

SANCTUARY

by

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Around 800 words

Elsa opened the heavy door to the roof and closed it carefully behind her. The sun was hanging low in the sky and painted the school roof red. She put on the hoodie she had brought with her and took out the cigarette pack from her pocket. A familiar looking girl was walking along the edge of the roof a few metres from her. She hadn't noticed her yet and continued balancing her way forward. Elsa took a long drag of her cigarette.

“You’re gonna fall if you keep that up,” she said while she breathed out the smoke. The girl was startled and turned around quickly.

“Shit Elsa!” The girl jumped down from the edge. “Don’t scare me like that!”

“Be aware of your surroundings instead. It could have been The Lizard instead of me, what would you have done then?”

“Jumped, obviously.”

“Oh shut up.”

“No but seriously, rather die than have to suffer at the hands of The Lizards wrath and my parents disappointment. ‘Caroline! What were you thinking! You could have gotten seriously hurt!’”

“They have a point,” Elsa muttered and took another drag. Caroline pointed a finger at her with raised eyebrows.

“You can’t say anything, you’re up here with me as well. And smoking as well BOOM, two strikes!” she said and held up two fingers that she continued to use to smoke an invisible cigarette. Elsa leaned her head back against the door and rolled her eyes.

“At least I cover my tracks,” she said.

“Ugh come on, stop being so boring and come sit with me”, answered Caroline and sat down with her legs dangling over the edge. Elsa threw her cigarette on the ground, stomped on it, and then walked over to her. She sat down the opposite way, with her back to the schoolyard and feet on solid ground.

“So what were you running from this time?” asked Elsa.

“Akiko,” answered Caroline.

“Akiko? I thought you liked her?”

“Yeah that’s exactly why I ran away.”

“Why?”

“I don’t know. I don’t know!” Caroline cried out and put her face in her hands. “She asked me something after class but the sun was shining so beautifully on her face and God... Elsa you should have seen her, she looked magical. A Goddess! And me, an ugly puny insect, couldn’t handle her beauty. It was too much!”

“You’re so overly dramatic Caro.”

“I’m a poet, what else should I be if not dramatic?”

“Mm yeah, that’s true. And then what?”

“I ran,” Caroline said, her face deadpan.

“You what?”

“I ran, okay! The words in my mouth just turned into mush and nothing came out so... I just said ‘Goodbye!’ and waved and ran away!” Elsa started laughing loudly and bent over with her arms around her belly. She tried to speak but only a few unclear words came out.

“You waved? Are you kidding me or what in the world Caro!” she managed to get out eventually.

“Stop bullying me!” Caroline whined and shoved Elsa who was wiping away a fake tear.

“I don’t know, I panicked! Do you think she was offended by it?”

“If I was her, yeah. What are you asking me for, you think I can fix this or what?”

“I’m asking you because you’re my best friend, stupid!”

They stared at each other for a few seconds and then burst into laughter. They laughed until it felt like their bellies would rupture. When they had calmed down, Elsa took out a new cigarette and lit it. Caroline looked down at her lap where her fingers were pulling at the strings from the hole in her pants.

“I’m never gonna speak to her again,” Caroline said after a while.

“Tsk. You just gotta. Or move away from here.”

“Are those the only choices I have?”

“Probably, yeah.”

“And where am I supposed to move, do you think?”

“That’s for you to figure out, I’m not the one on the run for offending another student,” Elsa said and took a drag of her cigarette.

“Ha! As if you’re gonna stay in this hell without me!”

“Yeah yeah fine, what do you have in mind then?”

“Okay, picture this,” Caroline said and sat up straight. She gesticulated wildly with her hands in front of her while she continued. “We move to the countryside. Not too far away, ten minute walk to the nearest grocery store. A small cabin. A dog. Golden retriever, of course. An art studio with windows everywhere for you. A cozy little writing room for me. Voila!”

“How romantic.”

“Right! I can write poetry and you can paint. I can write poetry about your paintings and you can paint about my poetry. It’s perfect!”

“And Akiko?” Elsa questioned with a raised eyebrow.

“Meh, she’s in the past”

“A half hour ago.”

“Forever ago.”

“There will be other Akikos,” Elsa stated and tried to blow smoke rings.

“They’ll just have to accept that we come in two. Otherwise, goodbye! Go away!”

“How nice.”

“It’s just facts!” Caroline said proudly. Her smile disappeared slowly as if she caught herself. She lowered her hands and brought them down to her lap again.

“Of course, only if you want to, it’s just a stupid idea...” she said with a fading voice. Elsa turned her face to Caroline. Her hair and face were red from the sun. Her gaze was locked on the hole in her pants that had become almost double the size. Elsa threw her cigarette on the ground and took Carolines hands.

“Of course I want to. There are no Akikos in my life, only Caros,” Elsa said with a soft voice. Caroline smiled and squeezed her hand. The school bell rang and they both sighed.

“Elsa can’t we just stay here, I don’t want to go inside again.”

“Come on, it’s not that bad. There’s just one lesson left and it’s that sub that always just puts on a movie.”

“Fine. But if The Lizard comes in and turns off the movie and forces us to write a whole paper in an hour AGAIN, I will immediately run back here and jump!”

“If she does that, I promise I will jump with you.”