

Bottled Up

- A Short Story -







Another sunny day in god forsaken Florida. Looking to her left however, from the passenger seat of the truck she was in, Amelia had no regrets. Alex, her fiancé, her boyfriend, the love of her life, switched lanes and looked at her with his dorky sweet adoring smile. The light shined in and caught his hazel eyes, the freckles right beneath them, and spun his hair into golden straw. In every way, he was perfect and it made her heart quicken just being with him. This was what true love was all about, being perfectly happy, feeling so happy with the one you were with; he was her heart, her everything.

“What,” he asked, reaching over to old her hand while he drove with the other. Looking down, she traced her thumb along his skin.

Biting down on her lower lip, trying to contain her grin, she said, “nothing, just thinking about how happy you make me.”

“Eh, you’re just happy cause of the sex. It’s the only thing I’m good for.”

Amelia burst out laughing. He grinned himself. Taking a moment to size him up, she knew why he makes such a tease.



In his baggy shorts and large t-shirt, standing 6'1", he was lanky (which she liked) and just the right amount of awkward that made her always bite her lip, hiding her adoration, he definitely did not look like a "sex god". But that was exactly what he was, and not just because of how well-endowed he was, he made her feel safe, comfortable. He was the only person she had ever been with that actually made her enjoy sex, the only person who didn't make her feel like a thing, a sex toy. He made her happy because he made her so comfortable. Amelia felt so open with him, felt like she could be honest with him. That was why the sex was so amazing, because he made every effort to make her comfortable. Their relationship was wonderful, perfect.

"Oh you know that's not true. I mean yeah, it's fucking amazing, but it's not why I'm happy." He smiled at her sweetly, quickly turning his eyes back on the road ahead. Staring at him, she almost wanted to make him pull over the car so that she could kiss him and hold him close. But it was a beach day, with his two best friends who just happened to be married. Fucking awesome.

"It's a beautiful day," he said taking the exit off I-95.

He was such a Floridian. "It's too sunny, hot, humid and gross. Thank god for the wind."

"Baby," he whined in a way that would have annoyed her were it anyone else. "We can go home; we don't have to go if you don't want to." He slowed, approaching a red light.

She smiled at him. He was so sweet, so kind, so generous. He knew how she hated people, all people, which was strange considering everyone loved her and her mom constantly told her what great people skill she had. More importantly though, he knew how she didn't feel comfortable with his friends, how he couldn't connect with them and just wanted to slice her wrist

open whenever she was near them.

A part of her wanted to be selfish and give in to her social anxiety and slight agoraphobia. She could never stand people within arm's reach of her until she got to know them, or could connect with them, which she rarely ever really could do. Her ex's just called her a free spirit because she would move on from guy to guy, seeking what she has finally found with Alex. They never understood her like he did, never gave her the opportunity to be open, to be herself like she was now.

But no, she could not be selfish, however uncomfortable she would be around them, listening to the new bride drone on and on about herself, her likes, her infatuation with other girly shit that Amelia just did not understand, never could. She liked comic books, video games, and reading. The girliest thing about her was how obsessively vain she was about her appearance. But being a narcissist wasn't the way to bond with a church going gal.

"Honey bee, it's fine. That's why I brought a book and my notebook in case I get suddenly inspired. Now if you ignore me I can just bury my nose in a book."

"Baby," he pouted, driving along, "I'm not going to ignore you."

"Honey bee, you know you do whenever we're around your friends. It's fine. I mean, it's not totally fine, bugs the crap out of me, but I get it." She gave him a kind smile to show him that she was okay. "It's okay, really. See, I'm fine, I'm perfectly fine." No she wasn't, but it was better than just making everything about her. Relationships weren't about that. Her mother always told her that making sacrifices wasn't what a relationship was about, but Amelia couldn't make him sacrifice his friends to just be with her and she didn't think about entering an uncomfortable

as a sacrifice on her part. One day she knew she was going to have to join the world rather than hide from it, and joining the world alongside Alex, she felt comfortable.

“Are you sure? We don’t have to go. It’s fine, I’ll just call them up and tell them we had to cancel.” His consideration made her smile. Amelia loved that he cared about her and was thinking about her.

“Hon bee, let’s go enjoy the beach.”

Pushing her sunglasses up her nose, above her glasses, she grabbed her bag from behind her seat and climbed from the car in her 3-inch high wedge sandals. Not exactly beach appropriate but she hated flats and loved how her legs looked in heels. She also liked how Alex would stare at them and marvel over her.

“How did I get so lucky,” he said pulling her close.

“You’re just saying that ‘cause I’m hot.”

He pulled away, looking down at her seriously, tucking her long bangs she used to cover her face behind her ear. “No, you’re beautiful. Inside and out.”

