Of Slingshots and Arrows

by NowhereLand

Summary

Snapshots of Connie and Daryl's developing relationship in 1000 words or less.

Notes

I have been throwing around some of these ideas for awhile. What can I say? I am smitten with these two.
Connie woke to Yumiko shaking her lightly. She sat up quickly, looking around the room she shared with Kelly, ready to move at a moment’s notice. She felt her body calm upon seeing the younger woman fast asleep in the bed next to her own.

“Relax,” Yumiko signed, “It’s our turn for watch”.

Connie rubbed the sleep from her eye and rolled her shoulders, “One minute”.

Yumiko nodded and slipped out of the room. Connie moved slowly, stretching out her neck and sighing at the pull of her muscles. She swung her feet over the side of the bed, moving to put on her boots. The cool air that hit her when she escaped the warm cocoon of blankets made her shudder, raised bumps appearing on her exposed arms. She could feel the draft of cool night air move through the room. Standing, she went to the dresser, opening her drawer to search for another layer or two of clothing to wear while she stood on watch. Her eyes drifted to the dark garment in the corner, away from her other clothes. She felt herself smile as she hesitantly reached for it, pulling it from the drawer slowly.

She held the flannel work shirt in her hands, running her fingertips over the dark blue fabric. She could tell it was old and heavily worn, the material thin but still soft under her touch. There was a mended tear on the pocket, sewn with a steady hand that she knew hadn’t belong to the shirt’s owner. A button was missing toward the collar, the leftover thread there was frayed and discolored. It smelled like wood smoke and tobacco, reminding her of childhood camping trips with her father, leaning on his shoulder and watching dancing sparks from tinder. Connie slipped the shirt on, cuffing the sleeves so that they didn’t fall over her hands. The sight of herself in the small mirror that hung on the wall next to the dresser, the image of the shirt on her slight frame, a reminder of how she’d ended up with it in the first place.

She could see Daryl, draping the shirt around her shoulders while they stood on the walls of Hilltop on a particularly breezy night. She had been chilled, rubbing her hands up and down her arms. Connie had caught him out of the corner of her eye, slowly shrugging off the shirt before watching him hesitantly moved toward her. When she felt the fabric touch her bare arms she had looked him, half amused and half questioning his actions. He had given her one of those shy, sweet smiles she had come to love as a response. His hand lightly pressed to her shoulder blade, his thumb aimlessly grazing across the shirt; she had almost considered leaning into him. Connie became aware of the blush that rose in her cheeks at the memory and remembered where she was. Quickly collecting her knife and sling shot, Connie blocked out her body’s reaction to the thought of Daryl. She strapped them in their appropriate places, the coolness of the mental reminding her of the risk outside the walls of the house and reality of her life now. She made her way out to the hallway, Yumiko leaned on the wall waiting for her.

Connie didn’t miss the slightly raised eyebrow and smirk that her friend sent her way as she observed the large shirt hanging on her body. She chose to ignore it, knowing the other woman had her suspicions anyways. Yumiko had been the first to notice her growing feelings for Daryl; sending knowing looks and silent questions to Connie whenever the man was near. Her gaze wasn’t teasing like Kelly’s eye rolls and kissy faces, just-observant. She had asked Connie about him once, when the two were alone and out of sight. Were they together? Did she want them to be? Connie had dodged the questions with tact and a fake smile, which apparently told Yumiko everything that she needed to know. She never asked again.

“Ready?” Yumiko signed. She nodded in response.
Connie followed her companion out into the night. She pulled the shirt tighter to her body, wrapping her arms around herself. Practically speaking, the flannel was warm, and the extra space between the shirt and her body added the option for additional layers as needed. She needed more “in-between” clothes, as her mother would have called them. Garments for the grey space between late winter and early spring, or the late summer and early autumn months. The shirt would fit those times nicely. As she climbed the ladder to the catwalk of the wall, Connie told herself that the other parts were simply consequential. If the imperfect navy fabric and woodsly smell happened to remind her of Daryl and his sweet smiles and touches on her shoulder, then so be it. She knew what it would have meant in the old world to wear his clothes, knew what others may think when they saw her, but the rules were different now. Clothes were in short supply and sharing was a way to survive. She leaned against the wall, hanging her hands over the side and looking in the direction of Alexandria. Besides, he had never asked for it back.
Sweets

She sat at their normal meeting place, a picnic table close to the wall away from the bustle of the community. She saw Dog before she saw him. The animal running towards her with an excitement that always managed to make her smile. He jumped on her lap, and she smiled as she petted his head and allowed him to lick her chin and cheek. His owner came up at a slower pace, but headed toward her just the same. She watched him as he approached. He was looking at the ground, his hair hanging in front of his face, though it looked like he had had a haircut. His shirt stretched across his chest, revealing every movement of his muscles. She felt vibrations from Dog’s bark, making Daryl look up. He met her eyes, and gave her one of his shy smiles. She felt her stomach knot. The feeling wasn’t totally unwelcome.

He reached the table and sat down across from her, that small smile still on his face. It made her grin back. She signed, slowly, “It’s nice to see you”.

“You too” he said. He paused and she could see him think, hands slightly held up, a sure indicator that he was going to sign, “You alright?”

She cocked her head slightly and nodded, “Why?”

“I mean,” he stumbled over his words, “Are you eating?”. Dog laid his head on her lap, she scratched his head.

Connie understood. The Alexandrians had been bringing food to Hilltop, it was the whole reason Daryl was even here. The winter had been harsh, and they had lost manpower, planting time, fuel, and everything in between. She had been eating, thought not nearly as well as they had in the fall. He knew this, and his concern for her specifically wasn’t lost on Connie.

