

A day later and Lianna was back in my room with me as I waited to hear the results of the tryouts. Over the night alone in my bed, I'd slowly evolved into a huge ball of nervousness and anxiety, struggling to get to sleep as my mind whirred uselessly. Lianna and I had something going on between us, but what that actually was hadn't been discussed. We'd left it just hanging there in the air as we rushed out of her room yesterday. I really wished we could talk about it, because it was eating me alive. What did she want out of this?

Then there was the club. Jack had ranted in the club chat channels for hours, and although the organisers hadn't realised it initially, it didn't take long before questions were asked about my identity. Why was Jack, a member for a year now and apparently their mid laner last year, trying to tell them that the person they knew as a girl was actually a dude?

The club people had at least told Jack to shut up after a while and that they would talk internally between the 'officers' of the club about the situation... which led me back to why Lianna was here, for moral support. Sure I had Aimee too, but she was... less of a help and more of a hindrance when it came to the drama in my life.

"Calm, calm," Lianna urged from beside me on the bed, her hands coming down hard on my frantically jiggling knees. They continued trying to bounce even as her hands sat there, the mattress allowing a little wiggle room. Her actions had me switching gears, anxiety about club stuff giving way to a freight train of sensations. It felt so damned good to have her hands on me. If she could just take those hands and use them to do other things...

"I can't be calm when you're cupping my knees like that, it feels sorta dirty," I mumbled bashfully, face on fire. Crud, I shouldn't have said that out loud! Was she going to think it was weird?

"Oh, right..." she said, clearing her throat and pulling her hands back. Glancing away did nothing to hide her goofy smile and lip bite. I hadn't messed up? I think? Goodness, I was completely romantically inept. What did any of this stuff mean? Someone please help me!

As if to save us both from the weird situation, my computer chimed with a direct message coming in, and in a first for my life, I lunged for my laptop like it was a lifesaver floatation thingy. I pulled it onto my lap and leaned back to look at the screen. A message from the club president.

"It'll be fine, Glade," Lianna murmured again, her hand gently snaking around my shoulders. "I'll yell at anyone who fucks with you, got it? I mean like, yell at them harder than I did when you broke my laptop. I'll really rip them a new one, okay?"

“That sounds kind of scary to see,” I said honestly.

“Well then let’s hope they don’t mess with you,” she smiled, eyes locking with mine. For long moments I just basked in that smile, but she snapped me out of it with a nod towards the laptop. “Gonna check that?”

“Oh! Right!” I said, yanking my gaze off the pretty girl sitting next to me and down to the screen.

I clicked on the app and opened it up to see what had been said.

Davidplaystoomuch: *Hello Glade, there’s been some problems with you trying out for the mid lane position. Jack thinks you’re using a friend of his to pretend that you are good at league. Since we didn’t see you playing, we can’t verify that this isn’t true, and since Jack has prior history with the account that was used in the tryouts, we’re inclined to at least listen. As such, we’re going to need you to come to a classroom where we can have a rematch. You can bring your own computer or use the ones there, it doesn’t matter to us. Sorry for the problems.*

Oh no, that was bad. That was absolutely, one hundred percent bad. I couldn’t go into the same room as Jack and beat him out of his prized League position as my post transition self. Gosh, I’d have been scared to do that even before my identity had been on the line and I’d just looked like a thin and sorta scruffy guy. He’d get so angry if I won and smug and mean if I lost... there wasn’t a winning option here.

“Huh, that’s... both kinda reasonable and completely shit for you,” Lianna said with a thoughtful hum. “Do you think you’ll do it?”

“No, I’m definitely backing out,” I shook my head emphatically. “This is way too much... what if Jack finally makes the connection and stuff? I mean, I look a heck of a lot different now, but still...”

“What *did* you look like back— nevermind, that’s super rude of me,” she began to ask before stopping herself with a wince.

I blew out a long sigh and stared at her for a moment, then shrugged. “Sure. I have a picture or two on my phone.” The honest reason I was okay with showing her was that I was finding it harder and harder to even associate with the person I used to be. I would stare at a picture and feel nothing but vague unease, followed by the sense that I was staring at someone else, someone who wasn’t me.

It took me a while to flick through all the photos on my phone. I had gotten into a little bit of a habit with taking selfies since my transition had really taken hold... oh my goodness, a lot of selfies. Some of these definitely did not need to stay. Oh no what was I even doing in that one?

