

Lost in Cyphers

Leisure room:

As the asylum's grandfather clock indicated their weekly session's time, the new friends hesitantly walked one after the other in the corridors.

"Are you sure about this?" Lucy looked back to check if RM was still behind her.

"I don't know," RM's heart pounded heavily, "Let's just do this before I change my mind."

The healing room – Week One:

Entering the white room, both members grabbed a cushion and sat in front of one another.

Lucy took a deep breath while adjusting her posture, "Shall we begin?"

"Lead the way." RM nervously crossed his legs.

"Hello, my name is Lucy and I have acute depression" she introduced herself, "Aside from the usual symptoms that I got used to with time, my condition also caused me severe panic attacks that often left me helpless. Recently, I started developing a case of hypochondria and I've been doing everything in my power to fight it."

"Well, this is intense," RM commented. "Nice to meet you, Lucy. I am amnesiac so I don't know my real name but I go by RM, short for Resident Monster. All I know about myself is that I have anger management issues and lately, I decided to look for whatever triggered my condition in the first place."

"Not bad for a first time!" Lucy cheered on her roommate.

Intimidated, he rubbed the back of his neck, "I only managed to say whatever went through my head at the moment."

"Baby steps," she encouraged him, "You're doing just fine."

"Just to let you know ..." he informed her, "My steps are slow and heavy."

Giving him thumbs up, Lucy stated, "That's okay Mr. Elephant. I'll walk you through it."

The healing room – Week Two:

With their first healing session turning out to be successful, the roommates agreed to keep pointing out their flaws in every assessment in order to help each other leave the place together.

“I’ve been living in fear for a while now,” Lucy initiated, “I haven’t felt safe in a while. I tried to avoid it, escape it, ignore it ... But I realized that the only way I will get over it is by confronting it. I want to confront my fear and feel safe again, but I haven’t found a way yet,”

RM closely listened to her every word, “That’s interesting. But what’s threatening your safety anyways?”

Upon hearing his question, she halted him, “House rules: sharing only, no further questions.”

“My bad.” he followed his shallow apology with his own statement, “In my case, I feel pressured. The funny thing is, I don’t know if I feel that way because I’m anxious to seek why I have been locked up in here or if I’m actually protecting myself from ever finding out.”

Lucy was all ears, “Are you afraid to find out that you have failed at some point in your life?”

“Aren’t you?” he sent back the question.

“Always,” she instantly replied. “There are moments where I wonder that, maybe if I had done things differently, I wouldn’t end up hurting my family.”

Her plea caused RM to frown, “Do they blame you?”

“To be honest, they never pointed fingers but actions speak louder than words, you know?” she confessed.

“I know it’s not my place to say anything,” RM built up his argument, “But I’ve known you for months now, and I’ve seen how much you care for total strangers, including myself. Therefore, if your family can’t give you a break for that one moment you didn’t give back, then they’re not worthy of you going through all of this trouble for them. You deserve better.”

Lucy stared at RM in admiration while he was giving his powerful speech. His words overwhelmed her to the point of shedding silent tears.

“Did I say something wrong? I-I’m sorry I was just trying to keep the session going. Ah, I should’ve kept my mouth shut,” RM scolded himself.

“Not at all. I’ve known you for months now and even through your isolation, I saw how much you cared for total strangers, including myself.” she held her hands together, “Thank you for your kindness”.

“D-don’t mention it.” since he wasn’t used to Lucy being nice to him, RM felt embarrassed. Soon after, he proceeded, “If you don’t mind me asking, do you miss your family?”

“Every day” she sighed, “I wonder if they ever think about me.”

“I’m sure not a day goes by without you crossing their minds,” he comforted her. “At least, you have someone out there waiting for you. I’m starting to think that I’ve been disowned.”

“Don’t say that. You’re never alone RM, I’m here for you.” she assured him.

He nodded in appreciation with a sad smile, “Yes you are, for now. But there will come a time when you’ll get better and you’ll want to go back to your family. As for me, I will need to get better in order to revive my lost life.”

“Let’s focus on the present now,” she gave him a wink. “I give you my word, we’re walking out of here together.”

“I won’t say no to that,” Her promise warmed his heart. “Can I walk you to your room?”

The healing room – Week Three:

The weekly assessment became livelier, as the two final residents anticipated these sessions that became somehow intimate.

“Lucy, do you have a passion?” RM asked, intrigued.

“As a matter of fact I do,” she affirmed, “I have always had a thing for writing ever since I was a little girl. I always carried a diary with me and with time, I wrote down everything that haunted my thoughts. It was my way to cope with the pain induced by my condition.”

“That’s a relief,” he reckoned. “It’s good to see that you defined your own mean of escapade. I wish I could do the same.”

His revelation saddened her, “Don’t you have a hobby?”

"I wouldn't call it a hobby per say-" RM conveyed, "But I often think about random things: sometimes, they make sense and other times the overthinking engulfs my mind. For an amnesiac, my head surely hurts a lot."

"You're a pensive one, I like that." Lucy stated, "We can use that to channel your passion."

Hearing her suggestion made him feel cornered, "Actually, I'm trying to get rid of it. My insomnia is creeping back in and it's not helping with my anger issues either."

Feeling his restlessness, she assured him, "I have just the thing to fix that. Walk me to my room?"

Ward R:

Arriving to her room, Lucy ushered RM in, "Make yourself comfortable, I will be right back."

"What are you looking for exactly?" he said as he sat on her bed.

"A lullaby," she shouted from inside her closet "I used to have insomnia for months, and this was my remedy throughout the long burdensome nights."

While she was away, RM explored the room in the hopes of learning more about his partner in madness. While doing so, his eyes landed on an object that has always piqued his interest. Reluctant to open it at first, he eventually convinced himself to take a look, one harmless look. As he was hastily going through the journal, he came across the most unexpected and bizarre content, with the last entry marking his name on a blank page.

"What the hell?" RM shouted in fury, startling Lucy, "What's the meaning of this?"

"What's going on?" Upon seeing her journal in RM's hands, Lucy gasped, "RM ... I can explain."

"Oh really?" he flipped through the pages, "Care to explain why there are entries for every resident that used to be with us on your diary?"

At that moment, words failed her, "It's not what it looks like."

"Humor me, you sociopath!" he viciously attacked her.

Caught red-handed, Lucy fell on her knees, "I know that I must look crazy for keeping tabs on every member on my journal but you have to understand, I did it for a reason. The only way for me to forget about my own trauma is to focus on others' illnesses. When I write details about the patients, I

make sure that I don't fall in the same pit like them. Giving a name to every illness that I might catch later is the only way to control my hypochondria. Don't get me wrong, I am more broken than the seven of you combined, but I'm trying my best to turn the tables for better. I still have a long way to go but for now this is my only remedy. This keeps me relatively sane."

"Why is the entry with my name still blank though?" RM questioned.

"You don't know what's wrong with you, therefore there is nothing for me to report," she explained. "I might sound a bit selfish for saying this, but I feel safe around you like this."

Her disclosure startled him, "What's that supposed to mean? Are you planning on keeping me locked up for your own gain?"

"I never said that, I truly wish you become better. I just hope that I will be able to endure whatever you've been through," she lamented.

"I thought you were the sanest of us all, Lucy," RM derided "I guess I was wrong."

Trying her best to hide the pain his comment inflicted, Lucy divulged, "It's a survivor's curse: You stick around here for a while, you start picking up on habits."