“Yes” she signed definitively, locking eyes with him.

He seemed satisfied with her answer, and quickly broke her intense gaze. His eyes avoided hers for several seconds until he timidly met them again, “I -uh- got you something.”

Connie cocked her head as Daryl took off the backpack he wore. He set it on the bench next to him and dug around the inside. He pulled out a mason jar and set it on the table between them. She looked at it, seeing the dark brown powder behind the glass and felt a smile forming on her lips. She reached for the jar, opening it with excitement. She moved the mouth of the jar to her nose, closing her eyes as the rich scent wafted from its contents. She couldn’t remember the last time she had even seen real cocoa powder, let alone smelled it. Dog looked up at her, smelling the contents of the jar, tail wagging quickly. Opening her eyes she looked back at Daryl who immediately diverted his eyes, looking anywhere but at her. She set the jar down and reached for her notepad again.

“Is this what I think it is?”

He shrugged and gave her a bored look, but the ends of his mouth twitching into a smile gave him away. She reached for the jar, opening it with excitement. She moved the mouth of the jar to her nose, closing her eyes as the rich scent wafted from its contents. She couldn’t remember the last time she had even seen real cocoa powder, let alone smelled it. Dog looked up at her, smelling the contents of the jar, tail wagging quickly. Opening her eyes she looked back at Daryl who immediately diverted his eyes, looking anywhere but at her. She set the jar down and reached for her notepad again.

“Where did you find this?” He reached for the pad and pen and began writing his response.

Connie watched him with a small smile. She had been pleasantly surprised to discover over the winter and spring that Daryl was pointedly sweet. He remembered their conversations and her
mundane musings, and he let her know he remembered. A specific type of ballpoint pen she had loved in the old world appear clipped to her notebook. Gifts of cinnamon cookies made by one specific elderly women in Alexandria, wrapped neatly in fabric and tied with twine. Emptying his backpack on the picnic table of books he'd found on runs. The last time he had been at Hilltop, it had been especially frigid. As they drank coffee with a lukewarm breakfast she craved something sweet to cut the blandness of oatmeal. They discussed their favorite sweets, cookies and cakes, candies, and warm drinks. He had like white cake and she had defiantly challenged him with her love of chocolate. She looked between the cocoa and back at him, wondering why he was like this with her.

Daryl finished writing and slid the notepad in front of her, “Don’t worry about it. Knew that you wanted some, thought you could bake with it?”

Her stomach knotted as she read his messy scrawl. She didn’t deny that she felt something for Daryl, moments like these always reminded her. She often tried to ignore her growing affection for him, to cast the thought out of her mind and focus on surviving. Her crush was silly, possibly dangerous, and she knew it. But right now he was looking at her with gentleness and something she could only describe as hope, the blue of his eyes were peeking from behind his bangs, and she wanted to do nothing but sigh and stare. Connie scribbled her response quickly.

“Only if you help me” she showed it to him before getting up from the table, Dog following, not allowing him any time to make excuses or to back out of her offer. He hesitated slightly before closing the backpack and standing up, slinging it over his shoulder. They set of the toward the kitchen, the mason jar held firmly in her hand between them and Dog leading the way.
Piggyback

Daryl heard her gasp before the sound of her hitting the ground behind him. He spun around, heart pounding in his ears and knives unsheathed as he felt the adrenaline rush through his body. He was prepared to pounce, kill any threat. He saw quickly that there wasn’t one. No person, no walker, just Connie on the ground. She had fallen on her front, but was already maneuvering onto her back, a hand searching for something. He panicked slightly, shoving his knives back on his waist and quickly dropping to his knees. Dog, who had ran ahead, hustled back to her side at the sound, whimpering and attempting to lick her face. She gave Daryl the sign for “okay” while her other hand found her ankle, wrapping around the joint.

“You don’t look okay” he muttered as he reached out a hand to steady her. If she noticed his lips moving, she didn’t say. She was obviously uncomfortable, a frown permanent on her face, a deep sigh escaping from her chest. Daryl felt a strange pang in his chest at the expression. He moved to place an arm under her shoulders, helping her to a seated position.

“A-n-k-l-e s-p-r-a-i-n” she fingered spelled for him. She nodded to the area where she had fallen. Daryl spotted the shallow hole where her foot must have been caught. He looked back at her and nodded, saying he understood. He went to assess her ankle, his hands hovering over the injury, and she nodded giving him permission to continue. He gently felt the area, already feeling the swelling through her boot. She jerked when he pressed on one spot. He looked at her and signed an apology with a weak smile. He sat back on his heels, taking off his backpack with the movement. He took out his water bottle, handing it to Connie and signing “drink”. She drank the water readily, while he went through the bag for his small bottle of mismatched pills. He popped open the bottle and shifted through them with a finger, searching for an anti-inflammatory. She watched him with a small smile and a twinkle in her eye as she took the pills.

“What?”

She shook her head as she swallowed the water, a leaf falling from her curls. He noticed another and reached up to pick another out of her hair, realizing only as he dropped it on the ground what he had done. She watched him with a bemused look, he felt a blush creep into his cheeks when he saw her gaze on him. He went back to the matter at hand.

“We got to get you back,” he said. He knew she wasn’t going to be able to walk far, if at all.

“The traps,” she signed, a concerned look on her face. Hilltop needed any animals caught in those traps, he knew that. But she wasn’t going to be able to help him with the catches like she usually did when she accompanied him.

He put a hand on her shoulder, “I’ll come back out,” he narrowed her eyes slightly, “Promise” he signed. She nodded in response, seeming to accept his response.

He looked at her and spoke clearly, singing the words he knew. “You’re gonna ride on my back,” she raised her eyebrows at him, a smile dancing on her lips. “You have a better idea?” he asked. She shook her head no, still seemingly amused at the whole situation.