"Here," I said, flipping the phone so she could see it.

"What?!" she blurted, eyes blown wide with disbelief. "No way, you didn't... that's like, your cousin *at best*."

"That is really me, like three years ago," I grinned, feeling my heart do little flips. Wow, that was a powerful feeling, when even the girl who you were interested in couldn't make the connection.

"That's... how? *How?*" she asked, shaking her head. "Holy shit."

"Magic," I laughed, wiggling my eyebrows theatrically. Gosh this felt good. I felt all flushed and giddy with happiness, like that first time I'd realised that the reason my shirt felt scratchy was because my nipples were growing. Obviously it had been simple hormones that had actually done the work, not magic. Explaining that in full seemed like... a lot, though.

"Seems like it," she said, using the arm that was still around me to give a playful shake. "I think it's a vast improvement, personally."

"Same," I smiled, feeling my cheeks heating yet again with embarrassment. Betrayal again, is it cheeks?

"I really do think you should do this though," she told me seriously, even as her eyes sent me support. "I'll come with you. We'll do this together."

"Are you sure?" I asked, nervousness welling up again within me. There was so, so much that could go wrong.

Her answer was instant. "Yes, definitely."

I took a deep, solemn breath. Okay... she believed in me, so I could do it. She'd be there to support me, I wouldn't be alone against the world, at least on this one. Finally, I nodded, staring earnestly back at her, "Okay. I'll tell them that it's on."

“You’re so cute,” she blurted, surprising both of us. Her hand reached out of its own accord, gently brushing at my cheek with a thumb. Then she was biting her lip and dropping her gaze. “Sorry.”

“I do like being called cute... so it’s okay,” I teased her softly, grabbing at her hand.

She responded with a smile, but it seemed that she was all out of words right then. Sitting there with her, gazing into each other’s eyes, I was suddenly very aware that we were alone in the room together.

Goodness, her eyes were so dark, like a hot bath at midnight with the lights off. During a storm, because a lot of bathrooms had misted windows instead of curtains so you couldn’t keep all the light out... nevermind, there were way more important things to think about right then. Like, for example, the fact that she was leaning forward and— oh gosh.

She kissed me, just gently, testing the waters. I was too surprised to kiss her back, prompting her to beat a hasty retreat, concern clouding those wonderful eyes of hers. “Sorry, was that... we didn’t really talk and I thought, um... I shouldn’t have...”

I shook my head, quickly, emphatically even. There was a whole lot of *no* and it was packed real tight into that movement. “It’s okay, I was just surprised. Can you please.. Um, do it again? Please?”

With a heart-fluttering smile, she moved tentatively forward again, lips landing gently on mine. A tiny noise escaped me and my hand rushed to find a place at her waist. I needed something to hold on to, my head feeling like it would pop right off and embed itself in the ceiling or something wild like that.

Her lips were soft as they pressed into mine, oh so soft, and then she pinched my bottom lip between hers. Just like that, I was kissing her back, falling into her embrace even as my heart fell ever further for her. I was hopelessly out of my depth and loving every minute of it.

One of her hands snaked up and around my head, holding me in place, her fingers trailing through the soft fluffy hair at the back of my neck. The other one found my waist, kneading gently at the softness there.

I was losing my mind, the sensations and emotions flowing through me at a torrent, a fire hose of wonder pointed directly into my brain. It was so much, but I loved it, unable to hold back a

smile even as she pushed me over, maintaining the kiss while lowering me gently until I was laid out on top of the covers.

She pulled back as my head came to rest on the pillow, straddling me now and gazing down with a mix of emotions that I couldn't begin to parse, except to understand that they were all good ones.

"Wow," I said shyly, panting and out of breath. "That was even better sober."

Her smile widened, amusement dancing in her deep eyes. "Yeah... sorry about that."

I shook my head. "No, it was good, it broke the ice... it um, started all of this, I guess."

With a laugh she raised her eyebrows in agreement, then groaned and fell sideways off me, coming to rest on her side. Her hand fluttered down to rest on my stomach, her gaze following it, watching as my breathing caused it to rise and fall.

"I thought you were so cute, even when I was yelling at you," she said gently. "The way you froze like a deer in the headlights. Took a little of the steam out of my anger."

