



Bird Meets Cage

Anyta Sunday

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Dear Author,

He called himself Stardust, but one of my friends told me his name was Jean. I met him during the summer I worked at the cotton candy stand when the circus came through town.

He was made of big dreams, sunshine, and raw sense of being that I'd never known existed before him. His eyes were black as mud, his lips were the same color as the cotton candy I sold, and his smile could put a solar eclipse to shame.

He was everything I wasn't. He was the first man I ever loved, and he left without me ever telling him that the way he looked at me broke my heart.

I'm older now, and even if that circus never comes through town again, I'll still call him Stardust.

Photo Description:

A man stares into the camera, a glint of magic in his dark eyes as he inhales his cigar making it sparkle like golden starlight.

This story was written as a part of the M/M Romance Group's "**Love's Landscapes**" event. Group members were asked to write a story prompt inspired by a photo of their choice. Authors of the group selected a photo and prompt that spoke to them and wrote a short story.

This story may contain sexually explicit content and is **intended for adult readers**. It may contain content that is disagreeable or distressing to some readers. The M/M Romance Group strongly recommends that each reader review the General Information section before each story for story tags as well as for content warnings.

Bird Meets Cage Details

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From Reader Review Bird Meets Cage for online ebook

Ann says

Simply stunning.

I could feel every scene the author wrote. All the sights and sounds of the big top were so much more than just words and the atmosphere was perfect. So moody, but not depressing and a total fantasy with just enough reality to keep it grounded.

This wasn't an over the top romance with instant declarations of undying love. It was all the beauty and heartbreak of a first love and unfortunate realities. It was a real romance that only time and distance could make happen. I absolutely loved it and it nailed the prompt perfectly and did Stardust justice.

All that being said, WTAF? I read about (view spoiler) and I (view spoiler). Has hell frozen over?? Are pigs flying?? To be fair (to me), Danny was different and he didn't get along with the other you-know-what's who played to type perfectly and were obviously in character, the skeevy bastards. Danny is an anomaly among his kind and we're just going to leave it at that. Actually that just proves the talent of Anyta Sunday.

The last page slayed me and I read it more than once, possibly more than twice.

Dammit I just read it again, all verklepmt, must go.

~◊~Doxni(ela) ♥ ?? love & semi-colons~◊~ says

4.5 stars

Read this book twice: perfect prompt, stunning cover, sublime story.

Seventeen-year-old Nathan falls in love with a beautiful acrobat, but the circus comes to town just once a year, and Stardust always leaves. Stardust wants to fly, and Nathan's settled with his mom and sister.

When a bird wants to soar, the last thing he wants is a cage.

This is a coming-of-age story, a first-love story, a story of heartbreak, broken dreams, and abiding hope.

There is bleakness here, nostalgia, sadness; there's waiting. But there's also faith, forgiveness, and love.

This is Americana: small towns, brimming with optimism post WWII.

The secondary characters, Nathan's sister and Danny the Clown of many smiles, add much to the story.

But it's Nathan and Stardust who shine, and it's their magic that will hypnotize you.

Dalia says

4.5 stars

So, so beautiful and magical.

Somehow cage seemed to make sense. Because it was me. And I wanted to be the one that protected him; I wanted to be his home.

Lori says

This is possibly my favourite prompt of the event, so when it was chosen by one of my favourite authors I began an agonising wait....until, finally, today, I got to read, Bird Meets Cage. I was not disappointed.

While reading it I was transported back in time, my study disappeared and I was in the hot and humid circus field. The descriptions...oh, wow, the descriptions. Each sentence is beautifully crafted, almost lyrical in its execution, creating the most wonderfully real atmosphere. Stardust & Floss...both as magical as their names. Anyta achieves in 15,000 words what some fail to do in 50...she made me believe in magic, she made me fall in love.

Thank you a million times for this story.

(And the cover...oh, my, god, the cover. Stunning.)

ETA: If you want an even better review of this story read Natasha's

? Todd says

I really enjoyed this short, free story, but OMMFG, the **12 year separation**. It made me want to strangle someone.

And the historical setting, from **1949 to 1961** set my queer teeth on edge. Stories where the MC's can't ever be open and honest in public are generally a huge no for me.

But this story totally worked for me from start to finish, which is a testament to just how gifted Anyta is as an author.

4.25 stars.

Sunny says

4.5, rounded up because I'm still riding the feels.

Beautiful...

A bit melancholy, but not depressing.

Such vivid imagery...the sights, the smells, the atmosphere.

Wonderful characterization...distinct personalities, consistently shown thru actions and dialogue. Special nod to Danny, here. What an awesome character :)

So many feels...all those emotions Anyta yanked out of me, so effortlessly, it seemed, and with an economy of words.

So very romantic.

I had quotes all picked out for this review, but they are too special not to be read in the story first.

Giulio says

I read it all in one breath, under a beautiful starry sky. Simply flawless, not a single word wasted.

A great story for a great prompt and an awesome cover.