“Here,” He took his backpack and held it out for her to put on. He adjusted the straps so that the bag sat appropriately on her smaller frame. He could feel her gaze on him, making his heart pound in his ears. He ignored the feeling, snapping the chest strap in pace and meeting her eyes gesturing that they were going to get up. Daryl held his hands out to her and helped her stand, wrapping an
arm around her waist to get her leaning her up against a tree for support. He turned and squatted slightly, feeling her arms loop around his neck almost immediately. She leaned onto him, her front flush against his back. Reaching behind him, he found her legs, and positioned his hands below her knees, before hoisting her higher on his back.

He started walking with her back toward the direction of the road. She was lighter than he thought she’d be, making the walk somewhat easier than he’d imagined. He moved slowly but steadily, the path back to Hilltop becoming more clear as they got closer. He felt her breath on his neck, hot and coming out in short bursts, most likely from the pain. He picked up his pace, and ignored the feelings rushing through his body at the sensation. The wall was coming into view now, off on the horizon. Dog ran ahead toward the community, letting them to their arrival. He shifted Connie slightly, his arms beginning to feel heavy. He felt her chin gently come to rest on his shoulder in response, arms moving closer to his body to lay across his chest. His body tensed, unsure of the gentle sign of affection. He resisted the urge to turn and look at her, afraid of what would happen if he did.

The the gates open, Kelly and Luke running out toward them. He tapped Connie’s knee, her head came up from his shoulder. He let go of her legs and gently lowered her to the ground, slipping an arm around her waist quickly to steady her. Luke appeared on her other side. Kelly signed quickly, too fast for Daryl to understand. Connie nodded at her and gave a smile. The younger woman looked satisfied but stared at Daryl with narrowed eyes,

“I got her,” she said. Daryl moved and Kelly replaced him. The trio started walking back slowly. He watched them retreat, heart picking up pace again as Connie looked back at him and smiled.
Thank you all so much for the kind comments and kudos! These have been a joy to write and have helped me fill the dreaded mid-season break. Here's another to combat the winter weather.

They had arrived at Oceanside earlier in the day, now settling down for the night as sunset started to settle. The children sat with Jerry and his own kids around a small fire, giggling at whatever story the man had created for them. Michonne had resisted bringing the kids along with them to training. The travel would be strenuous and dangerous, even with the relative calm that had settled after the pikes. But RJ and Judith’s pleas, mixed with the reassurance of Aaron and Daryl being nearby, had made her give in. She hadn’t regretted it, seeing her children kick in the water and building sandcastles gave her a rush of emotions.

“Michonne,” Ezekiel said behind her, bringing her out of the memories of the day. She turned to look at him, Aaron standing at his side, “We should finish plans for training”

She nodded, “We’ll need Daryl” she looked around the community at the various groups mingling, “Any idea where he is?”

“Headed toward the beach last time I saw him,” Aaron suggested.

She looked over to the path that led to the beach and back to the men, “I’ll find him. Go get ready,”.

She started off toward the beach, the trees lessening in number as she got closer to the shore and the roar of the ocean growing louder. The sky peaked through the canopy of trees ahead of her, where the well worn path emptied onto the shore. As she approached the dunes of the beach, she noticed a pile of items. There were two pairs of boots, one noticeably larger than the other. Daryl’s vest was on the ground, as though dropped there. Michonne narrowed her eyes in confusion, then looked up the shore. She spotted him with two companions.

Connie and Daryl stood in the shallow waves of the ocean, boots abandoned and their pant legs rolled to their knees. They stood close together, Connie signing to him as he watched her intently. The genuine smile on Daryl’s face made Michonne’s heart fill. Dog bounded in the water up to them, a piece of driftwood securely in his teeth. He nudged Daryl’s knee with his head, and the man looked down at him. He glanced back to Connie and signed something, an action that surprised Michonne. Daryl put a hand on either side of the wood and pulled against Dog’s strength. Daryl jerked the stick and Dog kept his grip, splashing in the waves growling in enjoyment. Connie watched the pair with a smile on her face and a soft look of affection. Michonne could have recognized the look of tenderness anywhere, and the way Daryl was gazing at the other woman made her feel like she was intruding. She watched him now at ease, relaxed, smiling, a boyish glow in his demeanor. Combined with Connie’s endeared gaze, she nearly considered turning around to allow her friend this moment of happiness, in hopes that he would cultivate whatever the two’s soft exchange of looks and smiles signaled. But they had to train, and night was quickly approaching.
Michonne continued making her way toward them slowly, watching them with interest. Daryl jerked the stick again but this time Dog broke it free from his grasp, both nearly tumbling into a wave that rolled to shore, causing a large splash that landed on Connie. The denim over her thighs darkened immediately and caused her to look down, and then back at Daryl. He gave her an apologetic look but before he could apologize, she bent down and splashed water up at him in one quick motion. Daryl looked surprised, glancing down at his own, now wet, jeans. He met her playful gaze, her lips twisting into teasing smile, before getting his own small smirk. Michonne watched as the two quickly entered a heated splashing match, scooping up water and kicking at the waves. Dog, now abandoning his driftwood, ran between them barking with joy at the salt water flying through the air. She heard Daryl laugh, something that happened so infrequently it caught her by surprise. The sound made her release a sigh and caused a soft smile to break out on her own features.

Connie spotted her, stopping her splashing. Daryl noticed, and turned his attention to Michonne. She waved a hand at the pair as she got closer. Daryl looked at Connie and said something Michonne couldn’t hear before beginning a quick stride toward her. Connie bent to pet Dog who was whining at her feet, upset at the stopped playtime. Daryl approached with a look she couldn’t read, his cheeks flushed, eyes avoiding her own, and jeans soaking wet. She choked down a chuckle.