"I'm glad you're not angry at me anymore," I told her sincerely, while I lay there, unsure what to do with my hands or whatever else. I was a complete newbie when it came to romantic stuff. If this was romantic?

"Me too," she smiled, her hand drifting up to cup my cheek.

"Lianna... what are we doing?" I asked, the words leaping out of my mouth, propelled by my need to know what was happening. To have a definition, to know the boundaries of this connection between us, if there were any.

She blinked, seemingly confused for a moment before understanding lit her expression. "Right. We should talk, I guess."

I nodded, the pleasant emotions that had occupied me just before now gone, replaced by nervous fluttering as my heart rate ramped up. Why I was so nervous, I wasn't sure. I mean, we'd literally just made out on my bed, there weren't a whole lot of ways you could take that. Still, there were a few options I wasn't keen on.

What if she'd decided she wasn't interested in a trans girl after all? She'd said we needed to talk in such a serious way and now she was staring at me as my face went both cold and flushed. What if she just wanted to be like, friends with benefits? Oh no, wait... what if she was one of those chasers who fetishised trans people in weird and uncomfortable ways? Shi-ll... then there were my parents. What would they say if I brought Lianna home? My stomach dropped, cold and heavy. Fu-dge.

She was silent for long moments while my thoughts whirled, watching as my expression no doubt went through any number of emotions. "Hey, calm... calm," she said, cupping my cheek gently.

"Sorry... I've just never like... done this type of thing before. I've never had um, romantic feelings for someone," I whispered, my breathing laboured and my brain hot and prickly, like a headache without the pain.

"Whoa, whoa," she said, quietly but nevertheless urgently. "Is that why are you panicking? What's wrong? We can go slower if you'd like, it's okay."

I was panicking? Oh. I was panicking. I closed my eyes and leaned over, pushing my face into her shoulder in a single-minded attempt to find comfort. Immediately I felt calmer, her arms going around to seal me into the embrace as I fought to take deep, even breaths.

"Geez, the world has really done a number on you, hasn't it?" she said, fingers gently figure skating across my back.

"More like my parents," I sighed, scrunching my eyes tighter in a vain attempt to keep my mother's voice out of my head - the way she seemed to link femininity and attraction to men, so that you couldn't have one without the other. Just because she'd never explicitly stated that I would only be a woman in her eyes if I liked men, doesn't mean I hadn't heard her say it.

That wasn't the issue though, I'd personally never held that belief, she'd never infected me with it like others might have been. Instead, it was that same fear of her finding out that had me scared.

Was that why I'd just freaked out? A few kisses here or there were one thing, but committing to a relationship would almost inevitably lead to my parents finding out about my sexuality. Yeah, that had been the final thing that tipped me over.

“Can you tell me about them? What are they like?” she asked, her grip on me not wavering an inch. “I know we spoke a little about them, but this seems like something big.”

Ugh, where did I even start? With the basics, I guess? “They’re rich, they have connections,” I told her, pushing back a little so I could see her face. “Old money, most of my extended family is rich too. They’re strict as hell, and um... they value appearances above all else. To be honest, if I hadn’t been lucky enough to turn out pretty, they wouldn’t have been chill about my transition.”

“Seems to be the case with a lot of people,” she said, her expression going dark with anger. “Same bullshit that women have to deal with about beauty, except if trans women don’t meet their standards, they get stripped of their gender too.”

I shuddered. I’d seen that happen in the media, on twitter and in gaming especially. There were a few streamer or professional gaming transgender women out there. I couldn’t imagine what it was like to be under that level of scrutiny, to have that many people debating your very identity on the comments of videos and stuff. The few times I’d been brave enough to glance at it had left me feeling sick, reeling for my bed where I could hide until I’d calmed down.

“Yeah,” I agreed, feeling a little nauseous even now from that whole body gut punch that came from knowing random people out there wanted you dead or worse.

Seeing my expression falter again, she winced and swore, “Shit, let’s shelve this conversation for now.”

“No, it’s okay,” I said, shaking my head with a slight smile. “I’ve never really been able to talk about this kind of thing. I didn’t have many female friends when I was growing up, so talking about what’s going on in my head has always been hard. This is nice, to be able to just... yeah.”

