

# MORNING COFFEE

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Raindrops trickle down, blurring aspects of the man's face which is pressed up against the cafe's windows, the man almost looks flustered as my head turned to meet his. His bleach blonde locks are slightly saturated and frame his smushed face, dressed in muted greens and blues the rest of his body almost blends into the surroundings. It's far too early for customers, any local or just generally sensible person would know that. And even if there was someone who would stand outside in the rain at seven for their morning coffee, I'm positive Liam would have told me about it especially considering he's very much his type, well aside from the whole possibly being a creep thing. He seems far too panicky to be a threat, this is not a particularly smart way to think but I'm halfway through my book and he can't have been there that long considering I woke up less than half an hour ago. So I sip my coffee while staring him directly in the eyes, before raising an eyebrow and going back to reading.

Barely half a page passes before I hear knocking on the door. Although, I'm curious I can't say that defeats my annoyance so I let him wait a bit more as I pack away my book and irritably walk towards the door. He's put about three metres distance between him and the door with his hands in the air, trying to assume a non threatening position. I peek my head out, disgruntled by the cold air and few raindrops landing on my face. "Hello, there. What brings you here this early in the morning?"

"Oh, are you the owner of this library? Hi, I'm uh Mason. Do you know if an Amelia works here? She has light brown hair, freckles and is around twenty-two years old." Probably the only thing weirder than a coffee enthusiast is someone who wants to visit a library, at the crack of dawn, just to ask about the workers.



"Yes" and because I'm a horrible person who lives off of crushing the dreams of others, "I do know that no one called Amelia works here." Mason, does not seem very amused by my response, in fact he's far more depressed by it than I would've thought. I'm nothing if not curious, Liam says its a character flaw, but I'm like twenty percent positive that something will come of being nosy this time and that's high by my standards. "Now, now I'm sorry, come in I'm not paying the bill to warm up the rain."-not that I'm paying the bill at all. The man tries to get out of this situation, something about being busy, needing to leave in half an hour, memememe. Point is he is now seated nibbling through a piece of leftover tiramisu.

"So this is a nice, like business you've got going on, library-cafe, eh?" I completely forgot I glossed over his first question, this is why you don't ask two questions in a row.

"Oh, no I'm not the owner. Sorry."

"So like you work here or something?"

"Nah, just a friend of the owner, name's Ellie. Stayed over last night to help out with some paperwork. Enough about me, now tell me, why are you looking for an Amelia?"

Mason drops his spoon, wiping his mouth on his sleeve, starts digging through his briefcase and pulls out a novel, it has some familiarity to me even though I'm sure I've never read it.

"Amelia gave me book a couple years back, we were classmates in Northsea College, and I was going to another high school for year thirteen. I was reading a series of books she owned, this was the fourth in the series. I was going to come back here after graduation and return it to her but it didn't really work out."

"Ah, Northsea huh, Liam, the owner, also went there, maybe he knows your Amelia. I mean like that aside have you got a last name or something? Were you close friends surely you have some form of contact?"



"No, we didn't really have any mutual friends and" he groans burying his face in his hands avoiding my eyes to focus on the book cover "I was kinda, an awful person, it sounds like an excuse, I mean it is but I was going through a lot and just didn't want to think about her. I deleted all my social media and tried to block my memories of her for a long while and I guess it worked? I mean the second part at least. I tried to find her socials again but yeah."

"And so what, you're just knocking on every library you can find?"

Clear signs of anxiety, an inadvertent admittance of guilt and probably shame, shaky hands quickly spooning the rest of the dessert into his mouth, even though I speak with a reasonably friendly lilt, I can't imagine that these questions serve to calm this man. In between bites he starts to say some words,

"I mean she always said she wanted to work in a library or bookshop and stuff"

Awkwardly I stare off into the corner while scratching my neck, as Mason scrapes his spoon against his plate trying to collect any of the cream left. I mean at this point it is intensely clear that neither of us know how to continue this conversation. When I first hear the slight creaking of the wood I think Mason is leaving until I here Liam call to me from the top of the stairs.

"Morning El?" He's tilting his head at me, scrunching his nose which gathers his freckles in bunch right under his eyes, probably because there's a stranger in his store right now. Liam's adorable when he's sleepy, the way he squints his eyes at Mason and leans over the stair railings to give us a dozy smile. He's such a baby, some days I can't comprehend how he's got his life more in order than me, ignoring the obvious of course.

"Hi Liam! Mason, this is Liam, and Liam, this is Mason. You two went to the same high school so maybe you've met?"

"I don't think so sorry." And as soon as he says that he kinda realises he screwed up when Liam's face starts contorting and spitting out the words,





"Yeah um yeah actually I need go and, brush my teeth?" And goes right back into his bedroom which by the way is the opposite direction to the bathroom. Well.