“I didn’t mean to interrupt,” Michonne said with a teasing lilt in her voice, looking beyond Daryl to the women standing in the water and petting his Dog.

The red on his cheeks only deepened as he ignored her comment, “What do you need?” he asked gruffly.

“We need to start planning the training,” she said crossing her arms, “We’re waiting on you and you seem,” she paused, smile widening, “occupied,”

He was keeping a poker face but Michonne could tell that he was embarrassed. His eyes avoided meeting hers directly as he fidgeted, shifting from one bare foot to the other. She could see his chest rising and falling, more quickly than usual.

“Sorry,” he spoke quickly, “I’ll be there soon.”. He turned to go back to Dog and Connie, the latter of whom was now watching them.

“Daryl,” Michonne reached out to touch his arm softly. He looked back at her, “Take your time, okay?”

She looked beyond him to Connie then back to him, ensuring that he saw the subtle motion. His Adam’s apple bobbed as he swallowed, but he met her eyes and nodded, "Yeah,"

With a final wave to the other woman, she turned on her heels and went back to the camp, hoping Daryl would be good on his word.
Daryl sat on the wall of Hilltop in a plastic chair, crossbow across his lap. He didn't have to do guard duty when he came, but he often found he needed the few hours of solitude it gave him when he visited. Sometimes Connie would come and sit with him, he never minded that. She had been busy when he left her, working with a construction team to do some work on the main house after damage from a recent storm. He hated that he missed her already. He heard a noise on the ladder leading to the platform, he saw Kelly's head pop up.

“Hey,” he said nodding at her. The younger woman made her way over and sat in the chair next to Daryl.

“Anything happening?” she asked crossing her arms and leaning back.

“Nah. Haven’t even been biters” she turned and looked back toward the horizon, "You need something?"

She shrugged, "Just bored I guess. I'm done until dinner."

She seemed content to sit with him silently, so he went back to watch. The lands around Hilltop were still and quiet, he could even hear some birds chirping somewhere in the distance. They stayed like that until he felt eyes on him. He looked out of the corner of his eyes and could see her eyeing him. She looked as if she was searching for something.

“So,” Kelly said the word as if letting out a breath, “My sister?”

Daryl didn’t turn his head, continuing his glances at her from the side of his eye. He figured that this would happen eventually. Kelly had warmed up to him slightly in the last few months, trading in glares and long-distance stare downs for nods and the occasional half smile. She hadn’t trusted him at first, didn’t like when he came into Hilltop and took her sister away for hours; he got that. She wanted to protect Connie, he didn’t hold that against her. But he also didn’t want to have this conversation with her kid sister. Not now, when the lines between him and the woman in question were constantly blurring and graying.

“What about her?” he said, deciding that playing dumb may be his saving grace.

Kelly looked unconvinced, “You like her?”

He glanced at her again as he tried to come up with an answer. “She’s a good tracker, helps me out there” he nodded beyond the wall to the woods.

“That’s not what I meant and you know it.” Kelly said. She looked at Daryl expectantly, probing him to answer her question. He didn’t. "Fine." She sighed and sat back in the plastic chair, looking around at the others on the wall.
He relaxed after a few moments, Kelly seemingly accepting that he wasn't going to talk. He looked at his crossbow, noticing dirt and grime on the frame. He reached into his back pocket and withdrew a bandanna. He felt the tension in his jaw and shoulders release and he methodically scrubbed at the metal, distracting himself from the presence that sat next to him.

“She likes when you come, you know.”

Daryl looked over at her now and she was watching him, attempting to gauge his reaction. His heart pounded at the revelation, his stomach felt like it had dropped to his knees. It wasn’t a secret that he jumped at every chance he could to get to Hilltop. He was sure Michonne had noticed, but to her credit hadn’t say a word. But it was apparent that Kelly had also noticed his overly frequent visits and was determined to know his motivations. A wave of self-consciousness flooded his body. He liked Connie, he liked her a lot. Thought about her more than he would ever admit aloud. Sometimes they shared moments that made him think that maybe she thought about him too. The more moments they had the more he came, hoping to convince himself that there was something there beyond his own ridiculous pining.

“And I like seeing her happy,” Kelly continued. She narrowed her gaze on him, “I don’t want that to change.”

“It won’t” he said avoiding her eyes.

He hadn’t admitted anything, not really. But Daryl moved his head slightly so that his bangs could fall in his face. He knew that he was hiding, but he didn’t want her to easily read his expression. He wasn’t going to stop coming, she didn’t need to know why. He watched Kelly, the muscles in her face twitching as she processed his response. Her expression seemed to soften slightly as she met his eyes. He thought he maybe saw the ends of her mouth flick in a restrained smile.

“Alright,” she said nodding. She paused before attempting to make her features serious again, “I’ll know if she’s hurt. You know that right?”

Before he could respond they heard movement from the base of the ladder. Both turned as Connie’s curls came into sight. Daryl felt a smile form on his face immediately. She climbed up and looked between the two, her eyes staying on Kelly.

“What are you two up to?” she signed looking at Kelly suspiciously.

“We’re on watch” the younger woman responded simply. Connie looked at Daryl as if asking for confirmation. He shrugged in response. “Why are you here?” Kelly asked with a smirk.

Connie glared at her sister, Daryl saw her eyes flick to him before responding, “Was looking for someone”

“Did you find them?” Kelly’s smirk only grew. Daryl felt awkward, bringing his thumb up to his mouth and chewing on the skin around his nail.

Connie huffed a little before ignoring Kelly and looking to Daryl, “See you at dinner?” she asked.

