

For two people as dissimilar as Sammy and Peeps, they had an immense amount of common goals. They both wanted to lead abnormal lives. They both wanted to get as far from St. Louis as possible. And, as they determined by accident during an impromptu game of Truth or Dare, they both wanted to be fugitives of the law.

The problem with the desire to be a fugitive of the law was that, by definition, one generally had to commit a felony to gain fugitive status. Sammy and Peeps were both very docile and law-abiding citizens, so the illegal act was certainly the object that was obstructing their path to fugitive status. Of course, Sammy was quite the aesthete of petty theft, but stealing condiments would hardly warrant the need for a nationwide pursuit. After long and careful deliberation, they were no better off than before the long and careful deliberation.

“Do you want to shoot someone famous?” asked Peeps.

“Not particularly. I am a pacifist with terrible aim. How about you?”

“No.” A silence fell upon them, but conversations like this usually render frequent and well-defined silences.

“Do you want to steal some jewels or something?” asked Sammy.

“Like what? We could try to steal the St. Louis arch, I suppose,” suggested Peeps in sincerity, though it was mistaken by Sammy to be a joke.

“Maybe,” said Sammy, “We can tamper with the postal service. That’s a federal offense.”

“No!” blurted Peeps in a moment of terror. It was her adamancy that startled Sammy.

“Well, we can’t be fugitive without doing something dastardly, can we Peeps?”

Peeps replied, “Look, call me Sammy. I hate Peeps.”

“But—” Sammy thoughtfully interjected.

“Unless you think you’re going to confuse you with me, call me Sammy.”

Sammy nodded somewhere between yes and no. “Okay.”

“Who says,” Peeps continued, “that we can’t be fugitives without first doing something illegal?”

“Look up fugitive in the dictionary. See what it says.”

Peeps reached inside her pockets, but found that she didn’t have a dictionary on her. She sighed. “Okay, well, who says we have to be fugitives of the *lam*? I mean, why can’t we be fugitives of something else?”

Sammy laughed. “Like what, fugitives of the local accounting firm?” Despite his cynical tone, he was truly interested in what she had to reply.

“How about fugitives of St. Louis, since we will be doing our best to avoid St. Louis?”

Sammy shook his head. “I think the term *fugitive* implies that someone has to be chasing us. St. Louis as a whole cannot chase us.”

“Good point.” She thought harder than she ever had in her life. “Maybe we just can’t be fugitives.”

“No!” Sammy insisted. “We just need to find a way... a loophole. All we need is to incite someone to follow us across the country. Then we can be fugitives.”

Peeps sighed. “Well, we can’t do much of anything until we get some money.” This statement surprised Sammy. Peeps was rarely the voice of reason.

“Easier said than done.”

They both stood in place and looked around for random amounts of cash that might have been haphazardly strewn about the sidewalk. None existed. Perhaps realizing that this would get them nowhere, they began walking and looking around, possibly still for random

amounts of cash that might have been haphazardly strewn about the sidewalk. Walking did not, in any way, further their search financially, though it allowed Peeps to marvel at how comfortable her new shoes were.

They stopped when a cat lunged at Peeps. The sudden leaping of any animal, especially a mountain goat, generally causes people to stop what they are doing. Who would be able to keep walking with a mountain goat flying at them? Peeps, being a lover of all animals except dolphins, started talking in a very silly voice to the cat and petting it. Peeps looked at the nametag of the animal.

“Hi Puddles,” she said as if she were talking to a Siamese cat, which Puddles was not. Peeps did have a different voice for every species of cat, which unnerved feline enthusiast friends of hers. “I’m Sammy,” she said to the cat. Then as an afterthought, she added, “and this is Sammy.”

Sammy, being more impatient and far less warm-hearted than Peeps, wanted to leave the cat alone. “Sammy,” he said, “We need to find money. That cat won’t help us.”

Peeps scratched behind one of the feline’s ears. “Puddles, do you know where we can find money?”

Sammy grabbed the cat from Peeps’ arms and put it by a telephone pole. “All we need is for this stupid cat to follow us. We don’t need to be fugitives from a cat!”

Peeps was obviously upset, but she hid it nicely behind a face that looked only mildly upset. Just as they were about to leave, something caught the attention of Sammy’s eye. Looking on the telephone pole beneath which Puddles was licking its paw, Sammy saw a weather-beaten piece of stationery. On it were the words *Missing Cat*, a picture of a cat, the name *Puddles*, a phone number, an address, and, the thing that Sammy was intently staring at, the word REWARD.

Before he had the chance to point out the sign, Sammy yelled, “Sammy, grab that cat!” Peeps grabbed the cat. “This just seems too easy. How often do you find the missing cat below the missing cat sign?”

“Where’s the owner’s house?” inquired Peeps.

Sammy scanned the flyer for specific information. “The address listed is 448 Broad Way. Aren’t we near there?” Peeps pointed immediately to her right to a house with the numbers 4, 4 and 8 affixed in that order to the front door. He blinked very emphatically. He swallowed with relative difficulty, making sure the swallow was completed before trying again. He even suppressed a childish yelp.

