

Butterflies and Ice Cream

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Butterflies and Ice Cream

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Summary

Becoming a parent is sort of like being bitten by a radioactive spider. It's painful, it's scary, and it also grants you the reflexes of a cat, so when a small tornado of a girl went flying off the back of a sofa in an IKEA showroom, it was practically instinctual for Annabeth to pluck her out of the air and set her gently on the ground. - Mortal parent AU.

Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

Becoming a parent is sort of like being bitten by a radioactive spider. It's painful, it's scary, and it leaves you with a bizarre mix of new powers, such as the ability to operate on only three hours sleep or carry a pram, a screaming child and four bags of groceries up a flight of stairs.

It also grants you the reflexes of a cat, so when a small tornado of a girl went flying off the back of one of what seemed like hundreds of sofas packing the IKEA showroom, it was practically instinctual for Annabeth to pluck her out of the air and set her gently on the ground.

The girl was about five or six, with a pair of mischievous green eyes and frizzy red hair barely contained by two lopsided pigtails. Her jeans were covered in doodles and her hoodie was hand-embroidered with rainbow-coloured dolphins. She was hopping from one foot to the other, apparently unshaken after the near-faceplanting, her pigtails bobbing to and fro.

"Thanks miss!" she said brightly. She was missing her top two teeth, and as Annabeth watched she fiddled nonchalantly with a loose incisor.

"That's okay, kiddo. Are you okay? Do you have someone with you?" Annabeth asked, although she wouldn't be surprised if this carefree child had navigated the heavy traffic and crowded streets during lunch hour.

"Yeah," she replied, unconcerned. "I've got my mom. She's here somewhere."

At the same time, a woman's voice called out "Sally Silena Jackson-Dare! What have I told you about running off?" and after a moment the woman herself came into view. She was obviously the girl's mother, sharing the same green eyes, doodled jeans, and even lopsided pigtails.

The girl – Sally, Annabeth assumed – looked indignant. "I didn't run off! The floor is the Phlegethon! I had to jump from sofa to sofa so I wasn't burned and then I fell off the back of that –" she struggled for a moment with the Swedish name – "of that one there and this lady caught me before I could go splat!" She said it all in one breath.

"Sally!" The woman berated. "What have I told you? It's the Styx you really have to avoid!" She winked cheerfully at her daughter. "Thank you for catching her," she continued, giving Annabeth grateful smile, which she supposed was to be expected. The butterflies in her stomach were not.

"... Sally likes to run off, I've not sat down since she was two! You'd think I'd be used to that by now, honestly. I'm Rachel, by the way, did I mention? Rachel Elizabeth Dare, but you can call me Rachel. And this is Sally, but you've probably gathered that already..." She fiddled just as much Sally did, absentmindedly rearranging her bunches.

"I'm Annabeth Chase, and don't worry about it, seriously. Kids are a handful, I remember the antics my brothers used to get into – what I used to get up to! I'm quite glad Thalia hasn't reached that stage yet."

Annabeth rocked the pram gently on its back wheels, hoping her young daughter would stay asleep. Thalia was a temperamental child with a temper like thunder when her naps were disrupted. Often – today in fact – Annabeth took lengthy strolls through the winding shop floor of IKEA to lull her to sleep.

“Oh, she’s a cutie,” Rachel cooed. She reached out to stroke Thalia’s hair, but contained herself, to Annabeth’s intense gratification. “I won’t wake her. How old is she?”

“Almost eleven months now.”

“I remember when Sally was that age... It passes so quickly!”

“It really does,” Annabeth mused. “How old are you, Sally?” She wondered if it would be rude to ask how old Rachel was.

“Five and a half!” She held up her fingers to illustrate.

Annabeth gasped. “Five and a half! Wow, that’s cool. You must be in school now, am I right? Is that where you learned that stuff about Greek Mythology?”

“I’m in kindergarten! It’s really cool, but it was Mom who told me all about the Greek stuff... My favourite stories are about the Oracle of Delphi!” Sally was jumping with excitement now.

“I help maintain Greek and Roman art at the Met,” Rachel explained. “Sally comes along after school sometimes. I figure she should learn as much about the Classics as she can from me – it’s not like school is going to tell her much about it, despite the fact it’s the foundation for, I don’t know, half our civilisation? Besides, the Oracle is cool!” Her eyes were sparkling with excitement, and Annabeth suddenly found the palms of her hands start to sweat slightly.

“It is,” Annabeth agreed, trying to discretely wipe her hands on her jeans. “And I couldn’t agree more. I’m the architect the Met just hired to expand the Classical wing. I suppose I’ll meet you formally on Monday.”

Rachel’s eyes glittered, and the butterflies in Annabeth’s stomach swirled. “I suppose you will. Do you... Do you want to get a coffee, or something? We can chat about the art in the Met, and Greek art, and... stuff.”

“Coffee... That sounds good,” Annabeth smiled.

“And ice cream?” asked Sally.

“And ice cream.” Rachel confirmed, taking Sally’s hand and smiling warmly at Annabeth in a way that made her fingers tingle. “Lots of ice cream.”

End Notes

1. I'm not American, but as the series is set in America, I've set this fic there to. I've tried to use the right language (mom, not mum, etc) but some Britishness might have slipped through.
2. I've also not been to the MET, but I'm assuming there's a Classical wing. If not, forgive me!

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