He nodded, his thumb still in his mouth. She smiled before shooting one last glare at Kelly and going back to the ladder. Kelly looked at him, seeming satisfied that she had made both of them squirm. Daryl went back to the job at hand, watching the sun move behind the trees and waiting for his next meal.
Ride

Connie handed Magna the rifle she had been carrying while on watch, trading her for a bottle of water. She drank it, letting the cool liquid wash down her throat. It was finally warming up, the sun had made her shift enjoyable.

“What are your plans?” Magna asked her as she swung the rifle on her back.

“Grab some food,” she responded with a smile.

Connie was really going to find Daryl. He had arrived to Hilltop with Siddiq yesterday evening, each with a backpack full of herbs and medical supplies to pass on to the infirmary. She had eaten with him last night while they completed their latest ASL lesson. He was gone when she searched for him in the morning, out with Dog checking traps and hunting. She had been disappointed, a feeling that lessened only when he came back with a belt of squirrels, a smile, and a promise to “talk later”. Her heart had soared as she smiled down a him from her perch on the wall. But Magna, who had made her distrust of Daryl clear, didn’t need to know this.

Magna nodded, “Get some rest. I’ll see you later”

Connie climbed down from the wall, happy to have the solid ground under her feet again. She went toward the stable, where Daryl often sat with his bike and crossbow, away from the bustle of the community. She found him sitting on a stool fiddling with something on the workbench. Connie purposefully stepped heavy on the ground to make noise and get his attention. He jumped slightly, then turned and met her gaze, giving a small smile.

“Snuck up on me” he said.

She shrugged and flashed a sly smile, “What are you doing?”

“Fixing a bolt” She didn’t acknowledge how impressed she was with his progressing understanding of sign.

He set the bolt down and looked at her, “Was going to ride the border,” he spoke slowly, signing the words he knew, then nodded at the motorcycle. He looked at the bike then back at her with a look she could only describe as mischievous. “Want to come?”

She had never been on a motorcycle, but had dreamed of it once. She remembered the cute boy with a leather jacket she had pined for in high school who her parents would have most definitely not approved of. Her mother had called the things “death traps” as the boy cut her off in the school parking lot, the revving of his engine shaking her seat. Connie had watched him dreamily as he rode away. She’d seen others on the back of Daryl's, Carol and even Michonne once. There were always smiles on their wind whipped faces. Besides, he was leaving tomorrow, and she wanted to spend time with him before he left.

“I’ve never rode one”

He seemed to perk up at that, “Never too late” he said. She looked from the bike to him. He looked excited, a half smile on his lips and his bangs flipped out of his eyes. She nodded her agreement.

She found herself following him as he rolled the bike along to the entrance to Hilltop shortly after. He stopped nearby and signaled to the guards to open the gate. Magna glared down at her and Connie avoided her gaze. Daryl kicked up the stand and climbed on, looking back at her
expectantly. Connie hesitantly got on the back of the bike. She was aware of how close she was to him, her legs touching his waist, her chest inches from his back. It was the closest they had ever been, and she could feel her heart banging in her chest. She gripped the back of the seat like she had seen others do when on the bike, avoiding touching him with her hands. He looked over his shoulder at her and she could see lips moving to ask if she was ready. She nodded.

Daryl started the engine and the bike hummed underneath her. He pushed off and they were moving out of the gates faster than she had anticipated. Her hands reached for his waist, clutching at his sides. He rounded a corner, her body leaning with the movement, surprising her. She snaked her hands to his front and placing her body flush against his back. She clutched her hands together, some of the fabric of his shirt in her grasp. If he minded, he didn’t react, didn’t jump or freeze as she had seen him do before at touch. So she allowed herself to get close to him, her heart beating fast at both the excitement of the ride and their increased proximity. They came upon a straight stretch of road and they flew down. She watched the changing landscape as they went by, the trees blurred together and the wind moved across her face. It was Alpha’s land on that side, forbidden and seemingly darker. She turned her face to the other side, watching the sun move between the trees on their side. She jumped slightly when she felt his hand gently pat her own that sat on his front. It was a silent reassurance from him that it was okay; the border, the ride, her touch, everything. He was asking her to trust him.

She felt body relax at his touch. Loosening her grip slightly she looked over his shoulder she admired the dense woods around them, some flashes blooming flowers in white and purple and yellow. Her heart lessened its pace as she became more comfortable. The hum of the bike underneath her body was no longer noticeable, only an extension of them both. She enjoyed the wind moving her curls behind her. She could smell the tobacco wafting from Daryl's vest, coming off in wafts on the wind. She moved her hands back to his sides, but kept in contact with his back, not wanting to totally let him go; but trusting him to get them home.
A little moment while in the cave. If we don't get a significant Daryl and Connie interaction in 10x09 I am throwing hands. There is some slight speculation at the very very end, nothing confirmed, you'll know it when you see it.

Connie's eyes had adjusted to the shadowy darkness of the cave. They had to have been there a few hours now. Their initial frantic search for an exit had died down and the group was resting, recovering, and planning. Magna still wandered around, checking for any type of exit with a pack of matches. Aaron, Jerry, and Carol were huddled together, trying to plot the groups next move, the next attempt to escape. Kelly sat next to her, head on her arms that were draped across her bent legs, hiding her face. She reached out a hand ruffled her sister's hair gently.

Daryl sat alone, somewhat away from the group. When they had first fallen through the hole he had looked for her, locking eyes and silently asking if she was okay while they attempted to get their bearings. She knew she looked worse for wear. Her body hurt, she could feel the swelling in her face, and had felt the blood trickle from a cut on her hairline. But she had given him a quick nod, and then watched him as her tried to get a reading on the cave. He had talked to Carol for awhile before splitting ways, making his way to the spot where he sat now. He looked deep, lost in thought and angry, an emotion she had never seen in him before.

