for the better. "Please excuse me. I will be right back." And with this he got up and vanished to some less crowded area at the end of the wagon.

Sam noticed that he had dropped his notebook as he had tried to put it back in his pocket hastily while standing up. She picked it up before someone could step on it. As she looked if the man was coming back she noticed two young adults across the aisle snickering and whispering something, but didn't pay much attention to it. She pushed her glasses back up her nose and opened her book to the part she had been interrupted earlier, when a blonde girl moved across the aisle and sat down beside her.

"Hi, I'm Haley and if I'd heard correctly we will be neighbors soon. May I give you some advice for your stay in Pelican Town...?"

Elliott's day hadn't been the best to begin with. First his editor had torn his new draft to shreds. Then he had almost missed the train and now this worrying phone call from his brother. Sometimes these days he wondered how he was still able to carry on. His deadline was coming nearer and nearer almost crushing the last ounce of creativity left inside him. His ideas started to run dry. If he wasn't able to provide a good draft next time, the publisher would surely end his contract, which meant no income. On top of that his parents were closing in on him. Sometimes he caught himself thinking about how much easier it would be to go back to his old life.

No, he refused to give up.

Maybe that stranger's words were something to think about after all. Yes, he had told her, that her words had been hurting him, but he wasn't going to admit, that they

were the most painful thing, he had heard in a long time.

He was sure she meant it as she had said, she hadn't any intention to hurt him. And there was an undeniable truth in her words. He knew he couldn't keep on living and working the way he was now. It had proven to be a dead end. Either way, that woman had piqued his interest. She seemed to know at least a bit about the creative process and wasn't afraid to share her opinions. Maybe she was someone he could talk to more often, after she had finished her move.

He was on his way back to his seat as he spotted the familiar blonde beside the woman.

"Oh, no." He whispered to himself. What was SHE doing there? He slowed down and tried to be as silent as he could as he walked into earshot.

"... and the most important thing: Be careful who you associate with. There are some strange people in town and Mr. 'many a conversation' here is definitely one of them. Want to know about some things he did? We saw him on the cemetery one day..."

Elliott turned and walked back before she reached the end of her story. He knew it was silly, but he hadn't the stomach right now to deal with her. Too much had happened already. This day got better and better... Fortunately the train ride was almost over. In a few minutes it would reach Pelican Town. If he'd leave the train early he could get one of the few taxis waiting, instead of taking the bus with the other townspeople.

As soon as the train stopped and open its doors he was out. To leave without saying at least goodbye left a bad taste in his mouth. Hell, he hadn't even asked her for her name, but he couldn't handle Haley on a bad day like today without snapping.

His ride came to an end. As he was about to pay for the taxi, he discovered that his day had taken a turn for the worst.

"No, no, no, no..." where was his notebook?