

Sonder by Palak Tripathi

Hello there! It's nice to meet you! What's your name?

Do you like your name?

Tell me, dear, how are you feeling today?

Before you answer, take a moment to *really* think about it, okay?

Is it a physical sensation? Like hunger, or tiredness? Or maybe something less tangible? Like curiosity, or sadness?

Or perhaps, confusion? After all, I don't know you, so why am I asking all these questions?

Maybe if I tell you how *I'm* feeling, you'll understand this progression?

And ultimately, aren't we all just striving to be understood?

But *feelings*, those annoying, complex feelings, they're hard to explain, aren't they?

Well, I'll try my best, and in return I ask you to try your best too, okay?

Do you ever have those moments, maybe while your driving, or getting coffee, where you realize that there are hundreds of *lives* occurring around you?

Like all those people, in the other cars, or behind the counter, they all have their own families and hopes and tragedies too... All of them living their own complex and vivid *existences*, you know?

And so, for a moment, you remember just how vast this world is, how interconnected yet separate, the thousands of people you will never see again yet have their own trajectories like dominoes, isn't it...*astounding*?

I don't know if I've explained it all very well...I told you I'd try my best, but it's just so difficult, isn't it?

And yet, putting words to emotions, and thoughts, and feelings, is a poet's job, right?

If only everything had a name...like yours, or mine, a word that would describe—but wait, is that what your name brings?

Can a name, or a word, ever describe everything—encapsulate everything?

I suppose if it did, we wouldn't need poems, or books, or songs, or long lines of prose to weave words together in truths that describe the pull in our hearts...in fact, it would be much simpler if a word could do that, don't you think?

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But I, for one, would rather have the poems and books and songs and prose, even if it makes things harder, because there's a beauty in the way we try so hard to voice those feelings, and isn't that the link? The crux of human existence?

To connect to others? All those lives around you that you will never know, and yet at the base of it all, we're all just *trying* to be understood?

You don't have to tell me your name, or how you're feeling, if you don't want to...but, if you could, maybe ask those questions to someone else?

Or even, to yourself...take a second to be aware of the world around you, the people, yourself, and try to make a connection...what do you feel?

It's probably complicated, and that's okay, that just means it's real. It's hard to name everything, voice everything, but we can always try, right?

Sometimes though...sometimes feelings do have a name...like the one I was describing earlier, the realization of all the lives around me (including yours as you take the time to read this), remember that delight?

Turns out there is a name for that after all, so if you walk away with nothing else, let me leave you with a feeling, okay?

The feeling of *life* happening all around you and your contribution as a part in this bigger, greater, world we live in, in other words...sonder.