

Inkspired by K.A.Clattenburg

It was an interesting day at the hospital, so Charlie made her way into her local hole-in-the-wall bar near her apartment, still in her scrubs. She wanders to her favorite table in the corner, pulling out her journal to enter the day. She watches as Oliver, her favorite of the bartenders here, makes his way over to her.

"Hey, Charlie! Rough day today? You want your usual?" Oliver asks.

"Yes, and yes. How can you tell?" She glances up quickly at him but turns her focus back to her journal. "Wait, don't tell me I don't want to know what level of hell I look like at the moment," Charlie replies, not looking up back up at him but letting her pen flow across the page.

"Not that you'll believe me, but you never look like hell." Oliver smiles and turns. "Any level." And then under his breath and to himself, "More like heaven." He then goes back to the bar to prepare her beverage, a good old-fashioned coffee.

"Here you go, Charlie." He sets the coffee off to the side spilling a drop on the corner of her journal. "I'm so sorry, Charlie." He grabs a napkin and cleans it up.

"It's okay, Oliver." She smiles and looks up at him. His worried expression reminds her of her first night coming to this bar. "You know you had that same expression on your face the first time I came here."

"What are you talking about?"

"Here let me show you." Charlie flips through her journal, to a spot in the front. The page is filled with her handwriting and a sketch of Oliver and his worried look. Charlie begins to read her words to Oliver.

"Today was my first day working at Ocean View Hospital and thank goodness it was uneventful. Lots of paperwork filled my morning and then I did rounds with one of the other nurses, Beth. She was nice, at least to my face. I'm sitting here at this quaint little bar near my apartment now. I feel so at home here. The bartender's name is Oliver, and he has the most amazing tattoos. I also made him laugh when I just ordered a coffee. He accidentally spilled some on me when he brought it over to the table I am sitting at in the corner. He looked so worried. His expression was so adorable. Here's a sketch. I hope we become friends. He brightens my day!"

Oliver looks at Charlie as she finishes the last sentence. "You brighten my day too, Charlie." He knocks his knuckles on the table. His eyes were going between her and

her journal. "And for the record, you look beautiful, even when it looks like you've been pulling your hair out all day"

"Oli, need a refill dude," a patron yells from the bar.

He backs away, then turns. "Coming right up, Bob."

Charlie smiles as she watches, flips back to her current page, and starts a new sketch to go with her words. She gets lost on the page as she details a new picture of Oliver. Raised voices, which are not normal for her little slice of paradise, pull her from her journal.

"Look, dude, we don't want any trouble here. It's time for you to leave." Oliver is standing by a table near the front. A large man is also standing there, his chair knocked over. He has about five inches and a hundred pounds on Oliver. And Oliver is not a small or slender man.

Charlie notes Oliver tense posture, then she looks to the right of the men. She sees her neighbor, Mary, sitting in the chair opposite the large man. She stands and walks over without a thought. As if sensing her Oliver puts his arm out to stop her from getting any closer.

The bar is silent, and you could hear a pin drop. Mary's sniffles and silent cries pull Charlie's attention.

"Mary are you okay?" She moves towards Mary with Oliver between her and the man.

"Listen you-" The man starts.

"No," Charlie, in full nurse mode. Oliver shoots her a quick look but keeps his attention on the large drunk man. "You, sir, are going to listen to Oliver and get in a cab and leave. I've dealt with enough crap today at work that I do not. Let me repeat, I do not want to deal with it now. You are drunk. You need to go home and sleep it off. Now."

The man looks at Oliver and then at Charlie, with his final look landing on Mary. He turns and walks out into the waiting cab Oliver had called.

Charlie turns her attention to Mary, while Oliver makes sure the man has left and then tends to a few other customers. "Mary are you okay?"

Mary looks up meekly at Charlie. "I am now."

"Is he your boyfriend?"

"No, he's, my brother. He's not normally like that." Mary looks at the door.

"Do you want me to call someone for you or walk you home?"

Mary looks to the bar and tosses some bills on the table from her pocket and nods.

"Could you walk me home?"

Charlie nods. She figures she'd come back and grab her stuff and pay her tab. She leads Mary out the door and walks her home. After leaving Mary with a few numbers for professionals to assist with her brother, Charlie leaves her and heads back to the bar to get her stuff.

To her surprise the door is locked, so she knocks. Oliver opens the door. She doesn't have a chance to say anything before Oliver pulls her into his arms hugging her tight as he shuts the door behind them, locking it once again.

She never felt this at home, this safe before. But in Oliver's arms, a place she had never been before, all those feelings swirled around.

"I was worried when you took Mary home," Oliver said breaking the silence.

"I was worried when the big burly dude was glaring at you," Charlie admitted.

Oliver's arms tightened around her. "Go finish writing in your journal. I know you won't sleep until you do." Charlie lifts her chin looking up at him. "You mentioned it, once."

"But aren't you closing?" She looked around the empty space.

"I'm closed, but I have a lot to do. You have all the time you need, and then I'm walking you home."

Oliver led her to her table, her stuff still where she left it. She looked up at Oliver.

"I'll be right back with a fresh coffee."

Charlie slid into her chair. She looked over at Oliver, who was pouring coffee from a fresh pot and smiled. She then started a new drawing; the words would come later.