



## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

**NICK HADN'T LIED** when he promised that the following days would be very busy for Elise, who had hands full of work at Comic Planet. Obviously, advertising the shop had paid off and now, the place was crowded and Elise had trouble fitting all of the money into the cash register. Instead of being frustrated with the endless amounts of people and constant smiling at the customers, Elise was happy and utterly grateful to Nick, whose great ideas had worked like magic and led into business going better than ever. Perhaps Elise would eventually have the chance to move into an apartment of her own, or at least pay rent for her current home.

Most of the rush and hustle came to an end eventually, though people still came and went in a steady pace but at least Elise could breathe and sit behind the counter. In a few weeks only, her situation had flown up with no intention to come down any time soon and it caused the smile on her lips as she stared at all of the money in the register, before shutting it. A ping by the door alerted Elise again, and she looked up to see a tall, somewhat intimidating man approaching her with a large smile plastered on his face, and Elise felt her usual awkwardness rise to the surface. Forcing a shy smile, Elise looked at the man, who walked over to the counter and leaned against it with his smile earning a rather flirtatious shade to it.

"Hi. Can I help you with anything?", Elise asked nervously shaking, and cut off the eye contact for a couple of seconds to wish a leaving customer a good day, before bringing her eyes back to the tall man in front of her. She could tell the man had specific intentions in mind, and luckily it was more flattering than creepy, but there were two reasons why Elise felt her mind shutting down on her and her thoughts turning into a mess. One — she had no clue how to talk to men, not even a nerdy Schmidt had taught her. Two — she was desperately in love with Schmidt himself, and therefore, as this man winked at Elise, she felt uneasy under the intent gaze he was admiring her with.

"Yeah, actually, I'm on my way to meet my cousin and his roommates and since I heard about this new comic book store, I thought I'd bring something to them. But now that I know what's really the best thing around here, I was wondering if I could have your phone number?", the man grinned smugly, obviously proud of himself for saying that but Elise wasn't very talented when it came to flirting, and in this case she wasn't very willing either. Her face lost its color and her eyes widened as she tried to find the right words to speak, but in the shocked state, she found herself unable to form proper sentences.

"I... Uh... I—I don't have a... I don't own a phone...?", Elise stuttered out as she immediately regretted due to having her phone on the counter, where they could both see it. The man glanced down at Elise's hand as she grabbed the phone and tried to hide it, but her plan miserably failed as it started to ring and the Arctic Monkeys song played throughout the shop loudly, earning every customer's attention instantly. Silently cursing at whoever was calling her, Elise flashed a radiant, innocent at the stranger on the other side of the counter and murmured an awkward apology before answering the call.

"Hey, Elli! Winston beamed from the other side of the line. "Happy Thanksgiving, girl. Jess' parents are here and they're dying to meet you, so come here as soon as your shift ends, yeah? Also, I think one of Schmidt's relatives is coming over today he explained, and a girl having barely any time to recover from the previous shock, Elise fell into panic again at the mention of Schmidt's relatives. Would it be his father? His mother? And on top of that, she would have to make a good impression on Jess' parents too. The pressure was real. Yet, Elise managed to sigh and smile, forcing herself to deal with it like she always did.

"Of course, Winston. I'm closing the shop in an hour or so. See you then", Elise replied and ended the call once she was certain Winston had said everything he felt the need to. Carefully placing the iPhone on the counter, Elise gave an innocent smile to the man, who was staring at her with disbelief but luckily, understood to be rejected.

The look on his face was rather disappointed, and Elise felt utmost guilt for lying and shooting his attempts down without even giving him a chance. She did so for a good reason, but that didn't take away the terrible feeling eating her from within as she looked at the stranger shyly, hoping that he didn't hate her entirely for being so rude. However, she wouldn't blame him if he did.

"Okay, I get it. Happy Thanksgiving... ", the man shrugged, and glanced at the name tag on Elise's shirt, before adding bitterly, "Elise the Owner." Elise opened her mouth to say something, but there wasn't much she could do, and in a blink of an eye the man had already walked out of the shop without buying anything and left Elise with the guilt in her heart. She didn't like being mean or rude, as she had plenty of experience in being treated like trash, and therefore rejecting the man remained with her, even if she began worrying about entirely different matters then.

Because in an hour, she was going to meet not only Jess' parents, but someone from Schmidt's family and that sounded a lot like a nightmare Elise never wanted to experience due to extreme awkwardness and the inability to handle the pressure. And she was painfully aware of how she would most likely end up making a fool of herself, and that was something she did not look forward to.

