

You Didn't Even Say Goodbye

Simon lifted the glass he held in his hands to his lips and took a sip of his wine, hoping it would grease his strained vocal cords. For what felt like hours by now, he had been recounting the adventures with Fionna and Cake and Scarab and Betty, the very same adventures he had returned from only the day before. Princess Bubblegum wouldn't let him spare any detail, however minute, and he had a lot more story yet to tell. But his throat was getting sore, and he felt his voice beginning to rasp. The dinner with PeeBee and Marceline he'd been invited to, having consisted of candy, candy, and candy with a side of candy, wasn't of much help in that regard either.

"So," Simon braved on, "Prismo put a wall between us and the Scarab. But we knew that it wouldn't hold him off for long. He kept hammering at it with incredible strength. The entire place was shaking, I tell you. And then Fionna used Prismo's remote control and zapped us away into Farmworld, smack in the middle of a cornfield. Lucky for me, I guess, because there was a scarecrow right there, so I exchanged the muumuu Prismo magicked onto me with its clothes. It was nice to slip into a wearable set of clothes again. The muumuu is so... breezy. And itchy."

"What's Farmworld?" Peebs asked flatly without looking up from the notebook on the dinner table in front of her, which she vigorously kept scribbling into.

"One of the alternate universes we zapped through. Everyone there was either a farmer or a scavenger."

"Interesting. Please continue."

"Speaking of interesting," Simon perked up, "Farmworld Finn was a farmer. Can you believe that? I would've thought he'd be more into the adventurous lifestyle of

the scavengers of Farmworld. The boy is all about adventure, after all! Instead, he had a farm and a barn and a bunch of cute little kids! He sure is full of surprises.”

“He’s always been all about righteousness and justice,” PB said monotonously while still scribbling her notes, “I don’t think the lawless life of scavengers would suit him.”

A puzzled Simon looked at PB’s undeterred, speedy writing. Surely he hadn’t said enough in the past few seconds to warrant such vigorous, uninterrupted note-taking?

“So, what happened next, Simon?” Marceline asked chirpily as she sank her fangs into her wine glass and sucked the red out of it. Then she propped her head on her fists, resting her elbows on the table, and looked at Simon with those same expectant big eyes she used to direct at him when he’d tell her goodnight stories way back when she was a little girl.

“Next? Well,” Simon hesitated for a moment, “We began to look for the Crown in that world.”

Marceline straightened up. “What? Why?”

“It seemed like the best course of action. The only course of action, actually. Prismo warned us that Scarab would be hunting us down. So we needed firepower to defend ourselves. As the Ice King, I could fight an army of Scarabs on my own, easy-peasy. And me being the Ice King again would return the magic to Fionna and Cake’s world, of course. That would’ve solved all of their problems. And it would’ve kept them safe. As long as Ice King was around, they could keep living and being happy.”

Marcy stared at him, tight-lipped, as fury filled her gaze with daggers.

“Please don’t be mad, Marcy. They really needed my help. I couldn’t just leave them to be erased from existence. And, to be perfectly honest, after all these years of failing to find Betty, let alone saving her from Golb, having some purpose in life felt nice for a change.”

“Did you find the Crown in the Farmworld?” PeeBee asked clinically. She turned a page in her notebook and kept scribbling, all while keeping her gaze fixed on Simon.

“No. As it turns out, the Cro-”

BAM.

Marceline had slammed her hands onto the table and bolted up with tear-filled eyes, nearly tipping her chair over in the process.

“I can’t believe you, Simon,” she growled between gritted teeth and floated out of the dining room, disappearing into the darkness of the Candy Palace corridors.

It took Simon a few moments to gather his wits. As he quickly regained his senses, he stood up to go after her.

“Simon, wait,” PB said calmly. He turned towards her to see her closing her notebook and putting her pen aside.

“What?”

“I found that, in these kinds of situations, it’s usually best to give Marcy a bit of time to cool off and sort her thoughts first. Specifically, around four minutes and fifty-two seconds.”

Simon stared at her as if she had been speaking a foreign language. “What?”

“In my experience, it helps to give her some time first,” Peebs said.

Simon blinked. Twice. “I’m gonna go now,” he said flatly and left for the door.

