

Wonderlust

Written by
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JOE A lovable idiot in his twenties.
Has a crush on Kayley but
doesn't think he's smart enough
for her.

KAYLEY The kindly volunteer of the
charity shop. Lover of
literature and is interested in
teaching it's way to Joe too.

MRS CARDIFF An educated and elegant retired
woman. A woman with who
chuckles.

IN CENTRE-STAGE THERE IS A TABLE WITH A BOOK ON IT AND A CHAIR UNDERNEATH. LIGHTS COME UP AS THE JOE WALKS IN FRONT OF THE TABLE. HE IS WEARING A COAT OVER HIS SECURITY GUARD OUTFIT.

JOE When you're shift starts at 6 in the evening, you're never sure what to do with yourself. You wake up in the afternoon because the last shift finished at 4am, and then what do you do? Do you eat breakfast? Or lunch? It's impossible to relax before work, too. I'm always looking at the clock, working out in real-time the hours and minutes until I've got to go back to work. I wish I could do something with that time, but I always end up going to work early. Better than just sitting around watching youtube anyway. At the minute I'm at this office block slap-bang in the city centre. They do internet things, not sure what. They don't really talk to me, though I try. "Have a good evening," headphones on, shoudlers slumped, nothing. I try. Before I go there though, I have a look at the shops nearby.

KAYLEY ENTERS AND SITS BEHIND THE DESK.

JOE (cont'd) By the time I get there they're usually all packing up and going home. They don't talk much either.

KAYLEY Hi Joe! How are you today?

JOE (TO AUDIENCE) Except for Kayley, anyway. (TO KAYLEY) I'm wonderful today, thank you? How are you?

KAYLEY That's funny that! Because I'm wonderful too!

JOE Wonderful!

KAYLEY Are you buying anything today?
 How are you doing with that
 Irvine Welsh?

JOE (TO AUDIENCE) Kayley volunteers
 at this charity shop every now
 and again. *She* talks to me. And
 now, she's made it her mission
 to get me reading again.

KAYLEY (TO AUDIENCE) Don't trust anyone
 who hasn't brought a book with
 them! Reading is leading!

JOE (TO AUDIENCE) When I told her all
 I used to do at work was play
 games on my phone, she offered
 to pay for one of the books
 here. It's nice to have someone
 looking over you. Someone like
 her.

KAYLEY (TO JOE) Filth, wasn't it? Did
 you get up to, 'that bit' yet?
 Where it gets all weird?

JOE It's all weird!

KAYLEY Well, I won't spoil it for you
 then. You've come a long way
 since that first book, haven't
 you? What was that one? Chris
 Ryan, wasn't it?

JOE (SHEEPISH) It was an Andy
 McNabb. 'Something with guns,' I
 said.

KAYLEY Well, they all count.

JOE Yeah, but...

KAYLEY (SERIOUS) No, Joe, they all
 count. You can learn from
 anything, if you keep your eyes
 open. And not learning is such
 as a waste. (BEAT, BACK TO JOLLY)
 So, do you have anything else in
 mind?

JOE No, nothing at the minute. I'll
 just have a wander for a bit.

KAYLEY

Okay. Have a good look around!

KAYLEY TAKES OUT A BOOK AND BEGINS
READING. JOE PEERS THROUGH IMAGINARY
BOOKSHELF.

JOE

(TO AUDIENCE) Before this I
hadn't been in a charity shop
since I was a kid with my gran.
She only used to go in for the
Fairtrade hot chocolate, but
sometimes she'd buy me a cd or
something. I'm starting to like
them again. There's just so much
weird stuff. The other day I
bought a coaster from here. For
work, you know. It's blue, cork
on the back and on the front
there's this painting of some
puffins on a cliff side
somewhere, and then, underneath
them, was a poem *about* puffins.
I mean, who made that? Who wrote
that poem? And why? And where
and when? I like thinking about
that, every time I make a brew.

KAYLEY

(TO JOE) You seen anything you
like?

JOE

No, not yet.

KAYLEY

We've got some nice handbags in,
if you want to have a look.

JOE

No thanks.

KAYLEY

Not even for your
girlfriend.....s?

JOE

Nah, not them either. Even if
they did exist. Why are handbags
are a thing anyway?

KAYLEY

Erm...

JOE

Why not just carry everything? I
always did assume there was
another reason, like you can
turn it inside out to make a
hat, or that they're full of
bricks so you can pump iron all
day.