Why are you standing there, looking so sadly at the stars?

—Because I want one to fall, to make a wish.

Eli Easton says

Full of magic. Lovely, lyrical writing. Thank you, Anyta.

Nick Pageant says

No gifs for this one - not many words either. I'm just stunned by this story. It was beautifully written, so romantic and sweet, I can't do it justice and I'm not going to try.

Thank you, Anyta Sunday, for the beautiful gift you've given all of us.

I hope everyone who hasn't read this yet will take the time and treat yourself. There's love on every page and in every carefully chosen word.

Bonus Points for Natasha's lovely cover art!

Natasha says

This story is the single most beautiful, flawlessly romantic story I've read (at least) all year.

Do you like romance? No, not the power-hungry, *needy* kind I so often find associated with the m/m genre. I'm talking *romance*. Romance so thick and surreal, it's practically tangible. Romance that starts as a hum, and then, within a moment, there's a full orchestra blaring in your ears. Romance that keeps you up at night thinking about the effect of a few simple word choices.

(This review is spoiler free, except for a few characters real names)

I've loved my share of men. I've loved my Adrien English and his Riordan drama. I've loved Gordon Frost and Adam Blake. I've loved my poor Sebastian Swift and Max Prescott. I've loved Ty and Zane, and who hasn't, at some point?

But now it's time for *Stardust and Floss*.

Trying to describe Bird meets Cage is like trying to describe what your childhood wants were. Everything. Possibly the whole sky, but probably the earth and the sea, too.

I asked for a cookie, and Anyta Sunday gave me a wedding cake. This story is the child of my prompt from this year's MMRG event, Love's Landscapes. I'm not prone to sugar-coating much, and if I thought this story deserved fewer stars, I wouldn't be afraid to mark it so. But since Goodreads only allows 5 stars, those will have to do. I've also added this book to my 100-stars shelf, and Anyta Sunday earned herself every damn one of those.

I'm struggling to say everything I need to, to find some way to thank Anyta for giving me such a beautiful story, but like all great love, my heart can barely comprehend the things my mind wants to say.

Floss, *Nathan* was such a beautifully real character. His stardust-struck looks had me in an instant, and his sweet, down-to-earth charm made me love him even more. His attitude toward Stardust at both ages was... real.

Stardust, *Blue, Jean* was everything I wanted him to be, and more. He was quirky and kind and felt just like one of his sparkling cigars—all boom, and pop, and luster, until he finally wore down at the end. He was flawed, and perfect, and one of the only men who was magical enough for Nathan's love.

Danny, my fantastic clown. I couldn't have asked for anything more. He actually had me laughing with his antics. Anyta Sunday's writing is so strong, I easily visualized this silly clown doing these devilishly hilarious things, almost like a black and white film playing behind my eyes. And god, did he make me laugh. At a moment when my heart was breaking for Floss, Danny showed up and smoothed everything over. He was dangerously funny, and I felt all his goofiness felt so real for the time this story took place.

My favorite trope in my romance is long-lost lovers, and when I asked for there to possibly be a clown in this story, I was given one of the best clowns that's ever been written. I was given so much more than I asked for, and I feel so greedy, because I'm taking it all.

Oh, and a moment for the dialogue. God, the dialogue was amazing. Not a single word was uttered that was not needed, and the flow of it was completely seamless. It's so rare and magical when characters don't say overly much, but what they do say, is so powerful, that you're glad you weren't given filler words.

Thank you, Anyta, for this. I'm afraid I couldn't possibly rip my heart out of my chest and give it to you, so we'll never be quite equal in gifts.

Vivian says

If you revel in tragic beauty, this story is for you.

For most of this story I felt bereft and forlorn. The setting and characters were engaging. The timeline was long and each update I felt how sad to be stuck in a moment and never leave it. So, as charming as the ending is I felt like Nathan spent years frozen, waiting, and a small part of me cried inside. The exquisite use of the prompt bumps this from 3 to 4 stars.

Sheziss says

“I’m the bird, and you’re the cage.”

It's a very sweet story. I enjoyed every minute of it.

However, I wasn't as captivated as I hoped I would be. It was beautiful and nice, but it didn't make my head spin.

There are many shorties that make me want more. That's not something strange, as the definition itself says, most relationships need a big deal of pages to caress the reader's heart. But some stories just steal your heart with only a few pages. This one should have been one of those, but I still hoped for more, I still longed for a further development.

The pages available were almost perfect, but somehow I needed more to be deeply touched.

Jenni Lea says

This is by far the best story of the entire Loves Landscapes event in my opinion. It was absolutely perfect. I want Anyta Sunday to write more stories like this. But then again, I don't as I want this to remain the special

and magnificent story that it is.

Optimist ?King's Wench? & MANTIES Champion says

“What if it is a repeat of '49?”

Remember your first love?

Did you spend forever with them?

Did you *think* you'd spend forever with them?

Or was it just a moment that somehow became just a memory but one you can hold to forever?