“You’re just saying that ‘cause you love me.”

Smiling again, he shook his head up and down like the puppy that he was. “I definitely love you with all my heart.”

Touching his nose with her own like the cat that she was she held him close. It was a perfect moment, one she simply didn’t want to end.

“Alex!”

Damn.

He pulled away first and held her close, sticking his hand into the right back pocket of her high-waisted shorts, and waved at his approaching friends. Recently married, Amelia remembered the wedding perfectly. About three hundred people, three

hundred awful strangers that she had been forced to be close to. It had taken every fiber of her being to not have a panic attack. Of course, she had been a little standoffish, a book in her hand, her nose buried in it. An act she was going to try not to repeat today.

“Hey Marie, hey Kevin.” Amelia just smiled, saying her own hellos to them silently thinking about how fucking un-awesome the day was going to be. But then again, there was no one else she would rather be with. So it was worth it; he was worth it.

“We think we found the perfect spot on the beach,” said Marie, “it’s right near the water, perfect. Let’s go before some one snags it.”

“I thought we were going to eat first,” said Amelia looking up at Alex.

“Oh we already ate.”

“Amelia and I haven’t eaten yet, we thought we were all going to eat together.”

“I’m sure you can grab something on the beach.” Marie saccharine smile pissed Amelia off. Her whole body tensed up. Don’t do it Alex, she thought, don’t you dare give in to them.

“Yeah, I mean, I guess. Are you okay with that Baby Doll?”

No. “Sure, I guess it’s okay.” Fucking awesome, she thought, pulling away from Alex to fish out her water bottle from her bag, spiked with about 4 ounces of her favorite peach schnapps. Yay for alcohol.

“Great! Let’s get going. This place is pretty secluded, away from most of the people.” She led the way, and Amelia was at least thankful that the place was far away from people. Hollywood Beach was a very touristy place, the closest beach to where they all lived, and very nice as far as beaches went. Even in the suffocating daylight.

“Are you okay?” asked Alex pulling her close.

“Yeah I’m just hungry.”

“I’m sorry baby.”

“It’s fine, let’s just sit down and I don’t know, get ice cream I guess.”

He let out a groan that was a half whine. It was adorable how he did that, how he listened to what she said and what she didn’t say, how he could read her body movements.

“It’s fine sweetie. Let’s just get situated and maybe we can have some alone time and do something naughty on the beach.” She pinched his butt, pulling him alongside her. They had fallen behind a bit. But it was nice, not feeling suffocated by people. However, she still made the attempt to not let any sweaty half naked people brush against her. Thankfully, Alex helped her along. So many people on the confined 10-foot wide sidewalk, she needed to get away from all these people.

“Let’s walk along the beach.”

“Your shoes are not exactly sand friendly baby doll.”

“I can walk barefoot, it’s not to-too hot out.” Thank god.

Pausing she wiggled out of her sandals, winking at him as she pulled him along after her, onto the sandy beach. She loved him so much, with all her heart. The way he was looking at her, the way he was smiling down at her, it lit up her world.

Together on the beach, she walked along together hand in hand. It was better on the beach with the cool sea breeze. Looking up ahead, she noticed his friends cross onto the beach and head in their direction. Amelia stopped walking down the beach and waited for them.

“It’s just up ahead,” said Marie pointing to a single patch of sand close to the water and far away from people.

“That’s perfect,” said Amelia smiling, genuinely happy that

they had picked a place far away from all the people on the beach.

Laying her beach towel down, Amelia dumped her bag beside it and grabbed her drink. If the sun heated it up, the drink would spoil, mixing in alcohol and the taste of plastic together. The thought was unappetizing.

Situating herself, she took off her tank top and traded it with the book from her bag. Laying on her stomach, she watched the trio sit around together, talking about this and that. That’s what always happened. Of course, he made a point to look at her, to stare at her, making her feel comfortable as if she wasn’t the fourth wheel. Sipping her drink, she nodded along, smiled and pretended like everything was fine, like she was doing okay. Marie talked about every girly thing imaginable which made Amelia’s ears bleed, figuratively of course. But she smiled and played along because that’s what normal people did, they tried to make friends. All she wanted to do was read her book and pretend like nothing mattered. Or that she didn’t matter. It was easier that way, to be ignored while he was with his friends if she didn’t matter.

Dazing off into the ocean, her book in her hand, she felt her stomach rumble. Alex heard it too. Food, that was a thing right? Something they had all clearly forgotten just like she knew they would.

“Oh! We forgot all about the food.” Yeah, for like a freaking hour.

“It’s not a big deal, Alex and I can get something to eat on our way home.”

“Yeah, we have to go soon,” he said, smiling at her. He knew she wasn’t exactly enjoying herself. She could try, but it was hard, hard to even connect with these people. Her hero.

