

Sonder (excerpt)

written by

Kiko

INT. CAFE - DUSK

In a busy cafe, GRANT, 22, sits at a table alone, surfing his phone. He clears his throat, about to reach for something in the bag at his feet when -

ALLY

Hey.

ALLY, 21, suddenly tosses her purse on the seat sits right across from GRANT.

ALLY (CONT'D)

(apologetic)

Sorry I'm late.

She takes a deep breath.

ALLY (CONT'D)

Daniel, right?

GRANT looks confused, but quickly regains his composure.

GRANT

Yeah. You're..

ALLY

ALLY.

GRANT

ALLY. Nice to meet you.

ALLY

And you. I figured you'd be standing, not..

(clears throat)

Sitting with your coffee already.

GRANT

Yeah. Yeah, uh.. sorry. I had a bit of a long day today and just needed a pick-me-up.

ALLY

Right. Melina told me you worked in construction.

GRANT

Nothing too intensive.

ALLY

Mixing cement isn't intensive?

GRANT

Well, you do it long enough..

ALLY

Don't.. try to impress me. If it's hard, it's hard. You're already on thin ice ordering before I got here.

GRANT

And you were late, so we're even.

ALLY

(scoffs)

Whatever.

ALLY's phone vibrates. She checks it. It's a text from Melina. "Sorry Daniel flaked on you. He's like that sometimes."

ALLY looks at it, confused, giving GRANT a double take as he takes another sip of his coffee.

GRANT

Who's that? Melina?

ALLY

Uh..

ALLY puts her phone away.

ALLY (CONT'D)

You're not Daniel, are you?

GRANT

(checking watch)

Dang. Just shy of a minute and a half.

ALLY

Fuck.

ALLY sinks in her seat, turning red as she buries her face in her hands. She groans.

ALLY (CONT'D)

You're fucking kidding me.

GRANT

Language.

ALLY

Oh, shut the fuck up.

(sitting up)

(MORE)

ALLY (CONT'D)
Didn't even have the fucking
decency to text me. Had to hear it
from..

ALLY stands up.

ALLY (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, I'll just..

GRANT
Wait.

ALLY freezes as she picks up her purse, avoiding eye contact.

GRANT (CONT'D)
Is ALLY short for something? Or is
it just ALLY?

ALLY tilts her head, caught off guard.

ALLY
Uh.. Alyssa. Why?

GRANT
Just curious. Sorry for messing
with you, ALLY.

ALLY
Not sorry enough.

GRANT
What now?

ALLY
Um. Head home, probably.

GRANT
Like that?

ALLY
Like.. what?

GRANT
You look like you put a lot of
effort in your look.

ALLY
Yeah. I was supposed to go on a
date. Don't remind me.

GRANT
Are you gonna let it go to waste?

ALLY

Who the fuck do you think you are?

GRANT

No.. Hold on, we're getting off on the wrong foot, here.

ALLY

The less I hear from you, the better. You made my shitty day worse.

GRANT

(scoffs)

You don't want reminders, but you're gonna look in the mirror as you change out of those clothes and take off that makeup, knowing it was for a guy that didn't deserve it.

ALLY

What, and you do?

GRANT

No. You do. Don't let him mess up your night.

ALLY

Thanks for the pep talk, coach, but I'll have plenty more nights.

GRANT

Might be your last.

ALLY

Is that a threat, creep?

GRANT

(flustered)

Wha- No. It's not..

ALLY

What did you think was gonna happen, dude? Just talk me up until I..

ALLY lets out an exasperated sigh, defeated.

GRANT

At least you're still talking. If *that* was my intention, which it wasn't-

ALLY
Yeah right.

GRANT (CONT'D)
I hope it was a good distraction.
Or at the very least, a good story
to tell.

ALLY still avoids eye contact, her expression unreadable.
GRANT finishes his coffee and stands up. He picks up his bag,
ready to leave.

GRANT (CONT'D)
It was nice to meet you, ALLY. I'm
GRANT.

GRANT walks away, exiting the cafe as ALLY stands there,
frozen.

EXT. CAFE - NIGHT CONTINUOUS

GRANT exits the cafe, sighing as he checks his phone.
Suddenly, he's bumped by ALLY, who followed him out.

GRANT
(turning around)
Hey! What's your problem?!

ALLY
Come on.

GRANT
I'm sorry?

ALLY
Come on!

ALLY grabs his wrist, pulling him down the sidewalk a couple
feet. GRANT pulls his arm away.

GRANT
Use your words.

ALLY
You'll have to do.

GRANT
(rolls eyes)
That's flattering.