Her face went all gooey and sympathetic as I spoke and she gave me a nod to continue. Of course, I was now feeling all fluttery inside just seeing that she cared.

Forcing myself to focus, I said, “My parents... had an image when they had me. They wanted the perfect son and all that the stereotype entails. I’ve never come close to that image, no matter how hard they try and force me into it.”

“What, perfect rich boy son, sexually assaulting women and getting away with it? Taking up daddy’s company after he retires early? Grows up to be one of those soulless corporate ghouls

who grind up human lives into raw capital?" she scoffed, rolling her eyes. Whoa Lianna always surprised me with how feisty she was.

"Nah, that's my older brother," I grimaced. "They mostly just wanted me to be his sidekick, the lackey he sends to get his coffee. Well, that and half a dozen things. They've never really been all that clear from one month to the next about what they want out of me."

She was silent for long moments, staring into my eyes with a sort of soulful look that had me getting slightly nervous. Eventually she sighed and broke the eye contact, her gaze coming to rest on my waist, where her hand was. "It's such a waste, when parents don't love their kids properly. When good parents don't get the opportunity, but the shit ones do, then squander it."

"I gave up on getting real unconditional love out of my parents when I was like, five years old," I told her truthfully, not even feeling all that much sadness about that fact. How do you mourn something that you've never really known?

She closed her eyes with a hiss. "Let's move on," she murmured, eyes still locked shut. "Before I get really angry and go looking for some neckbeard to shank with a paintbrush."

A giggle escaped before I could reel it in, and I found myself smiling into those beautiful dark eyes of hers again. The way she got so angry on my behalf had my heart doing little cheerful flips.

"Instead, let's talk about kissing more," she said, a sly smile tugging at her lips. Lips that were still a little wet from the previous kiss. Oh gosh.

I felt my face flush as I stared at her, unsure of what to do next, like a deer stuck in a truck's headlights. A very pretty truck, with really gorgeous dark brown eyes and messy black hair and... oh she was really um... nice. Yup.

"What about... what about kissing more?" I asked, feeling my heart rate speed up again, but for an entirely different reason.

"I mean... I'd like to hang out more," she said, her amusement cooling a little as her expression turned heartfelt and earnest. "Seriously... I uh, I think you're really cool, and pretty. All that good stuff. I want to see where things go."

What? What did that mean? Now I was confused. See where what things went? "Um..." I mumbled, my mouth opening and closing like a dumb goldfish. My hair was almost the right

colour to be one, and I was obviously not picking up her meaning. Did she mean like, as friends? No... that was... crap but I really didn't want to assume where this might be going.

"That is, if you're into me too," she added, a slight frown crinkling her brows now. Wait, she was actually for real right now, she was actually telling me she wanted a romantic... um, thingy. Relationship?

"A-are you asking me out?" I blurted, eyes wide with nervous hope. "I mean, because I think you're amazing. You're... wow. I've never felt things like this for anyone and... yeah."

I got a blank stare in return, her mouth hanging open slightly. Then she laughed, a huge grin exploding across her face like the finale of a fireworks display. Dramatically rolling her eyes, she nodded wryly, "Yes dummy, I'm asking you out."

Feelings. Everywhere. Like a bomb going off. They probably plastered the walls, visible with a blacklight.

The feelings clogged my airways, gunking up my voice box as my lungs suddenly forgot all about that whole breathing thing. Who needs oxygen anyway? When a cute girl asks you out and you feel like you've just gone supernova, that's all you need in life. Nothing more. I think? Was I lesbianing right? Wait, I should reply.

I opened my mouth to speak, to tell her that yes, I'd date her, but all that came out was a long, strangled squeak. Her waiting smile turned into a smirk of amusement and her eyes rolled in their sockets again.

"Disaster, you're a disaster," she murmured, then fanned the flames of that disaster's cheeks by bringing her face closer to mine, our lips almost but not quite touching. Oh goodness, she was being very, um... intense right now. Her voice dropped low, amused and sexy at the same time. "Well? I asked you a question."

"Yes!" I choked as sparks exploded through my skull. I was about as unprepared for this type of thing as one could get while still being a semi-functional member of society. Maybe. There were probably people who were more... nevermind, we were kissing again. That train of thought disappeared into the fog like it had just been lifted wholesale off the tracks by the grim reaper of the mind.