KAYLEY Am I really the one you want to ask that question?

JOE Well, you know. You're here.

KAYLEY Thanks. Well, they're mainly to hold things,-

JOE What's wrong with your pockets?

KAYLEY Women's jeans don't have pockets.

JOE What?!

KAYLEY But they're also just to accessorise. We get a few women buying them from here before job interviews and dates.

JOE Really? Huh.

KAYLEY Well, you know. Looking good, feeling good.

JOE I don't, really-

KAYLEY Listen, don't think about it. Just enjoy how cute they are.

JOE Well...

KAYLEY Anyway!

KAYLEY STANDS UP AND JOINS HIM,
TAKING THE BOOK WITH HER.

KAYLEY (cont'd) Have you ever though about reading plays? We've got quite a few.

JOE No, I don't like-

KAYLEY And *some* of them aren't even by Shakespeare. How about a nice Tennessee Williams? Or a....hmmm, probably not Beckett...

JOE Maybe...

KAYLEY Or maybe some psychology? Or philosophy? Some of these are a little heavy though, do you like bikes?

JOE Bikes?

KAYLEY Motorbikes? Travelling around America on one?

JOE Well, I've never really thought about it-

KAYLEY How about poetry?

JOE 'Roses are red, violets are blue?'

JOE TRIES TO COME UP WITH THE REST OF THE POEM. HE STRUGGLES BEFORE KAYLEY HELPS HIM OUT.

KAYLEY You're new favourite book is right here, waiting for you!

JOE Something something, something something...poo.

KAYLEY (BEAT) Well, after that I think you definitely should read some poetry. Some proper poetry!

JOE IS UNSURE, BUT DOESN'T WANT TO LET HER DOWN.

JOE Yeah, okay. Alright!

KAYLEY Really?

JOE Yeah, why not?

KAYLEY Oh, erm, well, I wasn't really expecting you to say yes...

JOE (CHECKS WATCH) Oh! I need to get going.

KAYLEY Ah!

SHE CHECKS THE IMAGINARY BOOKSHELVES
FRANTICALLY, BUT CANNOT FIND
ANYTHING. SHE GIVES HIM THE BOOK SHE
IS CARRYING.

KAYLEY Take this!

JOE But isn't this-

KAYLEY Enjoy!

JOE Okay! I'll try!

KAYLEY EXITS THE STAGE. JOE GOES
BEHIND THE DESK, TAKING OFF HIS COAT
AND LAYING IT ON THE BACK OF THE
CHAIR. HE SITS DOWN, TRYING TO LOOK
LIKE A PROFESSIONAL SECURITY, BEFORE
SNEAKILY OPENING THE BOOK.

JOE (cont'd) (READING) Gertrude Stein... was
a writer, a poet, a playwright,
an artist, a scholar...Geez, she
was busy. 'And an editor to a
number of the most famous
modernist writers, including F.
Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest
Hemingway.' Well, okay I guess.

JOE STARTS TO READ. HIS FACE CYCLES
THROUGH CONFUSION, DISGUST, LAUGHTER,
PONDERING BEFORE SETTLING ON
CONFUSED.

JOE (cont'd) (READING AS IF IN A DIFFERENT
LANGUAGE) 'Elephant beaten with
candy and little pops and chews
all bolts and reckless, reckless
rats. This, is this.' (BEAT)
What? Wait, what? (READING
AGAIN) 'Enthusiastically
hurtling, hurting even, a
clouded yellow bud and saucer,
enthusiastically so is the bite
in the ribbon.' Well!

HE THROWS THE BOOK DISDAINFULLY BACK ONTO THE TABLE. HE STANDS UP AND WALKS AROUND THE BUILDING HE'S GUARDING. KAYLEY ENTERS AND SITS DOWN BEHIND THE DESK. A NICELY-DRESSED MRS CARDIFF ENTERS THE SCENE, LOOKING TO BUY THE BOOKS IN HER HAND FROM KAYLEY. KAYLEY AND JOE CONTINUE THEIR CONVERSATION AROUND THIS TRANSACTION POLITELY.

KAYLEY How's the poetry? Did you read any of it?

JOE I read a bit...

KAYLEY Just a bit?

JOE Yeah...

KAYLEY Ah. You didn't like it did you?

JOE No, it's not that...

MRS CARDIFF (TO KAYLEY) Thank you very much.