“We’re standing *outside* the house?” Sammy said with incredulity. Peeps nodded calmly. Sammy found this a bit too hard to comprehend; he needed some clarification. “We found a cat,” he began, saying each word with unnecessary volume, “directly beneath the sign telling us that the cat is missing,” he continued, unsure if he should be asking this to Peeps or to himself, “located immediately outside the house of the owner of the cat?” Peeps nodded again.

A pause set in for comedic effect.

Sammy grabbed the cat from Peeps’ arms and they dashed up to the front door of the house. He rang the doorbell. Quickly, the door was opened, and the look of delight immediately sprang upon the elderly woman who answered the door. “Puddles!” she screamed in sheer ecstasy, taking her cat from the outstretched arms of Sammy. Courteously, she invited them inside.

“I’m Mrs. Perth,” Mrs. Perth said.

“My name is Sammy,” Sammy said.

“So is mine,” Peeps said.

Mrs. Perth didn't catch on. "Your name is So?"

Peeps sighed. "No, just call me Peeps."

"Where did you fellas find Puddles here? Why, I reckon she's been missing for two weeks now. Maybe more than that, I'd imagine."

Peeps answered, "Outside by—"

"We found her on the opposite side of town," Sammy broke in. Peeps gave him a mean glance. So he added, "in an old cardboard box." This made Peeps a bit angrier. Sammy then inserted, "licking blood off her paws. We cleaned her up a little so you wouldn't have to see her in such a miserable state." Peeps stopped staring disgustedly at Sammy because she found it wasn't effective and started mentally rearranging the furniture in Mrs. Perth's living room.

The elderly woman walked into the kitchen with Puddles, presumably to feed the cat. From there, she said, "Well, I suppose you two want to know about the reward I posted." Coming back with purse in hand, she delved inside and extracted three bills. She handed one of them, a fifty, to Peeps, and the other two, two twenties, to Sammy. Sammy looked displeased. "Obviously, we don't need a reward, and don't let this question seem ungrateful, but I'm curious. Why does she get more than I do?"

Mrs. Perth looked at Sammy as if he were a time-traveler who had come from Sammy's past to warn him of some imminent danger.

"Sammy, let me tell you a story. Once upon a time, there was a young boy, 11 years old or so. Every day, he would work in the lumber mill for a quarter, and his only job was to sweep up the sawdust. Well, this young boy had a healthy imagination, to say the least. He would take these huge sawdust deposits, and do you know what he would do with them? He kept them all in boxes in his garage. He had boxes after boxes of sawdust.

"Well, one day, he took one of these boxes and he emptied it into his freezer. What he was hoping to achieve, you see, was to freeze it back into wood so he could plant it in the ground and make new trees. He didn't like that the lumberjacks would cut down these trees, and that the mill workers would take these logs and make things out of them. To this little boy, it didn't seem right.

"After letting his sawdust piles harden in the freezer, he took them out and planted them in the ground around his house. He did this to every last box he had, maybe ten altogether, and he planted each one in the ground.

"Do you know what happened Sammy? Each one of those frozen piles of sawdust *did* grow. But it didn't grow as a tree. No, each one grew as a wooden object. The first one he had planted grew into a birdhouse, only there was no hole for the birds to fly into. The second one grew into a baby crib, only the bars were too far apart to keep a baby inside. One grew into a pegleg that would splinter if anyone over nine pounds tried to wear it. All ten objects grew from the ground into handcrafted, wooden products with defections. They were all useless. Now, what does this tell you?"

Sammy shook his head because he had no idea. Mrs. Perth grinned a toothless grin. "Well, do *not* tamper with lumber mill production for the sake of nature, because you're just going to endanger our lumber mill products."

Sammy looked at her as if she had an ocean liner protruding from her forehead. "I don't get it."

"You know how nature rights activists say stuff like, 'Do not tamper with nature for technology sake because it only endangers our environment?' This is sort of a play on that. Get it now?"

Sammy confirmed, “Oh, I had gotten the first time. I’m just looking for relevance to this story and why Peeps got more money than I did. Again, I don’t even *mind* that she got more money, and I’m happy that you got your pet back, but I was just curious.”

Mrs. Perth laughed. “That story doesn’t have anything to do with the money. I just love telling it! The reason Peeps got more money than you is simple. I read the first draft of this story, where you did NOT cut Peeps off when she explained where you found Puddles. She said you found her right outside my house, which was the truth, but when you lied strictly to make me be more appreciative, possibly with intent to get more reward money, I lost a little respect for you. Of course, I’m still grateful you returned my cat, which is why I had no objection to giving you some money. Incidentally, I *loved* the part about the archaeological museum.”

Sammy frowned. He didn’t like being a rewrite.

Peeps and Mrs. Perth exchanged a warm conversation before Sammy and Peeps left. Once on the streets again, Sammy turned to Peeps. “I know how to be fugitives. Do you have a disposable camera or something?” Peeps nodded that she didn’t. “Well, we need to buy one.”

Peeps asked, “Care to explain what the plan is?”

“Nope,” Sammy said. “I might have in the first draft, but I think it is far more appropriate now to cut to another chapter while we prepare to become fugitives.”

“Okay,” said Peeps. She was content ending the chapter.