



CHAPTER FIVE

SLIGHTLY HUMMING, SCHMIDT was looking around the bar and searching for a man who seemed at least somewhat acceptable to introduce to the great Elise Stevens. Meanwhile, the woman herself was finishing her tea and tapping her finger against the counter, along the AC/DC song playing from the old jukebox resting against the wall behind them. Yes, she had agreed to his plan despite the amount of crazy it came with, but instead of participating in the hunt for the perfect man, Elise let Schmidt do the work while she quietly murmured the lyrics, and occasionally drowned them in the orange flavored tea so she wouldn't be heard. Schmidt did hear, though, and it took every inch of power and control in him to not smile and applaud right there and then — perhaps fetch all the awards in the world just for her.

"What about that guy?", Schmidt broke the silence between them, pointing towards a relatively handsome, young man, though one he considered to be fairly average, and not too difficult to beat. Schmidt did want Elise to be happy and have fun, but he wanted her to have that with him, but he had already been too selfish, and desired to cover up his feelings anyway, so finding someone else for Elise seemed like the right path to go down on. Which it wasn't, obviously, as it came with many risks, but still he nodded towards the guy he had spotted, and Elise smiled shyly at the attractive sight.

Elise shrugged, and glanced at Schmidt with a hint of pink covering her cheeks. "I mean, it's not Chris Evans, but...", she commented and Schmidt clapped his hands together in victory, even if in a way, it was a defeat. To cover up his actual feelings — the sadness, the faint jealousy rising in his chest and the frustration towards himself for even suggesting this — Schmidt smiled and repeated the word brilliant too many times, until it was weird and shady, but before Elise had time to question his well being, the man had already moved on to the next step.

"Let's see what we have here. From his clothes you can tell he's your typical overdue frat boy. Only parties, wears his cap backwards, thinks he's still young and not having a job is awesome. Also eats cereal for each meal of the day. Not boyfriend or husband material, but just perfect for a night of good fun!", Schmidt grinned and patted Elise's shoulder encouragingly. The woman took her first steps towards the man, who by now had noticed her and was smiling flirtatiously, causing her to blush while Schmidt was slowly growing more and more jealous, but before she could awkwardly stumble over to him, Schmidt stopped her.

Elise gave Schmidt a confused look as the man held her wrist to stop her from leaving, though she had no time to question his intentions when he had already spoken. "Silly Elise, obviously I have to teach you a few tips on how to flirt. First of all, don't get too attached. You're not looking for anything long-term tonight, right?", Schmidt explained, offering advice, which Elise wanted to reject, and wished to insist that she was fine without his help, but that wasn't the truth so she remained by his side. With a nod, Elise confirmed that Schmidt held her attention in a grip equal to the one he had on her wrist, a gesture that sent her heart out of this world, but she attempted to stay cool and calm.

Schmidt listed things she should keep in mind, and most of them were something she had known beforehand. Still, even if she was a nice person, she didn't feel too confident or certain about going over to such a good-looking man. But the man did seem a bit interested in her too, and in a moment of weakness, Elise reminded herself that on the opening night of her store, she had gone to Schmidt and Nick despite the constant worrying and anxiety, and that removed a fraction of her strong insecurity. She could do this — that was what Schmidt repeated, giving her hand a slight squeeze, which melted her insides into a mess and in the need to escape the situation before it could escalate any further, she nodded and let go.

"I can do this", Elise confirmed, and gave Schmidt a grateful smile, before gulping down the last drops of her tea. Once she had inhaled deeply and gathered the shreds of her bravery from within, Elise strided over to the man by the jukebox, the one with the charming smile and deep eyes, which alone was enough to earn an adoring sigh from Elise. However, she could not stop herself from thinking back to Schmidt, and comparing the new guy to him, but once she remembered that her chances with Schmidt were rather slim, she offered her hand shyly to the man before her. "Hi, I'm Elise", she smiled faintly, and instantly, the man took her slender fingers and placed a gentle kiss on the back of her hand.

"And you are also gorgeous", he grinned, "I'm Logan", introducing himself as he slowly let go of her hand. Elise blushed immediately, and glanced down at her feet, from where her gaze drifted over to Schmidt, who tried his best to smile only to madly glare at Logan once Elise had turned away. The two of them began talking, which at first was incredibly terrible for Elise, but soon enough in the conversation found a direction and they ended up sitting in one of the booths, laughing together. It was new for Elise, and the last time she flirted with a man was with her ex a few months ago, yet it felt like she still handled it somewhat well. Perhaps not as smoothly as she would have liked to, but at least Logan did not run away from her. And she felt good.

But frankly, Schmidt was fuming. A part of him wanted to smash his beer bottle against the counter, a part of him wanted to leave the bar right away, but the biggest part forced him to sit there and watch how the girl he had grown too fond of in the past couple of days, was being hit on by some random dude, upset her up with. There was immense regret in Schmidt's heart, pure hatred towards himself for ever suggesting such a thing, but now it was far too late and all he could do was suck it up and deal with the fact that Elise was smiling in the company of another man. She wasn't Schmidt's to keep and own, but still, he felt jealousy and the need to do something about it.

"Dude, you're so jealous", Nick's voice startled Schmidt, who jumped slightly and gripped the neck of his beer as he turned to face his best friend. Nick was laughing lightly as he wiped the counter, removing the splatters from the wood, while Schmidt snorted and shook his head in disagreement, even if it was useless. He still believed that no one had caught up with his massive crush on Elise, that it was his own huge secret, but all Nick needed was his eyes to tell that Schmidt was head over heels for Elise, and burning with jealousy. Yet all Schmidt did was deny, deny, deny.