She tapped Kelly, “I’m going to talk to Daryl.”

Her sister looked between her and Daryl before nodding and placing her head back on her arms. Connie ruffled her hair again before giving her shoulder a squeeze. She stood and walked toward him. He spotted her and watched as she approached. She slid down the wall and sat next to him without asking, crossing her legs and placing her hands in her lap. He stared at her through his sweaty bangs. He had a few bruises on the right side of his face, his lip was still bleeding from a small split. He blinked and looked away from her.

“I’m sorry” he signed half heartedly.

“Why?”

“For all this.” he gestured around them.

She turned to reach into her side bag and retrieve her notepad, forgetting that it was no longer there, having disappeared in the dark of the cave.

"Daryl," she signed his name sternly, “It’s not your fault.”

He met her eyes before dropping them, “Wish you hadn’t come. Would have been safe at Hilltop.”

When they had gotten the radio call that they group was going out, she made an immediate decision to go. She wanted all of this to end, wanted to protect her family. The months before had been some of the best. For the first time she felt security, normalcy. In part because of the man
who sat next to her. She elbowed him in the side.

"We're family. Remember?"

“Yeah, family,” he mumbled it, his lips barely moving.

His face was similar to how it had been last time she declared it, now clouded with additional worry in the form of a scrunched brow. She couldn’t read his reaction last time, and she couldn’t read it now. It had left her in a slight panic after he had left that night. She loved the communities and the people in them. They made her believe that there was still good things in the world. Daryl was one of those good things, one of the best things.

“Me and you,” she gently poked him in his chest, “We’ll get home.”

She gave a small smile. She saw his features soften slightly before the ends of his mouth turned upward, and she resisted the urge to wipe the blood still pooling on his lip. She sat back again, replacing her hands in her lap. She scanned her eyes over everyone else, checking their safety and their surroundings. She jumped at warm touch on her hand, and looked down to see Daryl taking it in his own. He held it as he had in the woods outside of Hilltop only days before. His touch and the cute smile on his face had washed her body in giddy feeling, distracting from the worry that had been eating away at her. His grip felt different now that they were in the dark, hiding the details of their faces, the threat of death looming over them. It was still gentle, hesitant, shy even; and when she looked at him he stared at his lap, avoiding having to look at her.

She turned her hand under his touch and she felt him jerk, as if prepared to take his hand back. He froze when she moved her fingers to lace between his own, pulling his palm tight against hers. She felt him relax, his fingers curling, mirroring her own. She shifted so she was closer to him, their shoulders touching, her knee pressing into the thigh of his outstretched legs. They stayed like that, not talking or looking at each other, observing the others as they moved around the cave and looking for any signs of threats. The warm touch was comforting, and while the skin on his hands was rough, his grip was gentle. It felt natural to be this close to him, and she resisted the urge to sink further into his side or lay her head on his shoulder in fear it would push him away. A small voice in her mind urged her to not let this moment go when they got back outside. To talk to him about whatever they were.

Daryl jumped suddenly and released her hand, his head snapping to a dark corner where a noise must have come from. He was on his feet in seconds and moved to stand in front of her as she scrambled to her feet. She noticed immediately that they were down a person. Magna was gone.

Chapter End Notes

If you have ideas for chapters or just prompts in general, feel free to let me know here or shoot me a message on my Tumblr @in-a-nowhere-land.
Michonne rubbed her temples as she walked from RJ’s room. The day had been long, consisting of her bustling around the community and a Council meeting that had given her a massive headache. Every turn had given her a growing list of needed supplies and repairs for Alexandria, and the visiting Hilltop group adding on to the communities collective recuperation from the harsh winter. RJ had been especially attentive to the story she had read, drawing out his usually short bedtime routine, and pushing back her much wanted quiet time. She emerged from the hallway and turned to peer into the living room, sensing someone there. She saw Daryl reading, feet up on the coffee table, Dog sleeping on the floor. Her mind running so much that she hadn’t even heard him come in.

“Feet off my furniture, Dixon” She could see Daryl jump slightly, hearing her voice ring through the room.

“Yes ma’am,” he did as he was told, sitting up straighter and placing his feet on the floor.

Michonne walked into the room and plopped into the chair across from him, sinking into it. He shut his book and shifted to slide it in his back pocket. If Michonne had to guess, it was probably the Sign Language book she had found in various spots around the house.

“He asleep?” Daryl mumbled, shifting on the couch.

“Finally.”

“How was the meeting?” he asked.

She smirked, “You would know if you had actually been there.” He didn’t respond. “In fact, I’m pretty sure I arranged for someone to take the kids so you could come.”

He shrugged, “Didn't feel like hearing bitching today.” Michonne squinted at him.

She knew exactly why he had blown off the meeting, and the extensive list of complaints was not it. She shook her head slightly before shifting in the seat, crossing her legs and throwing her head over the back of the chair and closing her eyes.

“Thanks for watching them.”

“Ain’t a problem. Jude was helpful with the traps when I took her out.”

Michonne popped an eye open at that, she felt a smirk playing on her lips and tug at her cheeks. “As long as she doesn’t start wearing squirrels,” He gave a small smile at her before he sunk back into the couch himself.

She paused, letting the silence linger for a minute before continuing, “Heard you brought a special
“Yeah?” he said it like a question, a choked chuckle in his voice.

“Yeah.”