"Oh gosh. I'm so sorry about that, I genuinely don't recognise him, I mean generally I'm good with faces but."

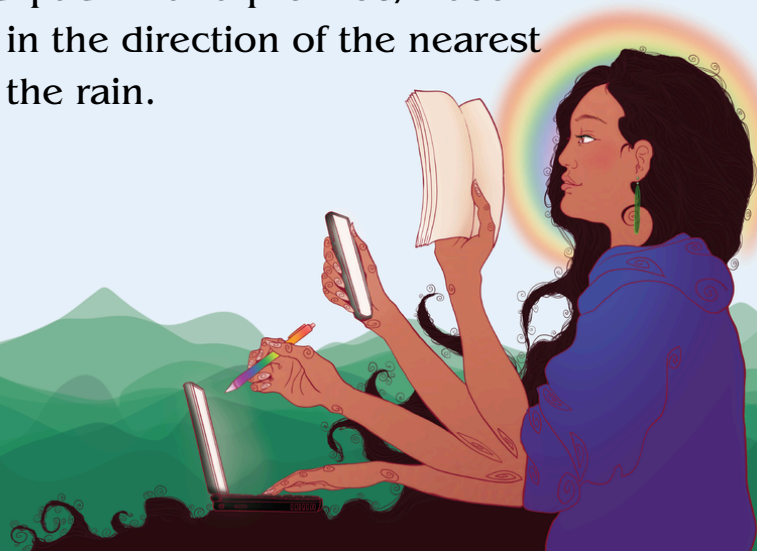
"It's fine, probably. I'll talk to him later. About Amelia though, you're trying to find this girl with nothing but a general knowledge that she wanted to work around books what like four years ago? I mean so much can change in that time, maybe her dreams changed or like she moved? Would she even want to see you?" I'm pushing my thirty minute relationship with this man too far but I can't help it, something about this whole thing is bothering me and I can't figure out what. "Sorry, that was a bit-" He sucks in air, cutting me off, before sighing to begin his response.

"No you're right. I came here on work and figured I'd bring the book, I promised myself I'd give up if I couldn't find her. Yesterday I spent all my free time running around to any book stores or nearby libraries. I thought I checked all of them but this morning I saw something about a 'cool hip coffee-shop that was also a library', and I figured it would be closed, but I have a flight at eight so. Haa, when I saw the lights on I thought it might be fate, but I guess not."

I start drink out of my very empty coffee mug, trying to read his face so I can know how to pose my next question. Then I see the clock on the wall as the minute hand reaches toward 6. He seems to realise this too, based on how he quickly starts wiping his mouth, again with his sleeve.

"Sorry I have to leave. Uh let Liam know I'm very sorry. It was nice to meet you El, maybe we can be friends or something like that" as he says that his hands hovering over the novel before pushing it towards me "My contact information is in there on a note for Amelia, call me if you want or don't that's fine too. If you ever see her can you pass it on for me?"

After I tuck the book into my backpack with a promise, Mason hurries out the door and starts running in the direction of the nearest bus stop, blonde hair fluttering against the rain.



I've only just begun packing away the dishes when Liam comes stumbling down once more staring at the figure that's becoming blurrier with each falling droplet, when he is down the street and round the corner I hear Liam's woolly jersey squeak along the window as he slides down it curling into a ball, glancing at me every now and then. "What's up?" I say kneeling beside him, running my fingers through his brown curls.

"I don't know, I thought we were close, back then at least. He was my first love and-" a long pause, and a sudden dread washes over me, as I finish his sentence for him.

"And he doesn't even remember you huh." He's rubbing away tears threatening to leak with the heel of his palm before standing up and stating he's going to shower so he can open up shop. This time he is actually heading the right way, thankfully because my fingers still feel the strain of the knots in his hair. As soon as the door clicks shut I stand up and run into the young adult section. I have a really bad feeling about this.

After running my fingers along the spines in a rush, I find it. The one hole in the shelf that's kept open by two dividers. A full series of thirteen books, its about giant-slaying or something, with one missing, one that hasn't been replaced in the years I've known Liam even though he spends everyday staring at it despondently, at least not until now. I pull the book out of my bag and open it up to the first page, a big pink sticky note stuck to the inner cover, written on it an email address, phone number, and a letter. *"Hey Lia, sorry that I returned this so late and for everything else as well. If you want to talk again I've left my details here. Lots of love, Mason"*

I shut the book and return it to its rightful home, removing the dividers and setting them on Liam's desk before going to find myself a wall to bash my head into. How did this happen.