Elise had never before realized how quickly sixty minutes could pass, but sooner than she had expected, she was indeed closing the shop and heading home. Hands deep in the pockets of her trench coat, Elise walked to the apartment building, entered the elevator and prayed that she would make it to their floor without the elevator crashing down tragically — yes, elevators was another fear of hers, but so far she had survived each time she had went on one. Soon enough, she was standing behind the door of 4D and the butterflies in her stomach passed nervously and reached insane as she opened the unlocked door and stepped into the warmth of their home. For a moment, she lived in the belief that her arrival hadn't been noticed, but she had barely gotten her coat off when Schmidt had ran to her and greeted her with a happy smile.

"Hello, Elise. How was work today?", Schmidt asked almost too enthusiastically, making Elise nervous and unsure how to react, but after a quick glance around and coming to the conclusion that the surroundings seemed safe and familiar, she shrugged. While putting her coat away, Elise sighed and thought back to the hours she had spent at the store, and decided to answer Schmidt's question despite the eternal fear of being boring and that he didn't genuinely care. But the thing was, it seemed that Schmidt did care. Genuinely, too.

"Well, it was busy, but it was great. Until this guy came into the shop, and he was flirting with me — To be honest, it was kind of scary and I had to reject him and I feel bad now. But he was intimidating. He asked for my number", Elise ranted, unsure where she found all the words but they left her mouth, and despite being surprised she smiled at Schmidt, who seemed equally amazed by her. As they faced each other, she could find signs of jealousy from Schmidt's eyes as he clearly thought about the picture of someone asking for Elise's number, when he had lived in the daydream of being the only man for Elise, but luckily, at least he was had turned the man down.

"Don't feel bad. I bet he was an idiot. But Elise, I would like to introduce you to someone", Schmidt changed the topic suddenly, and after wrapping his arm around Elise's waist and causing her heart to skip a beat at the sudden, breathtaking touch, he started to lead her to the roof. "Elise, this is my cousin, Big Schmidt", Schmidt spoke proudly as they stepped onto the roof, where two men stood — Winston, and Schmidt's cousin. Who, much to Elise's shock and disbelief, was the man from the shop — the one she had lied to, the one she had rejected, the one she had almost gotten over already.

Big Schmidt threw out his arms and a loud laugh boomed in the air as he grinned. "Elise the Owner! What a damn coincidence!", he laughed, and Elise turned red and desperate to run and hide immediately.

Well, at least this explained his flirtatious, suggestive ways.

Elise had succeeded on escaping from Schmidt, Winston and... Schmidt. Thanks to Jess and her parents, who were eager to meet the woman Jess had apparently talked plenty of, but although Elise was somewhat embarrassed by the amount of attention, she preferred something embarrassing with the Days instead of the Schmidts. The two men had a fight over who was the manliest, which Winston was hosting, and Elise didn't want to be caught in the middle of that anyway, so when she sat on the couch and glanced at the group of men arm-wrestling in the kitchen, she felt strong relief in her heart for being excluded from the quarrel.

Even better was when Jess took care of most of the talking for Elise, as she was perfectly aware of how uncomfortable Elise was with socializing, and therefore she took the right to answer the questions her parents had for the two. Once in a while, Elise offered a nod or a chuckle or something to keep her in the conversation just for the sake of being polite, but mostly she just sat quietly and let Jess do the talking — something she was greatly thankful and happy for. Talking to Jess alone was still sometimes a struggle for Elise, so talking to not only her, but her parents put a lot of heavy pressure on her weak shoulders.

To be honest, Elise wasn't sure how it happened, but somehow Jess, Joan and Bob ended up arguing over something Elise hadn't paid enough attention to, and before she had time to say anything, the family had left the living room and the woman was sitting alone on the couch. Nick and Cece were too busy working on the Thanksgiving dinner — which seemed like a dangerous combination to put in the kitchen working on actual food — and therefore Elise's choices weren't too various. She would either have to sit alone, or join Winston and the two Schmidts on whatever they were trying to currently achieve, and as much as she hated herself for choosing the latter, she did so anyway.

She had enjoyed Joan and Bob's company for as long as she could have it, but now they had left her and instead of sitting alone in the living room like the lonely person she was, Elise decided to be brave and walk up to the roof where the three men had ended up again. The wind was blowing just nicely to bring her the relief she needed, but as soon as her eyes landed on Schmidt, her Schmidt, who was shirtless on the ground and in the middle of doing the wheelbarrow with his cousin, the weak, faint breeze nearly knocked her down. Gulping thickly at the amusing but attractive sight, Elise approached Winston, who was laughing alone and sipping on a beer.