"Jea— What? Me? Please", Nicholas, you're hilarious. Why would I be jealous? Of who? Please", Schmidt laughed nervously, and took a huge gulp of his beer, which led to uncontrollable coughing at the verge of choking, but instead of helping, Nick just laughed. Leaning against the counter, Nick looked at Schmidt once he got control of himself and the coughing ceased, and gave him a stern stare.

"Schmidt, you obviously like Elise. You should like her, you know, before she goes home with that asshole", Nick advised, and nodded toward Elise's direction. Schmidt turned to look at the woman, who was smiling widely at Logan and biting on her bottom lip — always a bad sign, alerting Schmidt, but instead of running over there and interrupting what was slowly turning into a date of some kind, he faced Nick with knitted eyebrows and a mad look.

"Outrageous Elise is my friend. We didn't even sleep together. I'm here only to assist her with finding someone to spend the evening with, and Logan here seems...", Schmidt explained and with a desperate whine, glanced at Elise and Logan, "Logan seems... nice", he added with a whimper, making Nick smile widely in amusement again. Shrugging, Nick dropped the matter, but winked at Schmidt to make the man reconsider everything, and surely he did. Schmidt tapped his fingers against the counter and stared at Elise, pondering his options and considering whether he should ruin the thing she had with Logan, or let her be happy for the night. Should he be selfish and take matters to his own hands in order to eventually tell Elise how he felt, or should he allow Elise to have the night and have sex with a man he barely knew?

"I'm going to do something", Schmidt spoke then in the awareness that he couldn't possibly allow to shy, vulnerable Elise to wander into the darkness of the night with someone nearly strange to her. Nick threw his hands in the air in happiness, and smacked his palm against the counter, wildly interested in whatever his best friend in mind. Leaning across the bar, the two of them started to plot, while clueless, poor Elise sat across Logan and fiddled with her fingers, unsure what to talk about next.

Truthfully, Logan was attractive, but he wasn't that great. Like Schmidt had said, he was one night stand material, but that wasn't Elise's style — causing the wonderful awkwardness between the two, as the silence continued. To Schmidt and Nick, perhaps it seemed like they were really hitting it off, but the smiles were merely nervous ones along with quiet chuckles to break the silence occasionally, but they had ran out of topics long ago. And poor Elise had no clue how to escape the situation and put an end to the misery they were both clearly in.

Suddenly, the jukebox started to play a rock song Elise obviously recognized instantly, and she turned to see who was playing Another Bites the Dust only to find Schmidt dancing rather awkwardly, but she appreciated the effort. Moving his head along the beat, and bouncing his leg up and down, Schmidt approached the woman, and she broke into a wide grin, although she was overwhelmed by disbelief, unable to comprehend the fact that he would do this for her. She hadn't expected him to know and remember, but she did love rock music with her entire heart, and therefore she apologized to Logan, before getting up and walking over to Schmidt, who was quietly, with a struggle, trying to sing the lyrics.

"Do you know what band this is?", Elise asked with an amused smile, certain that Schmidt had no actual clue, but she was flattered by the attempt to get her attention. He did succeed, a great start. Still awkwardly moving his head to the beat of the dudd song, Schmidt fell into thought and pondered on his answer for a second, which already convinced Elise of his poor knowledge on rock, but she didn't mind. She'd teach him eventually.

"Uh, yeah, duh. It's, um, Bon Jovi, of course", Schmidt answered with a smug grin, although he knew he was wrong, but once Elise let out an adorable laugh, he didn't even care. He had made her laugh, and it definitely made his list of the most beautiful sounds in the world, perhaps even TOP 5.

"Wow, that's bad. Well, you taught me how to flirt, so I'll introduce you to some rock songs tomorrow, maybe?", Elise smiled, and Schmidt mirrored the expression easily, completely unable to not smile in her company. They were slowly relaxing in each other's presence, found themselves at ease, and it brought incomparable joy and a wonderful sense of relaxation to both. Even if, occasionally, Elise still felt awkward and blushed around him, they were growing close still and somehow, they ended up dancing together to the song, which earned a lot of stares. But as long as they were with each other, neither really cared.

"Look, I don't think you should go home with Logan. One night stands, they're not really your thing, are they? I say we finish this song and then go to the lo and make some tea", Schmidt proposed, and he could just see Elise's whole face light up with joy and happiness. Nodding her head gladly in agreement, she put her courage to good use, and started to dance a bit more, and Schmidt joined, leaving the two of them jamming in the middle of the bar. Sighing behind the counter, Nick covered his face with his palms, yet he couldn't help but admit they looked good together. They looked right together.

"And also, Ellie, I'm sorry for what I said earlier. You're really awesome, okay?", Schmidt continued, and the woman nodded with a smile, which turned out to be contagious yet again.

"Yeah, you too. It's okay, don't worry about it", she assured, and Schmidt sighed in relief. Once the song ended, the two of them waltzed out of the bar and towards the lo, leaving behind Nick, Logan, and everyone else they couldn't be less bothered with.

And Elise realized not one, but two things. First of all, Schmidt had helped her with finding a piece of bravery she didn't even know existed within her, and for a good two seconds, she had felt confident for the first time in ages. And secondly, although she didn't leave with Logan, she did go home with someone, and the fact that it was Schmidt, was perhaps the reason she fell asleep with a smile on her face that night.