“We’ll go get some ice cream. You guys want to come with?”

“I think I’ll just sit here,” said Amelia. “Thank you though.”

“No problem. What flavor? We’re gonna go to Ben & Jerry’s right there,” she said pointing to the ice cream shop up on the boardwalk.

“Very Berry Sherbet if they have it.”

“What about you Alex?”

“Double chocolate fudge. Do you guys need my card?” He was already fishing for his wallet.

“Nope, our treat. I feel bad that we ate before you guys got here, I was just so hungry.”

“It’s not a big deal,” said Amelia, grabbing her notebook and pen. “Hunger is a thing.” Oops, she thought, hope I didn’t sound too bitchy. But Marie didn’t notice, or didn’t care because she just laughed and tied her shining brown hair up in a bun in the dimming sunlight. Amelia smiled back, looking away to grab her notebook and pen. Something to write, she needed to write something, it egged at her, tingled her fingers, hurt her head. But what? She didn’t feel especially inspired, but needed to write, needed to scribble meaningless words onto a sheet of paper.

“Oo, look at you, starting your next great novel?”

“I guess so.”

Walking off, her own husband in hand, Amelia looked down at her notebook, aware of Alex making his way towards her.

“I’m sorry.”

“For what?”

“You don’t want to be here.”

A small smile graced her lips. “I’d rather be with you than anywhere in the world.”

“But you’re miserable.”

“Not really. I just wish she wasn’t so girly and talked about herself so much. She literally knows nothing about me. I can’t

even get a word in, even if I tried.”

“I know baby, that’s just how she is—”

“And that’s fine, it just makes me feel invisible.” Sighing, Amelia laid down and pulled him down on her. “You are all I need Alex, all I want. I’m okay with your friends, they’re okay. I don’t mind.”

He groaned. “Yes you do.”

Nothing she said would keep him from feeling bad, so she kissed him instead, fiercely pressing her lips against his. Her hand slid down his back, sweaty from the summer heat and lingered on the waistband of his trunks.

“I don’t mind Alex.” Her hand slid inside his trunks and he groaned, kissing her back fiercely. They were both very happy for the seclusion of the spot. He held her close, just like he always did and restrained himself greatly, keeping his hands around her waist while she touched him.

“We’ll go after we finish the ice cream,” he said between kisses, “I promise. We’ll go and I’ll treat you to some real food. You deserve it, you deserve everything.”

“We can stay.”

“No,” he said kissing her neck. “I don’t want to. You’re all I need, you’re all I want. And you deserve a good meal for just trying and being here with me even though you don’t want to. I’m sorry. I’m sorry I ignore you, I’m sorry we make you feel invisible.” He kissed her again and she moved her hand to cup his absolutely perfect butt. Looking down at her, he kissed her lips, her nose, her forehead and looked up. “They’re coming back.”

“Okay.”

Sitting up, she fixed her purple and black bikini top that had shifted during their mini make out session.

“Here you go love birds. I got you a cup instead of a cone

since that's sherbet, I hope that's okay."

"That's perfect, thanks Marie." She smiled down at Amelia, taking her seat in the sand. Taking up her notebook, she sat and stared at the ocean currents, have tempted to just dive in and forget about the world. It was so beautiful, with a slow tide today, swaying with the breeze that brushed against it. The sherbet was delicious, fruity and sweet, just the way she liked it. She basically devoured it within moments, savoring each snowy bite in the heat that threatened to beat down on her.

She could have moved away, could have stayed in Boston. But then she would have had to leave him, the one person she wanted to be with. So she chose to stay, for him. Was that a sacrifice? No, it was...it was something else. Boston wasn't a home without him and Florida, there were some points she had grown to appreciate over the years, things she had come to admire and even like because of him. Pulling him away from everyone he knew, his friends and family, that would have been selfish, something her mother didn't understand. Her mother was constantly telling her how sacrifice didn't make a relationship yet she expected Alex to sacrifice everything for her. It was hypocritical bullshit. Amelia wasn't sacrificing anything, because there was nothing without him in her life. She loved him, they loved each other so much it hurt. And being away, that had hurt beyond reason. It had been unbearable. So she stayed in Florida, right after college, she moved down and stayed right there with him, right where she wanted to be. Her mother didn't understand, she didn't get it. No one really did.

Swallowing the last bite, she tied her hair back and stared at the notebook and paper while they chatted. She had eaten, but her fingers and passion had yet to. They needed to feed, she needed to feed her passion, her love of writing, and finally she

knew what she wanted to write, what she needed to explore. Peeking through her glasses, she watched him laugh and smile, perfectly happy, moving his hands while he spoke in the way that infuriated her when others did it but made her love him even more when he did it. He was beautiful and didn't even know it. Putting her pen down on the paper, she smiled, relief filling her as she scratched the first word.