The corridors were dimly lit. To the right, an alley of colourful doors extended deeper into the palace. To the left, an open balcony door was a short distance ahead, from which a fresh night breeze crept indoors. Simon decided that this was the safer bet and headed into the quiet night that greeted him outside.

“Marcy?” he called out softly, only to be met with silence.

“Marcy, are you here?”

"Yes," a stifled voice under the balcony replied.

"Can we talk?"

There was no reply.

"It's okay. We don't have to talk right now. I'll wait here until you're ready and feel like it. Or, let me know if you prefer me to leave."

Simon leaned over the balustrade and waited patiently, sorting out his thoughts and placing his feelings into words just in case that may come in handy. A few minutes later, Marcy reappeared with a sigh. Her eyes were puffy.

"Hey, Marcy," Simon exhaled.

"Hey, Simon."

"Are you okay?"

"Dunno. Kinda."

"Do you... Want to talk about it?"

"I guess." She floated above and around him like a bubble.

Simon decided it would probably be for the best to not have his eyes chase after her and instead directed his gaze over the Candy Kingdom's distant, gentle contours in the moonlight.

"Do... Do you want me to start? Or would you like to start?" Simon tried.

"You start," Marcy replied.

"Alright. So, I guess what I was trying to-"

"I changed my mind," Marcy interrupted as she rapidly dropped into his sight. "Can I start?"

"Uhm... Sure, sure you can, Marcy."

Marcy flew closer, now facing him directly. "How could you, Simon? Just... How

could you? What were you thinking?"

Simon loosened his bow tie. "Well, as I was saying," he stammered, "I thought it was pretty much our best course of action, and-"

"It took me a thousand years to get Simon back. It took *Golb* to show up and mess up entire Ooo, Simon. Logarithmic *Golb*, Simon. Why? Why would you do that? Why are you so eager to leave again?"

"It wasn't about leaving, Marcy, at least not like that. It was-"

"Who knows how long it would've taken you to turn back into Simon again. Or whether that would happen at all. I *just* got you back!"

"I know, Marcy, but-" but she sank away from him and underneath the balcony again.

"..ou.. eent..ey..ood..eye," she mumbled from below.

Simon leaned as far over the balusters as his hips would permit. "Marcy, honey, I didn't quite catch that. Could you repeat that for me, please?"

"I said: you didn't even think to say goodbye, Simon."

A bolt along his spine froze Simon. Fear and guilt rose up from his toes and consumed him as he realised that, simply put, all things considered, summa summarum, that was nothing but true. There was no two ways about it. He hadn't thought about Marcy at all back there. At all.

Monkeyfeathers. He had done it again. Oh no. Oh no no no. Monkeyfeathers. Monkeyfeathers monkeyfeathers monkeyfeathers.

"You would've up and gone and become the Ice King again. You nearly *did*, didn't you? And just to save this... This Fionna and this Cake! And *their* world! And you didn't even think to say goodbye to me, Simon! Not even a *goodbye*! I would've found out that you're gone by watching Ice King raise his kingdom of ice and snow again and steal penguins from the zoos. That's how I'd have found out Simon is gone again. If at all. Or by watching the Ice King doing some other silly thing.

Flapping his beard, flying through the skies to watch leaves or something.”

“Marcy...”

“Couldn’t you get me and Peebs to help? You were zapping between worlds, right? You could’ve zapped into Ooo, or zapped us into yours? At least give us a call? You *know* we would’ve helped you, no questions asked!”

“I... Uh... I don’t know,” Simon admitted. “I don’t think I would’ve known how. We were sort of winging the entire thing.”

Marcy remained hidden from sight under the balcony and said nothing.

“I’m sorry, Marcy. I’m so sorry. I... I have no excuse for that. I’m really sorry.”

An unbearable silence followed. Marcy’s shaky voice finally broke it.

“Is it my fault?”

“What?”

She reappeared in front of him so rapidly that he nearly fell over backwards.

“I said: Is it my fault, Simon?”

“What? No? Is what your fault? What do you mean?”

“Tell me. You need to tell me if it is. I need to know.”