Do you still think about them sometimes?

Wonder what could've been?

Bird Meets Cage is about the one that got away. Stardust and Floss meet at the wrong moment in time. They carve out a few memories, try to memorize one another, all those things that will have to sustain them both. They leave an indelible mark upon one another. They can feel when the other is nearby. They'll never forget one another, but they're on separate paths.

“Everyone deserves a little magic.”

Stardust/Jean needs to fly in front of an audience, needs to dazzle them. He's the star of the show and the loneliest man under the big top. He knows that he and Floss' time is brief. He knows Floss is just a kid. He tries to stay away, to temper the pain they'll both feel when they part, but it's a fool's errand, really.

"Stardust"

-Nat King Cole

And now the purple dusk of twilight time
Steals across the meadows of my heart
High up in the sky the little stars climb
Always reminding me that we're apart

You wander down the lane and far away
Leaving me a song that will not die
Love is now the stardust of yesterday
The music of the years gone by

Sometimes I wonder why I spend
The lonely night dreaming of a song
The melody haunts my reverie
And I am once again with you
When our love was new
And each kiss an inspiration
But that was long ago
Now my consolation
Is in the stardust of a song

Beside a garden wall
When stars are bright
You are in my arms
The nightingale tells his fairy tale
A paradise where roses bloom
Though I dream in vain
In my heart it will remain
My stardust melody
The memory of love's refrain

Why are you standing there, looking so sadly at the stars?
-Because I want one to fall, to make a wish.

Floss/Nathan builds a life in the hometown he'll never leave. He and his confidant, Danny, play shows-Nate with his trumpet and Danny his flute-and they care for his Mom and sister. Some men come and go never finding a home in him. Until one day, twelve years later the circus comes back to town.

Will the feelings be the same?

Will he remember him?

Will he still look at him the same way?

Or will he break his heart again?

“I want to though. I want that heat in your eyes. I want you to want me so badly, you’d just take me.”

“What if it is a repeat of ’49?”

What if it isn’t?

I really don’t have adequate words to describe just how affecting, hopeful and poignant this was. How much I fell in love with all these characters. How beautiful the writing was. How good it made me feel. Natasha said it best. No one’s more surprised than I that I loved a book with clowns, though Danny is more than just a clown.

He’s Nate’s best friend, his biggest supporter, the voice of reason and of love. He brightens every room, has a smile for everyone and he spreads his positivity unreservedly.

“The rest of the world might not be there yet. But times are gonna change, my friend. Just you wait. Times are gonna change.”

My thanks to Ms. Sunday and her writing team for the good feels. You’ve just made it to my list of authors to autobuy. And my thanks to Natasha for the prompt and the beautiful cover. You may get your clowns wish, but I wouldn’t hold my breath if I were you. ❤️❤️❤️

Ami says

4.5 stars

A good story can transport you inside the pages – make you feel like you are part of the characters’ lives or being in the world where they are. You feel like you can smell that green grass, or hear the noises on the street, just like the words on the page. Or in this case... the sound and smell of a circus.

Anyta Sunday’s second contribution to the Goodreads M/M Romance Group’s Annual Free Stories Event, “Love’s Landscape”, brought the circus to me ... the smell of the dust, the sounds of performers preparing, the colors of the clowns... and the allurement of falling in love with a performer.

The story began in 1949 where 17-year-old almost 18-year-old Nathan saw Blue, the Acrobatic Trick Rider. He enchanted Nathan; Nathan called him Stardust because Blue and his horse left shimmering dust trails like cosmic dust. But Stardust was a performer, a bird he called himself. While Nathan was the one who stayed, a cage. And this bird still wanted to fly.

Until twelve years later when the broken bird returned to town again with the circus, where Nathan was now older and still remembered his first love. One might say that this felt like a tragic story because of the fact that Nathan and Stardust were separated for a little more than a decade.

But I couldn't think of it that way.

I thought the years they were separated gave them time to grow older, to mature. Nathan was surely more confident when he confronted Stardust again, twelve years later. Sometimes the bird needs to fly to realize that he has a home to land safely. Besides, I thought Nathan and Stardust would still have their best years ahead of them (heck they were both still in their 30's!).

I did feel that I was being a bit robbed from reading more about the budding friendship between Nathan and Danny (a clown that was left behind). I thought Danny was a very good secondary character; he shined in his own way. I would love to read more about his love for Danny's sister, Rosa. While this was Nathan's story, I couldn't help but want more of Danny and Rosa's story as well. It is probably because I have been reading some good MF romance stories too lately.

So I would love to read a hundred more words of this. Although to be fair, this story has also done a lot to stand out in my mind, compared to many others that are four times lengthier.

In conclusion, **Bird Meets Cage** is definitely my personal favorite of Anyta Sunday yet (and probably her best so far). It was magical, atmospheric, and rather melancholic (probably the era) writing. Simply put, it is mesmerizing from beginning to end. And I loved every minute of it.