I'm sitting here, on the beach, overlooking the ocean with my fiancé and his friends. I don't know why I'm writing this instead of being a part of the conversation. I don't know why I'm even here. I hate sunlight, I hate the beach, I hate everything about Florida but he (my fiancé) asked if we could hang out with his friends and how could I say no? How could I be selfish. Sometimes I fight, sometimes I bitch and complain about how he cares about his friends more than me but I don't think I really believe that. I just love him. And I love how he cares so much about his friends. All my friends are shitheads. Don't get me wrong, I love my friends, but they are shitheads. Totally different than his friends. His friends were so...like perfect. I can't help but feel uncomfortable around them, I can't help but hate being around them. But here I am, sitting on the beach, writing on my notebook beside them. They think I am writing my next great novel, but I'm not. Saying I'm writing about you isn't great, people don't always take that as a compliment. So I'm sitting here, writing about them. Writing about him.

My mom is right and wrong. Relationships shouldn't be about sacrifice, they should indeed be about compromise.

But sometimes, there needed to be sacrifice. I look at everything about him, down at the ring he gave me, and I know it in my heart that he is my soulmate, that he is the person that I want to be with in my life. Which is why I can't bitch and complain and exclude the people who are important in his life. I can't do that if I want to spend the rest of my life with him. I can't. I love him. I love how he cares, the kindness in his eyes, the gentle way he approaches things, how caring he is, how passive he is to my forcefulness. He's my better half. The person I spent my life looking for. I love him.

So that's why I'm here, bottling up my emotions, pouring them over these pages. If I write them out, I think maybe I can be different, more open, and more comfortable with the people in his life. He makes me so happy.

To whoever is reading this, look at the person by your side, at the person you love and be happy, never be miserable, unhappy. Be like me, completely happy, despite everything. Be in love, in pure unadulterated love, where the touch from that person just ignites your skin. Where every time they look at you, your heart skips a beat and you just want touch them; press your lips against theirs. Where you hate having to share them but do it anyway because it's a relationship, it's about the both of you, not just the one person. He puts me first and he is the person I put above everything in the world. I don't think my mom likes that though, I think she thinks I'm beholden to him. But I'm not. I'm protective, possessive, maybe a little obsessive. He's my heart, my soul, my everything and I couldn't live without him, wouldn't

want to live without him.

Sincerely yours,
Amelia

Looking over what she had written, she felt incredibly silly. Who the hell would ever read this letter to herself, this letter to a person? Rolling her eyes at herself, she smiled, tearing it from the notebook. What the hell was she going to do with it? Taking a moment, Amelia looked up from Alex who had just finished his cone of double chocolate fudge ice cream. Their eyes met and suddenly, she didn't feel like the fourth wheel anymore. She felt at home.

Leaning forward, she wiped at the chocolate on his chin with her thumb.

"We should get going," he said smiling at her, and only her. He was keeping his promise.

"Really? Do you guys have to go?" asked Marie.

"Yeah, we gotta go."

"Okay, but we really should hang out more."

Amelia smiled, honestly. "Maybe we can do dinner and a movie again, in a few weeks."

"I'd like that!" Girls, why did they have to be so girly? Amelia gave her a hug and looked at the letter in her hand. They all turned their backs to one another and Amelia stood there. A thought hit her. Reaching down to grab her half-empty water bottle, she poured out the contents and rolled up the letter. Hoping the alcohol and water wouldn't ruin what she had written, she put the letter in and sealed it up tight. They were so busy talking to one another, they didn't notice her as she took a few steps to the water. No one was watching her. No one

she knew ever had to read what she had written, but one day some stranger could and someone would know how much she loved the man she was with. Quickly, she threw the bottle into the ocean and watched the crystal blue tide take it out to sea. It would probably wash back to the shore in the next few days, but what did that matter.

Everyone said their final goodbyes, and went their separate ways with sand in their pants and in between their toes. The sun had set some, shifting the blue into shades of peach and lilac, leading to a beautiful night, where the sky would be clear and the stars would be shining.

Like the gentleman that he was, he opened the door for her. She kissed him before putting her shoes back on, she tossed her bag into the car, licking her lips, thirsty.

“Hey honey bee, can I have some water?”

“Where’s your water bottle.”

“I think I left it on the beach.”

“Wanna go back and look for it?”

Amelia pulled him close, and leaned against the car, wrapping her arms around his neck she bopped her nose against his. “No, let’s just get home. I just want you, nothing else.”

“Mmm,” he said grinning, “I like the sound of that.”

Amelia laughed and got in the car. He was all she needed. He was her heart, her soul, her everything.