When Michonne picked the kids up after the meeting, she was met with Judith talking a mile a minute. She bounced as she excitedly told Michonne about her slingshot training, acting out her use of the weapon. She showed Michonne the signs Connie had taught her, her tongue poking out of her mouth as she formed the shapes with her small hands. RJ had run straight to his room, intent on retrieving the pictures he had colored with the woman, her neat shading alongside his scribbles, showing them proudly to Michonne. The town made of well used wooden blocks on the floor of RJ’s room, usually reserved for him and Daryl and occasionally Judith, had a new building he said Connie had made. And while the children didn’t question the other woman’s new presence, Michonne did. It was a mixture of wanting to protect the kids and Daryl, and an itching curiosity that led her pry.

“They love her by the way,”

Daryl let out that choked chuckle again. He didn’t look up at her, his bangs hung over his face, hiding it from her. He had found something on his pants to fiddle with, picking at the frayed fabric.

“What about you?” Michonne prodded gently.

Daryl lifted his head slightly to look at her, “What about me?”

“How do you feel about her?”

He sighed, “Chonne,” his voice was quiet and gruff, warning her that she was toeing a line.

“Daryl,” she repeated back at him. She placed her elbow on the arm of the chair and propped her chin on her hand.

He looked at her and sighed, quickly turning away. His hand went to his mouth as he chewed on the skin around his thumbnail. She could tell he was contemplating whether to tell her anything. While she couldn’t read Daryl perfectly, she had learned enough to tell he was conflicted. She had noticed his frequent trips to Hilltop, the little blue book he carried around so much the corner had left a hole in his back pocket, the smiles that she didn’t think she would ever see again after Rick.

“She’s a friend.” Daryl responded, stringing the words together in a mumble.

He looked to her and Michonne met his gaze. The muscles in his face were tense, as if he was clenching his jaw. She could see, even in the dimly lit room, the rose pink tint in his cheeks. His gaze wasn’t stern, instead fleeting as he quickly broke contact. He was nervous, hesitant; qualities that Michonne rarely saw in him.

“Is that all?” Daryl looked at her again, his lips parting as if he was going to say something.

“She?” a small voice said from the hallway.

Michonne turned to see RJ standing, a stuffed animal under his arm. He looked at them with wide but sleepy eyes. He rubbed at his face with his free hand.

“RJ?” Michonne started, but Daryl was already up and moving, taking the opportunity to escape their conversation.
“I got him,” he said as he went to the boy, scooping him up into a hug. “Come on buddy,” he said to softly walking down the hallway, RJ now burying his face into Daryl’s shoulder. Michonne laughed a little under her breath, Daryl had always been a master of the quick escape. She saw the ASL book sitting on the couch cushion, well worn and with notes sticking from the pages. She smiled.
Rain

He hadn’t meant to get them caught in the rain but now here they were; running down a narrow path to the hunting blind set up about a mile from Hilltop. It wasn’t the safest place to be in a thunderstorm, but it was better than being in the openfields around the walls. Connie had been volunteered to check the roads to Alexandria and Oceanside with Yumiko, the recent heavy rains washing out some of the roads. Upon his arrival, Yumiko had suggested he and Dog go because his “knowledge of the area was better”. She had said it with a look to Connie that had made Daryl blush, and his companion glare. He had considered declining the offer, but he couldn’t bring himself to pass on spending time with her.

What he could have passed on was the pop up summer storm. He could feel the water and mud cake and cover his boots and jeans, could feel his hair stick to his cheeks and the back of his neck as it pounded down. He looked over his shoulder to check for Connie who was on heels, getting equally wet and muddy. He turned to look forward again and stepped awkwardly, his foot slide across the mud and his body began to follow. A small hand wrapped around his arm and pulled, trying to steady him. He slipped a little more, her hand dropping to grab his. He regained his footing, boots sinking into the mud. He looked back at Connie, embarrassed that he had almost wiped out.

“You okay?” she signed with her free hand, the other still holding his.

She made no move to release it and Daryl felt himself freeze in a panic. Her hand was wet and cold, but soft as she gripped his own. His heart was beating fast and his breathing heavy running, and her touch did nothing to make it slow. He nodded stiffly at her in response and turned, expecting her to drop his hand. She didn’t. Dog barked ahead of them, alerting Daryl that something was ahead. He glanced down at their hands before starting again, Connie now at his side, keeping pace with him. They slid down the trail together pulling and steadying each other to keep themselves upright. They splashed through puddles while thunder crashed and the wind blew around them.

The dark green shelter appeared in the swaying brush and trees. Dog stood at the entrance wagging his tail and barking. The pair arrived at the door and Daryl opened the door, only now releasing Connie’s hand to let her and Dog go inside. He followed and shut the door behind him. The rain pounded on the plastic roof, and a crack of thunder seemed to shake the small building. Light came in through the windows in narrow strips. He pulled a stool from the corner and set it next to Connie nodding at her to sit down. She did while pulling her hair out of its hair tie and shaking the water from her hair. The perfect ringlets bounced as she did it, and Daryl found himself watching them return to their place on her head.

He tapped her shoulder, “You okay?”

Connie looked at him before letting out a silent laugh, air pushing out through her nose. Her nose wrinkled as she laughed and Daryl found his eyes drawn to it.

“What?”

“Fun,” she replied. Her eyes were shining, and she gazed at him with a look of amusement.

“That?” he jerked a thumb behind him at the door and the storm outside. “You think that was fun?”
Connie was still smiling wide, a look of pure joy on her face.

“You’re crazy,”

She laughed again and Daryl felt a warmth spread through his middle. She reached into her wet canvas side bag and pulled out her notebook. She wrote quickly, the marker smudging with the dampness of the pages. Her head bobbed while she moved her marker across the page, water droplets fell from her hair on her face. There was a smudge of dirt on her cheek, leaving streaks of dark brown as droplets passed through. Even soaking wet and in the dimly lit blind; she was pretty. Daryl allowed himself to admit that from time to time. Always silently, and never when others could maybe see the gaze he cast on her. She moved to hold up her writing, showing him the wet page.