ALLY
Do you have anything better to do?

GRANT

No.

ALLY

Then let's go. I feel like making mistakes.

GRANT

(concerned)

Wha- are you sure?

(raises eyebrow)

Wait, you're not asking me to..

ALLY

Ugh. Gross. No. I came here ready for a date. And you looked interested.

GRANT

Okay - ignoring how condescending that is, I've known you for five minutes. I wouldn't trust someone just like that, and you especially shouldn't.

ALLY

Look at you. Already concerned. We'll get along great.

ALLY suddenly pulls up her phone and snaps a photo of GRANT, taking him by surprise.

GRANT

Hey, what are you-

ALLY types something on her phone.

ALLY

Ah, there.

ALLY shows GRANT her phone. It's a text to someone named "PHOEBE." She sent the photo of GRANT, along with the caption "Hey, hanging out with this guy. If you don't hear from me tomorrow morning, call the cops." GRANT is stunned.

ALLY (CONT'D)

Oh, what's your full name, by the way?

GRANT

Uh-

ALLY
(interrupts)
Wait, nevermind.

ALLY pulls out GRANT's wallet from her bag. GRANT's eyes widen as he pats himself down. ALLY opens it up and snaps a photo of his ID before handing it back to GRANT.

ALLY (CONT'D)
There you go, "Grant King."

GRANT
I- huh?

ALLY
I feel safe now. Let's go.

ALLY walks in a seemingly random direction. GRANT contemplates for a moment, frozen in place. He reluctantly waddles forward, almost as though his body's deciding for him. His mind catches up after a few seconds, jogging lightly to catch up to ALLY.

GRANT
Alright. Uh, where to?

ALLY's phone vibrates again. She checks it.

ALLY
Ah, perfect. PHOEBE's actually in a bar a couple blocks from here.

ALLY walks swiftly. GRANT has to actively speed up to keep up with her pace

GRANT
Great. Let her put a face to the.. face.

ALLY
(chuckles)
What's on your mind? Regret?

GRANT
Confusion.

ALLY
That's not as fun.

GRANT
You like messing with people too?

ALLY
Only when they mess with me.

INT. TAVERN - DUSK

We cut to the bar, where a few patrons sit. Most of the patrons' eyes are glued to the TV's, playing the local baseball game live. PHOEBE, 21, sits there with DAMON, 21, her boyfriend. She's applying lip gloss, pocket mirror in hand.

PHOEBE
Should I be worried?

DAMON
Remember that time you flaked out
on date night 'cause she dragged
you up to the opening of that cafe
in LA?

PHOEBE chuckles.

PHOEBE
Yeah. This is different, though.

PHOEBE hands the lip gloss off to DAMON, who puts it away in her bag for her. PHOEBE uses the mirror to look around at the people behind them, spotting the only man not watching the game. A man in his 50's, drinking whiskey.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)
Navy guy?

DAMON takes a sip of his drink, then grabs the mirror to see for himself.

DAMON
Nah. Maybe before, but not now.
Dock worker, probably. Or..
contractor. No ring. That's
interesting.

EXT/INT. TAVERN - DUSK

ALLY and GRANT turn into the bar. She spots PHOEBE and DAMON at the bar, approaching them, GRANT following close behind.

ALLY suddenly grabs PHOEBE's shoulders, scaring her.

PHOEBE
Fuck!

ALLY chuckles, sitting next to PHOEBE. GRANT sits next to ALLY.

ALLY
Hey babes.

PHOEBE
This is the guy?

ALLY
Yep. GRANT, this is PHOEBE and her
boyfriend, DAMON.

PHOEBE
Hey GRANT.

GRANT gives a little wave to her and DAMON. He's looks up at
the screen.

ALLY
(PHOEBE)
Oh! Did you hear about Sherry and
Nami?

PHOEBE
Yeah. The hiking incident, right?

ALLY
No, no. What happened at ALEX's
party the other day.

PHOEBE
Wait.. No. What did they do?!

Their conversation fades as we focus on GRANT, who's watching
the game intently. DAMON tilts his head, looking at him for a
second. He yells out from three seats down as AALY and PHOEBE
continue gossiping.

DAMON
(to GRANT)
You a Padres fan?

GRANT
(double take)
Huh?

DAMON
Padres.

GRANT
Oh. My dad was the one into
baseball. Haven't seen a game in a
while. What about you?

DAMON

I'm a Giants fan by proxy. My whole family's into it, but baseball's boring as shit.

GRANT chuckles. PHOEBE sighs, and looks at DAMON and GRANT.

PHOEBE

Can you two just..

