

And So It Begins

by Amika Malone

It was a dark and stormy night.

Kelly looked at her screen. Did she really just type that? Is she really going that cliché? Apparently so. She sighed. "Well I can't erase it for fear of losing words so I might as well just go with it." She bit her lip, reached for another bag of Skittles and kept going.

It was a dark and stormy night. Nicholas could barely see the road ahead of him due to the rain and fog. He knew he had to pull over and find a place to stop for the night but there was nothing for miles.

He pulled over to the side of the road and tried to gain his bearings. The storm had caused him to lose signal on his phone (well, that or the area he was in. He couldn't tell.) He looked around and saw a mansion.

Kelly read her words. Yeah, yeah those would do nicely. She leaned back and popped a Skittle into her mouth.

She remembers the exact moment she was suckered into doing this. She had been talking with Stacia and mentioned she had always wanted to write a novel, explore the slashy fangirl in her. Stacia had mentioned NaNoWriMo. Kelly knew about NaNoWriMo, cause Stacia had been doing it for years. Kelly herself had never considered it, because she was horrible when it came to long fiction. She knew she would never win (read: write the required fifty thousand words) because she hadn't even written ten percent of that on one story in her life. She knew this was going to be a horrible epic fail, but Stacia had given her the face, and pouted, and said they could help each other out, push each other to keep writing if they were both doing it. So she had sighed, ran her hand through her hair, and sent a text to Daniel. "I'm doing NaNoWriMo."

And now here she was, only eighty eight words into her novel, at 12:30am on the first of November. She needed to come up with something. She pulled out her notes and ruffled through papers until she found what she was looking for.

"Hmm... so Nicholas needs to come up upon Samuel's mansion at some point, so the two of them can meet but do I want to do that now, or do I want to draw out him driving around in the rain looking for somewhere to stay before he finally sees Samuel's mansion in the distance. And I definitely need to explain how exquisite Samuel's mansion is. Because that will be epic for my word count, even if it meant prose of the most purplest of purples."

She stared at her Microsoft Word document, the blinking cursor almost mocking her, telling her "write you fool, write!" with every pulsing blink. Biting her lip, she contemplated her options, knowing that doing this was seriously cutting into her writing time, but there really wasn't much she could do as far as writing went when she didn't know what she was even going to write. She yawned and rested her head on her desk, closing her eyes. "I'll just... I'll just rest my eyes for a few minutes and then keep writing. That's what I'll do."

She heard the door open and close, then the bed squeak as someone sat down on it. She opened her eyes and turned around to see Daniel smiling at her. "Hey Danny," she smiled back, then it hit her, "Wait a minute, it's still the middle of the night, what are you..." she looked at the clock. She had slept for twelve hours, and it was now past noon.

"Hey pookie. How's the writing going?" he asked, moving to lean on the bed, using his elbows to prop himself up.

Kelly shrugged. "It's alright. Except that I'm not even a hundred words in. I don't know where I want to go with this next. Either I'm going to have Nicholas come up on the mansion where he will meet Samuel now, or I'm going to have him drive around for a little while longer and then find the mansion. I'm thinking I'm going to do with the latter because then that way I can get more words out of it, you know, describing the storm Nicholas is driving in some more, cause I really haven't done much of that. And I'm definitely going for a while about how utterly exquisite Samuel's mansion looks. Also, accidentally sleeping at my desk for twelve hours didn't help matters at all."

Daniel smirked. "His mansion, huh? Is that what they're calling it these days? I can show you my mansion if you'd like..."

Kelly threw at stuffed rabbit at him. "Daniel Theodore! Not now, I am writing!" she shook her head and went back to her computer.

Nicholas could feel the wind making his car shake as he fought for a signal on his phone so he could at least figure out where he was and maybe, just maybe where a hotel could be, even though at this point there was really no reason why he should even dare to keep going. He didn't want to risk getting into an accident, but sleeping in his car wasn't really an option.

He gave up, turned his car back on and continued on the way he was going. He was probably driving no more than 5 miles an hour, but it was his safest bet right now. There was so much rain that any faster and he would hydroplane. There was so much fog that he didn't attempt to use his high beams because he would blind himself. He finally made it to the front of the mansion, gasping at the sheer magnitude of the place. The architecture was pure Victorian, a time period that Nicholas had been intrigued by for ages.

Kelly felt something hit the back of her head and she whipped it around to see what it was. It was her stuffed rabbit. Daniel had thrown it back at her. She pulled one of her earbuds out of her ear and glared at him. "What did you do that for?"

"I needed to get your attention somehow. Your phone's been ringing pookie. It's been Stacia." Daniel handed it to her and she looked at it. Yup, three missed calls and seven texts. Why would Stacia send her so many... She looked at the clock. "Shit! The write-in! I'm going to be late!" She nearly slammed her laptop's lid down and stuffed it into her laptop bag, followed by the power cord. She grabbed it and quickly kissed Daniel goodbye. "Bye baby, gotta go to a write-in, will be a few hours, there will be food there, love you."

Once in the car, she docked her phone and opened her speech to text app on her phone. She had installed it for just this moment: When she'd be driving and need a way to keep working on her novel (cause while she had a word processor on her phone she couldn't

really type on her phone while she was driving. Hence, the speech to text app. She had made sure she had had plenty of time to work with it before November, and it was now well trained. For the most part. It still thought she was saying "Nick lass" and not "Nicholas," but she should probably keep "Nick lass," both for a laugh and because that means two words instead one, and anything that leads to more words is a good thing. She made a face when she hit a traffic jam, which meant she was going to be even later than she would have been already. She called Stacia, who she knew was already there. It rang, and rang, and rang. Finally it went to voicemail.

"Hi this is Stacia! Since it's November that means I'm feverishly working on my novel, so I can't come to the phone. I'll get back to you as soon as I get sick of looking at words."

Ugh, of course Stacia would do that. And of course, she didn't have the phone numbers of anyone else in the region. She didn't have to be right on time to this thing, Stacia had said people come in and out at any time, but Kelly had never been one to be late to anything unless she let someone know, and it was extenuating circumstances (though she pondered the fact that maybe "I got caught up working on my novel" was extenuating enough. But these were all also people who were in the same boat as her, so they would totally understand. But but, since it was her first time doing this, she felt she needed to make a good first impression, and she didn't think that arriving at the first write-in on the first day was a good first impression.)