“Is what your fault? I-”

“I promise I’ll do better. I’ll call you every day! Every *day*, Simon. I promise! And I’ll come to visit you every week! No, twice a week. Monday and Friday. I can probably do Wednesdays as well. I’ll cancel band practice. Then can go to the pub and have dinner and go see the movies and-,”

“Marcy, honey, I’m still not following. What are you talking about?”

“Please, Simon,” she sobbed, “I promise. I *promise* promise. I’ll do better. Just, please, don’t leave again. Please.”

Simon felt his own tears making their way from his stinging eyes down his cheeks. He opened his arms, inviting Marceline into a hug.

“Goodness gracious, Marcy, come here.”

She flew into his arms, and he held her tightly as she sobbed into his neck.

“I’m so sorry, Marcy. None of this is your fault. None of it. You hear me? *None. Of. It.* What even makes you think something like that?”

“I don’t know,” Marcy whimpered into his neck. “It just keeps happening. Like it’s a pattern,” Marcy stammered through tears. “My dad was always a dillweed, he kept coming and going and doing and wrecking as he pleased. I thought my mom may have abandoned me for about a thousand years until I found that message she left. But she *did* send me away before she died, and she *did* lie to me, and she *did* die without saying goodbye. And you left once already to become the Ice King. Back when you were looking after me. And now you were about to leave again. To become Ice King. Again. And, this time, you didn’t even think to say goodbye. What am I supposed to think, Simon? The only common denominator is me, Marceline. That’s the one thing all of you have in common.”

Simon held her gently but determinedly, waiting for Marceline’s shaking to subside. He wanted to give the poor girl the time she needed to cry her heart out. She deserved that much, at least. And so much more.

Once she calmed, Simon said softly, “Marcy, honey, I’m so sorry. Look at me.” He leaned back so he could see her, cradling her face and wiping the tears from her cheeks with his thumbs.

“Listen to me, Marcy. This is very, *very* important. None of that was your fault. *None of it.*”

Tears welled up underneath Marcy’s puffy eyes again.

“You were an amazing, the most wonderful child, Marceline. You were a *blessing*. Nothing but a blessing. You cannot imagine how happy I was to have you back then. You were my only ray of sunshine in a decaying, splintering world. And now,

look at you! You've grown into an incredible woman! Slayer of vampires. Shredder of sick basslines. Is that how you say it? Sick basslines? In any case, having you around made my life infinitely better, Marcy. *Infinitely*. And it still does, both now and back when you were just a little girl."

Simon sighed.

"Us abandoning you was never any of your fault, Marcy. *Never*. It was always *us* blingblongs being stupid blobheads. We kept glubbing up, at your expense. I am so sorry things turned out this way in the past. So sorry, Marcy. You deserved so much better. I am so sorry I wasn't."

Marceline hugged him tightly again.

"Just... Please don't go. Or at least not like that. At least say goodbye, Simon."

"I'm not going anywhere, sweetie. I promise. I *promise* promise."

Marcy tightened her hug.

"It took me this entire wretched adventure to finally understand. I got a second chance, Marcy. But I didn't only get a second chance at being Simon. I got a second chance at doing *life*. And, this time around, I'm doing it *right*. No more running from obsession to obsession, no more neglecting how my actions affect those around me. No more. Things will be different. *I* will be different. I want to be happy and live life. And that includes spending time with you. And watching you play bass and sing at your concerts and having dinner with you and Bubblegum and watching you two be happy together and get married someday and raise your kids."

Marcy chuckled and separated from him. She stared at the floor, her cheeks graced by a modest blush.

"Some of those might take a while."

Simon took her hands into his.

"That's okay. I've got all the time in the world, kiddo. All that matters is that you're

happy.”

“I am. Just... Don’t scare me like that again. Ever.”

“I won’t. I promise. I’m here to stay.”

“Thank you, Simon.”

“There’s nothing to thank me for, Marcy.” He gave her forehead a kiss.

A loud crash in the inner court made them jerk to see LSP having slammed open a door and fleeing with her arms full of dozens of cakes in a humongous pile reaching far above her head lumps. Every couple of what would’ve been steps if LSP weren’t floating, a cake fell out of her grasp as she was making for the front gate, pursued by several Banana Guards and screaming like a cat that stubbed its toe.

“And while I’m waiting for those wedding invitations,” Simon thought, “I’m sure Ooo won’t fail to provide ample entertainment on its own.”