PHOEBE shoos DAMON off his stool. He rolls his eyes, pinching PHOEBE's side as he walks toward GRANT. She slaps the back of his head with a laugh. DAMON winces, rubbing his head as he sits down next to GRANT.

GRANT

You two are cute.

DAMON

(chuckles)
Yeah, thanks.

GRANT

So is PHOEBE the baseball fan?

DAMON

Oh, no.

GRANT

Then why a sports bar?

DAMON

People spotting.

GRANT

People- what?

DAMON

Like train-spotting, but with people. We're big on gossip. Listen.

The two turn back over to see PHOEBE and ALLY still gossiping.

ALLY

...so NAMI gets mad, and by this point, she's like, 10 drinks in. She finds a cozy little corner with some random freshman girl and just starts making out with her!

PHOEBE
 (eyes wide)
 Fuck! Did Sherry-?

ALLY
 She fucking saw! She sprints across
 the room, tackles NAMI to the
 floor..

DAMON and GRANT look back at each other.

GRANT
 I see.

DAMON
 Yep. Let me get you a drink.

DAMON calls over the bartender.

DAMON (CONT'D)
 (to bartender, pointing at
 drink)
 Another one of these for him.

GRANT
 Any interesting people tonight?

DAMON hands GRANT the hand mirror.

DAMON
 Older guy at the table, six o'
 clock.

GRANT looks through the mirror.

DAMON (CONT'D)
 Who is he?

GRANT thinks for a moment.

GRANT
 Weird. He's not watching the game.

DAMON
 Yep.

GRANT
 And no ring.

DAMON
 Very good.
 (beat)
 I think he's out trying to cheat on
 the wife.

(MORE)

DAMON (CONT'D)

Waiting for a date, probably half his age. Cash in hand. Not the type who could attract on merit. He's pretty closed off.

GRANT

Definitely homely. Maybe not a date. I'm thinking he's hiding out here. Navy, probably. Long day. Told his wife he'd be working late but probably avoiding the kids.

DAMON

I thought Navy too. You're good.

GRANT

Thanks.

GRANT peers over at ALLY and PHOEBE, still locked in conversation.

DAMON

What do you know about ALLY already?

GRANT

Not much. Impulsive, bad with faces, good pickpocket.

DAMON looks at the two, then back at GRANT, leaning in so they can't hear.

DAMON

Between you and me, ALLY's just been through a rough breakup. And I'm supposed to sus you out.

GRANT

ALLY asked you to?

DAMON

Nah. PHOEBE. ALLY's not in the right space to sus you out herself.

GRANT

Why tell me?

DAMON

You've got a vibe to you. It's none of my business, but I feel like you might've gone through something similar.

GRANT's eyes widen.

DAMON (CONT'D)
Yeah, I thought so.

DAMON sighs. He looks over at PHOEBE, who's giving him a look. ALLY takes notice. The bartender comes back with an espresso martini for DAMON.

DAMON (CONT'D)
(low voice, to GRANT)
Look. ALLY has a habit of making ridiculous decisions, even before everything that's happened. She's lucky she's not dead, frankly. So be polite about it, but drop her as soon as you can. For both your sakes.

GRANT nods solemnly. DAMON lifts his glass and toasts with GRANT.

GRANT
Don't have to tell me twice.
(takes sip)
Hm. Not a whole lot of vodka in this espresso martini.

DAMON
It's just espresso. Gonna be a long night for you around ALLY, and can't have you drunk around her.

GRANT
(tilts head)
This was your drink. You ordered just an espresso in a martini glass?

DAMON
This is the only bar in town that uses actual espresso in their martinis, and I didn't feel like drinking tonight.

ALLY and PHOEBE turn to join on GRANT and DAMON's conversation.

ALLY
So GRANT, what's your deal? You go to State?

GRANT
Uh, no. I'm in the Navy.

PHOEBE
No shit. What's your rate?

GRANT
MMN.

PHOEBE
(whistles)
Nuke. Fucking insane. I'm an HM.
Ship or sub?

GRANT
Sub.

PHOEBE
(exhales)
It gets worse.

ALLY
Explain. Please?!

PHOEBE
Your date's suicidal.

GRANT
(interrupting)
Okay, enough about me. ALLY? DAMON?

DAMON
We're students at UCSD.

GRANT
Oh, nice. Major?

DAMON
I'm Electrical Engineering.

ALLY
Cognitive Science with a
specialization in Design and
Interaction.

GRANT
Oh. Can't say I've heard about it.

ALLY
It's just art with extra steps,
really. But what makes whatever you
do so scary, huh?

GRANT
There's probably more to it than
that, is there?