"They're such idiots. This is great", Winston laughed and nudged Elise, causing her to laugh too as they stared at the two men shouting at Winston. "Yeah, keep going guys! Hey, how long can you do this for?", the man teased the cousins, the taller holding up the other Schmidt from his ankles and walking him around the roof.

"All day, Winston! All day!", they yelled in unison, and Winston was nearly choking on the endless laughter. Elise managed to breathe at least, but she was no doubt amused by the sight too, especially when Schmidt was trying his best to look rather athletic, yet he was wearing a pair of skinny jeans and struggling to keep his body up. But instead of saying anything, she merely stood aside with Winston, who delivered orders and challenges for the two men, both of them surprisingly obedient and willing to do anything they were told to just to seem like the manliest man of them all.

As the Schmidts were preoccupied with another challenge from Winston, the latter turned over to Elise and cleared his throat. "Look, Ellie, I had something else in mind just to mess with you, and well, it involves you. It has its perks, believe me, I just wanted your permission", Winston began with a mischievous smile dancing on his lips, and although Elise had a feeling she would have to regret saying yes, in the momentary rush she ended up nodding her head as a sign of willingness to hear him out.

"Okay, basically..."

Joan and Bob had settled things with Jess, and it seemed everything was well by dinnertime. Food was served on the table, and Elise took a seat next to Nick, who was obviously eager to get to the eating but Joan insisted on giving more or less of a speech and thanking the residents of the loft for the hospitality and kindness. However, they weren't all seated by the table, as Winston, Schmidt and Big Schmidt were still in the kitchen, plotting their next challenge and a re-earning Elise's agreement, Winston had come up with something brilliant.

"This whole thing is a draw. I mean, you did touch a hotter pan, but he ate a much bigger candle..." Winston was explaining thoughtfully to the cousins, who were shaking nervously just to find out which one was the superior Schmidt. In Elise's opinion it was the one she shared an apartment with, but her voice didn't count — however, something else of hers did. "But, well, I guess there is one more challenge. The one who kisses Elise first wins", Winston spoke deviously, a hint of mischief in his tone as he attempted to hide a smirk, earning shocked expressions from both of the men across the counter.

"Kiss — Kiss Elise?", Schmidt asked in disbelief, his eyes widening at the thought. They had only kissed once before, and the idea of doing so again was thrilling but made Schmidt nervous at the same time, and he was unsure if he could find the courage in himself to do as had been told. He was an experienced, talented kisser, but with Elise, it was somehow different and he felt shy and innocent again, rather than Schmidt the infamous ladies' man.

Big Schmidt snorted at his cousin's reaction, and pushed the shorter man playfully. "What, you scared of a kiss? Pathetic. I don't mind — I turned my eyes on her at the comic store anyway and if she hadn't hit me down, I'd be taking her out tomorrow. So, move over Little Schmidt, because I'm winning this thing", he teased and stepped out to stride over to Elise and smack his lips on hers, but there was no way in hell that Schmidt would let him kiss his girl. Although, she wasn't exactly his girl — not yet, at least — but he had no intentions to lose the woman of his dreams to his cousin, whom he loved dearly, but wanted to beat anyway.

Shoving Big Schmidt in the chest, the smaller one shook his head and gave a confident grin to him before turning on his heel and walking towards the dinner table. His timing was rather perfect, as Elise was just getting up in order to get napkins which Nick had forgotten, but she had barely taken one step when Schmidt had swooped in and wrapped an arm around her waist. In a blink of an eye, they were body to body and Schmidt had dipped the woman down as he craved their lips together in a fiery kiss, but frankly stole Elise's breath away. Admittedly, Elise was somewhat surprised by the sudden kiss but she felt at home on his strong arms, and ended up clutching onto him for support as the kiss deepened.

Joan erupted into applause, and loudly clapped her hands together when Schmidt kissed Elise and held her close to him with a wide smile on his lips. The moment ended for everyone else soon enough, but not for Schmidt and Elise, who remained there for a while, just staring into each other's eyes and smiling happily. Schmidt blocked out everything else, just admired the woman he was lucky enough to hold in his arms, and Elise did the same, unable to hear or see anything else but Schmidt and his quiet, gentle whisper.

"I won."

»»»  
**MORE SCHMELISE KISSES**

**this is one of my favorite episodes though (I do you guys have any episodes?)**

**Continue reading next part**