KAYLEY (TO MRS CARDIFF) No, thank you. Seems a little strange, you buying instead of donating.

MRS CARDIFF Well, when there's so much empty space on your shelves, you can't help but wonder just how to fill it all. I get lost for hours wondering what to do with all my new empty space, but it gets lonely sometimes with nothing good to read. So I found myself coming in here again, and I'm very glad I did.

KAYLEY Well, you're always welcome here.

MRS CARDIFF Oh, I know, I know. Thank you, again.

KAYLEY Goodbye now!

MRS CARDIFF EXITS, THANKING KAYLEY.

KAYLEY (cont'd) (TO JOE) Joe, it's fine. You don't have to like those poems. You can hate them even, if you want. Did you hate it? Really?

JOE It's not that I hated them, it was more like... It was just like, like someone was telling me I was stupid in a different language!

KAYLEY Yeah, I can see that.

JOE I just don't get it. Why she wrote it like that, who published it like that, who bought it. Who thought it was good. And who understands it! Who really understands that? Geniuses? Rocket scientists?

KAYLEY I think the thing about poetry is that, you can't approach it like a novel or a tv show. Or even a short story. Did you ever read any of them I sent you?

JOE Yeah. I had a problem with them as well.

KAYLEY Okay, a novel then. A novel makes sense, it's a complete story from beginning to end. But a poem's not. Sometimes it's not even a story, it's a feeling or a moment.

JOE But that's not fair.

KAYLEY What's not?

JOE How am I supposed to understand that?

KAYLEY Sometimes you can't. But that's not your fault.

JOE I don't get it.

KAYLEY Poetry is about describing life. And no-one really understands all of life. I know about books and you know about guarding, but we can't know everything. What did you tell me the other day, about when you leave your shifts?

JOE That I like walking down the middle of the road when it's empty? That the streetlights in the puddles look like the sea at sunset?

KAYLEY Yes! Like that! Poetry's all about things like that. Sometimes you can understand it, and sometimes you can't. But I, at least, like trying.

JOE Even if you never get it?

KAYLEY Even if I never, ever understand. It's, (THINKING HOW TO DESCRIBE IT) the thrill of the chase. You know?

JOE JUST LOOKS CONFUSED

KAYLEY (cont'd) It's not for everyone though. There was this book that came in the other day that made me think about you, let me just...

JOE No. I'll try. I'll give it a go.

KAYLEY IS TAKEN ABACK, BUT IS HAPPY TO HEAR IT.

KAYLEY Ok then. Good luck!

KAYLEY HANDS HIM THE BOOK AND THEN EXITS THE STAGE. JOE GOES BACK TO SITTING DOWN AT THE DESK. HE BEINGS READING AND THE CYCLE OF EMOTIONS STARTS AGAIN, ENDING IN FRUSTRATION. HE STANDS UP WITH THE BOOK.

JOE I still don't get it. What is this meant to mean at all? 'A white hunter is nearly crazy?' What?

 HE STOPS AND FLIPS A PAGE.

JOE (cont'd) Hmmm.

 KAYLEY ENTERS READING A BOOK.

JOE (cont'd) There's writing on some of these poems. There was some writing in that Irvine Welsh book too, but, not like this. Guess that's what get when you buy second-hand at a charity shop. What does that say there, under...(READING) 'A Little Called Pauline'

KAYLEY Not a girl, but not a woman either.

JOE 'A little called anything shows shudders. Come and say what prints all day. A whole few watermelon. There is no pope'

KAYLEY A small wedding, that gets mentioned in the papers but doesn't attract big names like the pope. All brides-to-be shudder on the big day regardless.

JOE 'A peaceful life to arise her, noon and moon and moon.'

KAYLEY Married life. If there are two moons to one noon, does that mean there's twice as much sex?

JOE 'I hope she has her cow. Bidding a wedding, widening received treading, little leading mentioning nothing.'

KAYLEY A cow was a traditional tithe for a farmland couple. The groom's father bids it, but has no advice for either the bride or groom.

JOE 'Cough out, cough out in the leather, and really feather it is not for. Please could, please could, jam it not plus more sit in when.'

JOE LOOKS EXPECTANTLY AT KAYLEY. SHE REREADS THE SENTENCE OVER AND OVER, BEFORE SHRUGGING.

KAYLEY Shoving her in the bridle carriage, maybe? I don't know.

JOE Well, it's more than I had. What else is there. (READING) 'A Time To Eat.'