*I always have fun with you.*

He looked from the page to her face. She was smiling at him, and he found the ends of his mouth tilting upwards in response. He could have fun with lots of people he supposed. Carol, the kids, occasionally Aaron or Michonne; but with Connie it was different. He anticipated their meetings, an excitement brewed in the pit of his belly as an opportunity to go to Hilltop came or when they sent a group to Alexandria. Their time together left him anxious, thinking about everything they did. He missed her in the space in between, he allowed himself to admit that too now.

As he pulled up another stool and sat next to her, Connie turned back to the notebook and began scribbling again. He was closer than he needed to be but it was cold and they needed to warm up in their wet clothes. He got comfortable, knowing they had a while to wait the storm out. Dog came and rubbed himself along their legs as they sat. He looked over her shoulder to see that she had drawn a grid, and had placed an X in one of the squares: a tic-tac-toe board. She was scrawling a note at the top of the page, handing the notepad to him when she had completed it. He read it with a smile.

*It will be even more fun when I beat you.*
She was walking back to the guest house in Alexandria when he finally found her. The day had separated them, he had been with the kids and she had been working with the council. It was dark now, probably nine or ten at night. She was going back to Hilltop tomorrow and Daryl wanted to spend time with her, as pathetic as it sounded. Dog beat him to it, breaking out into a run when he saw her. He nearly knocked her over when he jumped on her legs, but Connie responded happily, scratching him behind his ear in that spot he loved. Daryl followed.

“*It’s good to see you,*” she said as he approached.

“You too.” he responded.

There was a moment of silence as Connie continued to pet Dog and Daryl shifted awkwardly. He tried to retrieve the sentences he had come up with in his head before walking over. He tapped her shoulder and she looked up at him from her bent position over Dog.

“I wanted to know if you uh-” he hesitated, “Wanted to go on a walk?” he paused again, and she stood up, His heart beat betrayed whatever confidence he thought he had, “With me?”

She smiled at that, nodding eagerly.

They walked to the gate, Daryl yelling up the guards that they’d be on the perimeter. They went out the gates and into the dark, Dog leading them along the wall. They were quiet, as they often were, but it was comfortable. He tried to ignore the feeling of her arm brushing against his every so often, a sign that they were walking much closer together than they needed to be. It left a rush of tingles on his skin, cooler than the air of summer night.

He saw a familiar deer trail on the edge of the treeline. He remembered it from when he had been living in the land around Alexandria. He walked toward it but felt a hand on his arm.

"*Where are you going?”*

“Secret hideout,” he said plainly.

Connie released the softest exhale of a giggle and Daryl felt the corners of his mouth flicker at the sound. He went down the small deer path, listening to Connie behind him and watching Dog run ahead. He hadn’t been to the spot in awhile, avoiding reminders about what he had spent the better half of five years doing. It had been a fruitless search that had left him miserable, he knew that, but he didn’t regret it. He pushed thoughts of Rick aside, focusing instead on the woods; keeping the woman trailing him safe.

He saw the opening in the brush and looked over his shoulder at Connie. He waved her on, giving her room to step in front of him. She went down the path, Dog next to her, and he brought up the

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**Stars**

**Chapter Notes**

TWD officially returns this week which is great news because I am starving for Connie and Daryl content. Let me know if you have any headcanons or prompts you would like me to take on.
The river was high, rushing quickly and filling the otherwise quiet night air with the sound of water. The rocks under their feet were rounded and shiny with perpetual dampness. The other side of the river was less forested, but still green and lush. Between the trees he could see some light from the moon. He glanced at Connie whose face was shadowed but framed by the white, dim light. She looked over the tops of the trees, at the stars Daryl could see reflected in the water. He knew she would appreciate the spot, and the look of content she had convinced him that his thoughts had been true.

She turned to look at him before moving to sign, “You found this place?” He nodded and she looked around, “How?”

He hesitated. When he had been living out here it was close to the community, but not too close. He could see Michonne and get some supplies, but didn’t have to stick around. He considered not being honest with her, telling her that he used it for fishing or hunting. But she was looking at him with those large brown eyes that always seemed so gentle, and he felt the need to tell her.

“I lived out here awhile,”

“Alone?” her head tilted slightly and her mouth formed a tight frown.

“Yeah.”

“Why?”

“Was looking for someone,”

She seemed to hesitate as her eyes left his face. She looked back at him before signing, “R-I-C-K?”

He was now the one to turn his face, but he still gave a tight nod, looking back at the water. Daryl was sure that he must have mentioned him in passing, and the community members had most certainly told her stories about the late great Rick Grimes. Daryl was sure that Rick would have liked Connie, and he would have been sure to tease the shit out of him too. The feeling of Connie grabbing his hand made him jump.

“Come on,” she pulled him to a sandier part of the riverbed.

“What are you-” she began to sit, pulling him with her.

He followed suit, sitting on the ground next to her. She let go of his hand and he missed the heat and feeling of her smaller one immediately.

“What are we doing?”

“Watching stars,” he gave her an odd look, “You said you’d teach me,” she said as she laid back, placing her hands behind her head and settling on the ground.

He had said that last time they were out on a walk, but Daryl knew she was trying to change subjects after Rick had been brought up. Dog came and settled next to Connie, placing his head on her thigh and he smiled at the two. There was a sincerity in how she was looking up at the sky, eye wide and a small smile on her face, that compelled him to lay down next to her. He told himself that he was doing this to indulge her and for nothing else. So if he shifted closer to her, it was only to better point out constellations
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