

Sunlight

by Katherin

Young children, two bottles of Coke, millions of colours, a slogan and tender love.

first and last and always

Chapter 1 of 1

Young children, two bottles of Coke, millions of colours, a slogan and tender love.

"If I was a flower growing wild and free

All I'd want you to be is my sweet honeybee"

He had always found it so hard to listen to what she said. Not that she talked about silly stuff, but because her white voice distracted him, and within a few seconds he would only follow her with his eyes. When her words came near his ears, they became feelings.

And, with that, he found that holding her little hand in his was the best feeling he would ever experience.

He let himself be led by her between the empty, lonely streets, the yellow leaves dyeing the ground, while Lily babbled about a magic world she was yet to be familiar with. He tried to formulate words bigger than monosyllables, but something was making his throat dry...more than he could avoid. It seemed as she would never talk enough.

"You've already told me so many things about wizards," the little red-headed was saying, "How can your parents live here and not in all the places you've told me about?"

It took Severus a while to realize that she was waiting for an answer, her green eyes looking anxious.

"You know," he mumbled tensely, her hand making everything so much more comfortable and so softer, "Dad."

"Oh," but it took only a few moments for her disappointed look to disappear, and she tucked a strand of her short hair behind her ears.

She took a pause, wondering if she should continue that conversation.

"But I don't get it, you seem to know so little about the Mug...the non-magical world."

"You know... Mum."

"Surely the wizarding world is much more fun," Lily concluded, thoughtful. She let go of his hand for a little while, to move more strands of hair from her eyes, as they were stubbornly over them.

Her face was ruddy, making her hair look a little less reddish, and her freckles look a little bit browner. Severus couldn't keep himself from sighing. He couldn't fully understand it; he could just get that, in his faint kind of understanding, she was so different from anything he had ever seen. He had already observed other girls who would play and run and wear little flowered, purple dresses, but none of them looked so full of life. He had the impression that she had always a subtle glow around her.

He had known that she was a witch the moment he had seen her with her hair loose in the wind, playing hide and seek with her stale sister.

He looked at the gray shirt he had put on that day. It could fit three boys, each of whom twice his size, at the same time. He had the vague impression that the only reason Lily was his friend was that he could tell her all about magic. Nothing would explain that choice better.

"Where are we going, Lily?"

She giggled pinkly, holding his hand again, not seeming to care if it was too boney.

"I want to do something different, we go to the park everyday! There's this snack bar right over there, and it has all these kinds of soda. Mum said it would be ok, even though she doesn't like me to drink soda..."

"Soda... what? You mean that white thing your mother uses to bake cakes?"

She stopped and turned her head to look at him, one of her blond eyebrows raised, trying not to laugh at him.

"No, you're mistaking it for ferment... You really have no idea of what soda is?"

The colour of his cheeks made her hair seem black in comparison.

"I don't think I have ever eaten that," he whispered, lowering his eyes and stepping in the frail leaves on the ground.

"It's not something you eat, it's something you drink," and her explanation sounded like a nice kind of coldness, like those soft breezes on hot days, when all you want is a soft breeze. He immediately thought that, whatever it was, it should be cozy, like walking beside her and watching her long, ugly shadow on the ground, above the leaves.

They arrived and stopped in front of an open house, full of drawings and colourful windows, with tables and seats and white tablecloths. Severus had never been to such a place; it vaguely reminded him of the Leaky Cauldron, only the latter wasn't so... He found no words and walked in with Lily, who seemed so overjoyed.

Until the gray day that he died, he could never put into words how happy she would always look. Maybe it was only in comparison to himself; but oh, if it weren't happiness, how should he describe it? It looked rather pinky, but he had never seen such a shade, not the precise shade of her. It was easier to put it into colours rather than into sentences.

Maybe it was the crazy life he had at home and his crazy parents who had raised him; maybe it was the grayish, dirty walls of his bedroom; maybe it was just Lily. Whatever the reason was, walking beside her felt like having a shadow to protect him while giving him a pleasant view of the sun. One that wouldn't hurt his eyes.

He hadn't learned about comparison and superlatives yet, but being around the young red-headed girl and not using them was truly impossible. Not a thing about her was sweet; it was always, always the sweetest.

She let go of his hand again to look for coins inside the pockets of her pale blue dress. She calculated the money and placed it onto the counter, where an old lady wearing a pinafore was stacking plates.

"Hello," the owner said, neither kind nor unkind, "What do you kids want?"

"Two coke," Lily replied, pointing at some sort of large refrigerator full of black bottles. "Do you want something to eat, Sev?"

He carefully examined the black bottles she had called coke. They were weird and full of drawings. They didn't look as comfortable as Lily's explanation had made them appear; the little white bubbles and its ugly label. But she seemed to like it so much and was so cheerful that it didn't take long for him to start believing that the glass looked lovely.

Lovely, lovely, lovely. His vocabulary, not vast enough yet, was so full of lovely words whenever Lily was around...

They sat down side by side, she still holding him by her little hand.

(So many, many years later, whenever he would take the silver lines out of his mind, the memory of that red table and white tablecloth would hurt inside him like hot iron. The orange stain in Lily's cursive handwriting: with love, Lily.)

Certainly she didn't have inside her the kind of love that he felt, but she had some sort of love while taking the lids off the bottles of soda and filling two glasses already containing ice. It was Severus' consolation, he who still couldn't comprehend the boundaries of what they were doing: while the ice made a sound like *crec*, melting together, there was an unexpected and indistinct range of colours. It was so blue the way he looked at her, her playing with the straws, again babbling about Hogwarts, Diagon Alley, the Leaky Cauldron, the whatever-the-place-was. And it was so yellowish, the way she would look at him in return.

Like if it weren't *Severus*, but just anybody, while he could only see *Lily*, and not *anyone*.

"Aren't you going to try it? C'mon, Sev, it tastes so good!"

Too many words and bewildered thoughts for a ten years old but they would be excessive and bewildered at fifteen, at seventeen, and at the age of twenty-one, he lost what he had to make him think so much, and till the end of his life he remembered the green, big eyes blinking, so excited about him drinking the soda.

It was just a weird gaseous drink, and still she would laugh, her face turning red of joy. Severus understood why he thought so much; his thoughts were black, straight words in his head, while that girl was a pleasant colour, so many shades associated with something calm and... How many words were there for love, after all?

He choked with the funny liquid; the gas, although he wasn't sure it was a gas, tickled him in his nose, and the soda passed through his throat, frostier than he had expected.

At that very moment Severus realized it wasn't a matter of comparing her beautiful and warm face to every colour he could name. It was a matter of feeling her, just as real as he could feel the air inside his lungs, the tickles in his nose, the ice melting inside his glass, his heart beating in that compass.

He swallowed and took another gulp. It indeed tasted good. He wondered what her lips would taste like, even if not knowing why he wanted to know. Surely they would taste something between pink and green, as they looked so warm.

"And I wonder if you're allowed to swim in the lake... I mean, there's a lake, isn't there? You said something about them having boats..."

Lily's voice, Lily and Lily. *Always*.

AN: The opening verses are from "All I Want is You" by Barry Louis Polisar. The chapter title is after a Sisters of Mercy song.