

## **Strangers**

*Bella is sitting centre stage at a table for two. Daniel enters and walks up to the barista standing behind the counter. He then walks over to Bella.*

DANIEL: Hey, can I sit here?

BELLA: Sorry?

DANIEL: I'm just waiting for my coffee.

BELLA: Oh yeah, no, of course you can.

DANIEL: Thanks.

*Daniel sits down.*

BELLA: Are you new in town?

DANIEL: Just passing through. How'd you know?

BELLA: Small town. I probably would've seen you by.

DANIEL: Yeah I'm on my way to visit family but I thought I'd take a quick stop here.

BELLA: Yeah it's a good café. I come here all the time. If there was a Hall of Fame for regulars I'd be at the top.

DANIEL: Haha, any recommendations?

BELLA: I like the mango tea and the blueberry muffins.

DANIEL: I'll have to try that next time I'm in town.

BELLA: Where are you headed?

DANIEL: The city a couple hours from here. It's my grandfather's 70<sup>th</sup>.

BELLA: Wow, that's a big one.

DANIEL: Yeah...

BELLA: Are you travelling with family?

DANIEL: My mum and sister and coming up tomorrow, my dad got there yesterday.

BELLA: So you're all by yourself? How old are you?

DANIEL: Recently turned 17, how about you?

BELLA: My 16<sup>th</sup> is in two weeks.

DANIEL: It's the month for good birthdays.

BELLA: Well it's no 70<sup>th</sup>.

*They laugh awkwardly but slowly fade into a silence.*

DANIEL: So... are there any good spots in town?

BELLA: The Eastfield shops aren't too far from here or you could rent a boat to go on the lake. But my two favourite spots are the Stargazing Hill and the Big Ol' Theatre.

DANIEL: Does the theatre have a name?

BELLA: The Big Ol' Theatre. That's its name.

DANIEL: Oh, I wasn't expecting that.

BELLA: Yeah no one knows why it's called that. It's just written in gold on the top of the entrance way so that's what everyone calls it.

DANIEL: That's kinda cool. Do you like theatre?

BELLA: I love it. I've performed on that stage 11 times and been to see over 30 shows there.

DANIEL: Wow, you must really like drama.

BELLA: It's just a different kind of magic you know?

DANIEL: How so?

BELLA: It's a small town. There's rarely anything you haven't seen a million times after being here your whole life. But theatre, creativity, it adds an element of excitement. You can get stuck in a loop being in a town like this, but when there's a creative spark, you never know what could surprise you.

DANIEL: That's a beautiful way of thinking about it.

BELLA: Thank you. Do you have a theatre back home?

DANIEL: Not as close, it's like a 45-minute drive. I've been there a couple times.

BELLA: Not your thing though?

DANIEL: Not really, but I still like creativity. I'm a musician.

BELLA: That's so cool! What do you play?

DANIEL: Well I can do a bit on drums and a bit on the keyboard, but I'm mostly into guitars and singing.

BELLA: Do you write songs?

DANIEL: I'm not the best but I try.

BELLA: I'm sure your great. What kind of songs do you write?

DANIEL: Mainly just my own experiences, you know? Stuff I can connect with, and hopefully, so can others.

BELLA: Those songs are the best kinds.

DANIEL: I like to think so. Maybe I can write my next song about a stranger I met in a café.

BELLA: Only if I get backstage tickets to your first big concert.

DANIEL: It's a deal.

BARISTA: Daniel.

DANIEL: Oh, just a sec.

BELLA: Yeah, you're all good.

*Daniel walks up to the counter, gets his drink, sitting down again.*

DANIEL: Does the queen of regulars approve my drink?

BELLA: What's the drink?

DANIEL: Mint Mocha.

BELLA: Approved.

DANIEL: Thank you, your majesty.

BELLA: You are very welcome, my lord.

*Daniel takes a sip.*

DANIEL: I'm Daniel by the way.

BELLA: I'm Bella.

*They exchange a handshake.*

DANIEL: That name suits you.

BELLA: Thanks...

DANIEL: All good.

*Awkward silence.*

BELLA: So I guess you're off then...

DANIEL: Yeah I suppose so...

*Awkward silence.*

BELLA: You're not moving.

DANIEL: Oh and here I was thinking you liked having me around.

BELLA: I didn't mean it like that.

DANIEL: Nah, I'm just messing with you.

BELLA: This is a genuine question though... don't you *have* to go? Like won't you be late?

DANIEL: I mean the party isn't until Wednesday, so I could stay here for a day or two.

BELLA: Isn't your family expecting you today though?

DANIEL: I doubt they'd even notice if I was gone.

BELLA: Daniel... what's going on?

DANIEL: I think my parents are getting a divorce.

*Pause.*

BELLA: Aw I'm so sorry.

DANIEL: I'm fine honestly. They've been arguing non-stop, and I'm worried they'll make a scene at the party.

BELLA: Well... what are you gonna do if that does happen?

DANIEL: I don't know. I guess I was kinda debating whether or not I'd actually go.

BELLA: But you'd miss your grandfather's party and once your parents get home they'll be mad at you.

DANIEL: If I skip the party, I'm not going home, Bella.

BELLA: Where would you--- oh.

DANIEL: I don't know why I'm even telling you this stuff. I'll, uh, I'll go now.

*Daniel goes to leave.*

BELLA: No, it's okay. It's nice to have someone new to talk to. Kinda breaks the loop a bit.

*Daniel sits back down.*

DANIEL: Uh, okay... it's just that they're not **just** being difficult with each other. Lately I haven't felt safe at home. I'm always yelled at for stupid things and it makes me find any excuse to not walk through that door.

BELLA: You're just gonna run away?

DANIEL: It's not a "just" situation. I don't even know if I could bring myself to do it. I just...

*Daniel looks away.*

BELLA: You just what?

*Daniel looks back at Bella.*

DANIEL: Maybe a loop is what I need. Maybe a Stargazing Hill and a Big Ol' Theatre is what I need.

BELLA: Then you could always come back, but I think you need to try talking to them first.

DANIEL: I don't know if I can...

BELLA: You can. I know you can.

DANIEL: If I come back, where do I meet you?

BELLA: It's a small town, I'll find you.

DANIEL: I don't want to leave. This place feels safe.

BELLA: It's a really good comfort zone. But take it from someone who's been here their entire life, you get sick of the comfort zone.

DANIEL: That's why this was so perfect. You're the comfort I need, and I'm the change in the loop.

BELLA: I know, but I still think you owe it to yourself and to them to see them one last time. You can't end the chapter on a negative 'what if'.

DANIEL: There's just no arguing with you is there?

BELLA: I don't know the full situation, so I don't know what's truly best. But...

DANIEL: Yeah...

*Bella smiles.*

DANIEL: I guess I better catch that bus then.

*Daniel gestures to the left.*

BELLA: Yeah I guess you should.

DANIEL: I **will** be back.

BELLA: Even if you don't come back, thanks for breaking the loop.

DANIEL: Thanks for helping with my spark.

BELLA: Bye Daniel.

DANIEL: Bye Bella.

*They hug, then Daniel exits. Bella walks up to the counter.*

BELLA: Hey, can I get a Mint Mocha? Thanks.

*Blackout.*