KAYLEY Eating can be anything, except late.

JOE A pleasant simple habitual and tyrannical and authorised and educated and resumed and articulate separation. This is not tardy.'

KAYLEY *Separation.* Even when we eat with others, we are still separated by the table. And food always has a funny way of bringing back memories of those we cannot be with.

JOE Yeah...that's true. (READING) 'A Purse. A purse was not green, it was not straw color, it was hardly seen and it had a use, a long use, and the chain, the chain was never missing. It was not misplaced, it showed that it was open. That is all that it showed.'

KAYLEY Women, and their belongings, are expected to prim and proper. Often by other women. Sounds like a mother. And displaying no indication of wealth. To not insult men, or to not incite them? Wealth will never be as charming or attractive as intelligence or grace.

JOE Okay. Yes. I got that one.

KAYLEY SITS DOWN AT THE TABLE. JOE
PAUSES FOR A MOMENT BEFORE
APPROACHING HER.

JOE (cont'd) Roses are red, violets are blue,
I'm starting to like poetry a
little, so thank you.

KAYLEY Ah! Very good! I'm glad you're
starting to like it now. I knew
you that you would, if you just
gave it an opportunity.

JOE What you said made it make a
whole lot more sense.

KAYLEY Thank you! That's awesome!

JOE It's interesting the range of
things that she wrote about it.
Weddings, and food, and the
purses one too. I had never
really thought of them that way
before.

KAYLEY (CONFUSED) Purses?

JOE Yeah, you know. Writing about
them. In the book. Wondering
about their inviting guys or
insulting them?

KAYLEY I didn't write that.

JOE Wait, what?

KAYLEY What did it say?

JOE GIVES HER THE BOOK. THEY BOTH
PORE OVER IT.

KAYLEY (cont'd) Ah. I've seen her before.

JOE Her?

KAYLEY Well, her handwriting. I don't
know who it is, but someone
keeps bringing in books with
bits of writing in them. Just
little things like this, trying
to understand it themselves.

(MORE)

KAYLEY (cont'd)

It'd be a waste not to put them on the shelves, over a bit of writing so we put them up.

JOE

Oh. So, it wasn't you?

KAYLEY

No. Unfortunately not. (SHE GOES TO GIVE THE BOOK BACK)

JOE

Oh.

JOE LOOKS DISAPPOINTED. KAYLEY STARTS TO SMILE.

KAYLEY

I could write something in there though, if you want. Though you'd have to swear to keep it forever.

JOE

Oh yeah? What would that be?

SMILING, SHE OPENS THE BOOK AND WRITES SOMETHING IN IT. SHE GOES TO GIVE IT BACK AGAIN.

KAYLEY

Just, promise you won't open it in the store. Okay?

JOE

Okay. (CHECKING HIS WATCH) I've got to go, see you later!

KAYLEY

Bye!

JOE EXITS THE SCENE AND KAYLEY SITS DOWN. MRS CARDIFF ENTERS THE SCENE, HOLDING A BAG FULL OF BOOKS.

KAYLEY (cont'd)

Good Afternoon! Are you buying or donating today?

MRS CARDIFF

Donating again. I've nearly cleared another entire shelf now. My husband is very happy, though only because he wants to put our old photos there.

KAYLEY

Well, that will be nice.

MRS CARDIFF

Yes, I think so too. (SHE PASSES THE BAG OVER) Thank you.

KAYLEY

No please, thank you.

MRS CARDIFF I couldn't help but notice you
talking to that young man again.

KAYLEY Ah, Joe. Yes, he comes in quite
often.

MRS CARDIFF I can't be for sure, but I fancy
I saw you writing something in
that book.

KAYLEY Did you? Well...

MRS CARDIFF (LAUGHING POLITELY) Oh, I'm
sorry. You just reminded me of a
line I wasn't able to understand
until just now. (BEAT) 'Out of
kindness comes redness and out
of rudeness comes rapid same
question. Out of an eye comes
research, out of selection comes
painful cattle. And it is
disappointing, is it not. It is
so rudimentary to be analysed,
and see a find substance
strangely.'

KAYLEY Erm, thank you?

MRS CARDIFF Oh, you're very welcome.

MRS CARDIFF EXITS, CHUCKLING. KAYLEY
SITS AND PONDERES. THE CYCLE OF
EMOTIONS STARTS AGAIN.

LIGHTS DOWN.

END.