

It was that time of year again, where the local cccats, crooks, gravents and nautipods scoured the local beaches for sand hearts, hoping to present them to someone they love. Roman never thought too much of the holiday, as a whole. Yes, a crook like him, who received compliments about his gorgeous, silver colored fur coat, or his eyes, or blah blah blah... well he didn't much care for holidays like these. It's not that he had a weird Scrouge thing going on about it though; he didn't necessarily hate the holiday, like some other skrie residents might. No, it was more along the lines of him not really having a reason to, in all his years of life. He never really loved anyone, and he grew up as an orphan, so he never had any parents to give a sand heart to as a substitute. He always had a hard time making friends, nevermind keeping them. So his logic was just... 'why bother?'

Why bother searching for sand hearts for himself, when he could watch others do it instead, from a short distance away? The beach was peaceful, and calm almost every other day, but the days leading up to this love-y dove-y holiday made the beach more full of life than most of the rest of the year. Seeing the joy on the face of a gravent as they find the perfect heart to gift to their significant other back home, or the sounds of giddy squeals from a nautipod when they find one, sprinting back to a friend only a few, short paces away and presenting it to them... it was a scene of blissful chaos. Roman was able to live vicariously through the many stripes and colors of people who scour the beaches day to day here. For him, that was enough.

Of course he would appreciate receiving one too, or spending the time to find one and give one out, but who would do that with him? And that's when the idea hit him: it was so obvious now. He could organize something for people like him, who didn't have anyone in their lives to give to on the holiday proper. Lonely people, who didn't have many friends, or any family to speak of, who maybe wanted to participate, but didn't really have a way to do so. It was such an obvious idea. How did he not consider doing it before? This holiday was a holiday about love, in all forms. So even if he couldn't find anyone to dig around a sandy, gritty beach for, he could at least bring together people who felt the same as him.

Making handmade pamphlets wasn't all too hard, once Roman had decided on exactly what he wanted to put on it. It was merely time consuming. But, he did manage to make enough to cover a sizable area in his city. Putting them up was a slog, but he knew that the end product would be worth it. Come the day of the holiday proper, he would have a small group to host.

At least... he thought he would. Today being the day, and no one arrived to the little gathering he had advertised on those flyers. Was coming to the park for something like this weird? It was a public area, so no one had to feel nervous about... well, you know. The statistics for that sort of horrible act on a day like this was something Roman did NOT want to think about for too long. It was a frankly depressing thought, and today wasn't a day for the usual greys of depression.

As the hours passed, and no one showed up, Roman had to resign to the idea that no one would be coming. By now, the sun was beginning to set, and he had taken to lying down on his back, relaxing a bit. He may have dozed off for a bit, though, because upon sitting up, his tail brushed up against something.

It was a paper mache sand heart, with a folded up note taped to the underside of it. The hastily painted heart was weirdly cute, and looked almost like the entire thing was crafted by a small child. The shape was only vaguely heart shaped as well, but it was done well enough that it was clear a heart was the intended shape, at the very least. Picking it up from the grass at his hip where it had been carefully placed, Roman noticed the slight heft it had to it's weight. There was something inside of it, He carefully twisted his wrist a bit to the side, gingerly attempting to figure out the hand crafted Sand Hearts inner secrets, and determined it was filled with some sort of lightweight gravel, based on the sounds. It definitely wasn't real rocks, since it was far too light, and the sound was way off for something like that too. The sudden thought of it being filled with aquarium gravel crossed his mind, which if true, was a very creative way to weigh down this little crafted gift.

There was still the matter of the note taped to it's underside, which has lain in the grass beside him. It was a bit damp , like his own fur was, but it wasn't impossible to open up and read what was written. The note itself was dry enough on the rest of it, and it wasn't like it was sopping wet. The paper was nothing too crazy or fancy: it was just a sheet of college ruled lined paper, with a few of the awkward nubs on the side that implied the note was written in a spiral notebook, before being torn out, and folded up so it could be properly taped onto the faux sand heart vessel.

The handwriting took a moment to decipher, since just like the aquarium gravel filled vessel it was attached to, it was awkward and clumsy. It gave the note a bit more charm though, and Roman couldn't help but smile as he struggled to figure out what the hell was even written on the page. But once he did, he genuinely wanted to cry.

"Hey," It read, "I saw your flyers all over the city, and I figured out that like me, you're kinda lonely. Or at least, I think that's the case. Sorry if that came out weird. I'm really shy by nature, so even though I wanted to come and meet you, and talk to you, in the end, I chickened out. I spent a long time making this sand heart for someone that passed away not too long ago. The second anniversary is coming up in a few months, and on days like this I kinda feel... not great. Instead of thinking about love or joy, I'm thinking about the hole the person I lost left behind. Maybe me seeing your flyer was a sign, though. I was about to go through with something that isn't really great. I hope you never have to understand what I mean by that. I realized that the world isn't such a dark place after all. There are people like you out there, accidentally saving the lives of strangers like me. Happy holidays, stranger. And thank you for reminding me what it's like to love being alive, even if it was a complete accident. -another stranger, alone on the holiday"

Roman read the note again and again, and the impact of it hit him harder and harder each time. He looked up, glancing around, desperate to find the person who had left him the handmade sand heart. But there was no one around besides the love-y couples, or parents with their children. He took one last look at the note, desperately scanning it for some form of contact info for the author, but found nothing beyond the words they had written, thanking him.

The whole thing was so surreal to him. Did he manage to prevent someone from... no, he couldn't think like that. It was far too sad. He vigorously shook his head, and wiped the remaining tears out of his eyes, before picking himself up, and taking the paper mache heart. A symbol of love for someone no longer with us, now gifted to him as a thank you from the person who had made it for someone else. A true treasure, to be sure.

With a quick, one handed dust off, Roman made the trek back home, thinking about the events of today. He would never know the stranger that gave him something so sentimental to them, but the idea that he managed to touch them in such a way was a good feeling. Maybe that was what this holiday was about? Not about chocolates, or romance, or showing any type of standard, obviously defined notion of love. Maybe this was how it was meant to be spent? Just... being kind to his fellow skriean. Yeah, that sounded good. Maybe that would be how he spent this holiday from now on. Instead of people watching, he would go around, being kind to those who need it. Kindness was in a way, it's own form of love, right? Either way, it made sense to Roman to it that way.

He entered his home, and spent the last hours of the day trying to craft a small space in his home to display the makeshift heart. When he was done, he looked over his work, giving a slight frown initially. He wasn't very crafty at all. But one look at the awkward heart perched on his couch made him realize that it was perfect. The shoddy gluing job he did was a perfect way to compliment the awkwardness of the heart.

Now displayed properly for the time being, Roman admired his work, and gave a soft, barely visible smirk to himself, before finishing up the day for himself, and making himself a bowl of ramen before lgging on to his games, and eventually heading to bed to prepare himself for the next day, and iall it held for a crook like him.