



## CHAPTER SIX

**AFTER NINE HOURS** of good, peaceful sleep in Jess' room, on a mattress set out on the floor just for her, Elise felt rested and ready for a new day. Perhaps the fact that Nick tried to make tea for her also helped, but even better was when Jess fixed the mess that was Nick trying to do something as challenging as boiling some water, and Elise actually got a cup of delicious tea to kick off the morning. Winston had offered a jog with him, but kindly, Elise had passed the opportunity, as she wasn't that into exercise, and had other plans anyway.

She wasn't joking when she promised to teach Schmidt about rock the previous night, in fact, she was quite serious despite laughing it off afterwards, and as Jess and Nick left for work, Elise stayed behind and waited for Schmidt to arrive from wherever he was so they could get started. It seemed he usually woke in the early hours, which explained his absence and the silence in the apartment, as Elise sat on the couch alone, with a notebook resting on her crossed legs. She was taking her mission seriously, and therefore, she had created a couple of lists to help Schmidt separate rock bands and understand which was which, but knowing him, he would most likely learn quickly no matter what methods they'd use.

It was lonely and quiet in the loft for a fair while, but Jess had assured that Schmidt would come back soon from work, where he had visited for a project Elise hadn't learned of yet, and she hadn't been lying. Eventually, the front door opened and was immediately shut, drawing Elise's attention from her notebook to Schmidt, her gaze falling upon the sight that would never cease to take her breath away. Loosening his tie, and shrugging off his jacket, Schmidt grunted in annoyance, and gave off such a powerful vibe, it sent shivers down Elise's spine as she bit on her pen and looked at the man from the couch.

"Good Lord, I can't believe the idiots must work with, I am so—", Schmidt began ranting, until he turned to face Elise, and his mind went completely blank at the sight of her. There she was, so naturally beautiful, with her glasses hanging on her nose and a faint smile tugging up her lips as they stared into each other's eyes. "And... and... wow", Schmidt finished, though not quite bringing clarity to the situation. However, he didn't care to elaborate, and quickly found a seat on the couch, right next to Elise so their thighs were slightly touching, something they both noted but tried to ignore.

Elise pushed her glasses up, and gave a compassionate look to her friend, wondering whether she should place a hand on his shoulder or knee or not, and then settling for the latter. "Everything okay at work?", she asked carefully, and as a response Schmidt rapidly nodded his head and added a thick swallow as his eyes drifted elsewhere from Elise, and landed on the notebook she had placed on the coffee table. With a few insincerely spoken words Schmidt attempted to assure that everything was just peachy, though Elise couldn't help but doubt. Nevertheless, she dropped the subject, believing that it was none of her business, and Schmidt would open up about it if he needed to. Right now, they had other stuff to work on.

Schmidt grabbed the notebook, and Elise cleared her throat as she pointed at the titles she had scribbled down to the paper. "I, uh, I like to make lists", she admitted with blush rising to her cheeks. "So, I divided the bands and singers into sections so it'll be easier to learn them", Elise added, and then placed her hands on her lap, fingers entwining as Schmidt read through the bands she had written down for them to listen to. Anxiety washed upon her as she waited for a response, and to direct her thoughts elsewhere, she took out her laptop, which she had brought from the comic store and opened Spotify where she had one big playlist of rock songs.

"You're really into this, aren't you?", Schmidt flashed a charming grin at Elise, who forced an awkward nod, and then turned over to her laptop to avoid such intent eye contact, which frankly turned her brain into a mess of thoughts she wasn't brave enough to voice, and her heart into a puddle of feelings, all of them for or because of Schmidt. He coughed to fill the silence, and faced the list once again whilst his teeth gently bit into his bottom lip. "I know maybe one or two of these bands. AC/DC and Metallica, probably", Schmidt shrugged, and Elise almost gasped in disbelief and shock.

"I'm tempted to tell you to put some money in the jar, but obviously we have no time to waste so let's get to work", Elise giggled lightly, and the sound made Schmidt smile widely. Happy to do as she suggested, Schmidt cracked his knuckles, and leaned towards the laptop, from where Elise turned on the first song.

"You'll love this, just wait and see."

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Winston, Nick and Jess were standing in the lobby of their building, all of them heading to the loft after getting their respective tasks done and having a few nice, free drinks at the bar. Once the elevator reached the lowest floor, they entered the lift and on their way up, Winston began discussing the beauty of animals, more specifically his favorite kind — cats, also known as his newest obsession.

"I mean, I've always wanted a cat, I guess", Winston shrugged, and took a sip of the water bottle he had taken to the run he had forced himself to take. Lately, he had received lots of comments, mostly from Schmidt, regarding the few extra pounds he had gained, and after a fair share of motivation from his roommates, Winston had started jogging. Despite knowing that he'd eventually give up and rely on pizza and cake again, Jess, Nick and Schmidt smiled and encouraged him to keep it up. Obviously, they were there for each other, always supportive. Unless it was about cats.

"Winston, we're not getting a cat", Nick sighed, as the elevator halted and the doors opened. Winston opened his mouth to argue, but as soon as they had stepped out into the hallway, Nick raised his finger up and ordered everyone to shut up immediately. Standing in silence, they all listened to the sounds coming from behind the door of their apartment, and Nick's eyes widened at the realization.

"Is that Bohemian Rhapsody playing in our loft?"

The three of them rushed to the door, and after struggling with the keys, Jess managed to open the lock and they all pushed inside, only to find what was potentially the most surprising, unexpected, yet entertaining sight they had ever witnessed. There they were — Elise and Schmidt, listening to Bohemian Rhapsody on full volume, and she was standing on the coffee table and he was on the couch, both holding up TV remotes as microphones and singing into them loudly.

Jess dropped her keys in shock, and Winston almost spat out his water at the sight of Schmidt and Elise duetting the song, taking turns singing the lyrics they both knew impressively well. When Elise had told them that she was going to teach Schmidt rock 101, the two of them dancing and singing around their apartment was the last thing they had expected. Sure, Schmidt liked to sing, but seeing him so relaxed was unbelievable, and the same went for Elise, who was usually so shy and withdrawn. Which was probably why it was the best thing they had ever seen, even if surprising.

"I'm just a poor boy, nobody loves me", Schmidt sang, and Elise continued, singing the higher parts and making a perfect duet with the occasional additions to Schmidt's surprisingly fine performance. Not too long ago, he was completely unaware of all the greatest, well known rock songs, but now, he was downright owning the lyrics like he had grown up with them. Like Elise.

"Easy come, easy go, will you let me go?"

Frankly, the connection and attraction between the two was visible, to everyone except Elise and Schmidt, who were just having a good time, but to their friends — whose arrival they still hadn't noticed — it looked a lot like relationship goals no one could ever reach or achieve. It looked perfect, almost swoon-worthy and something to make them jealous and wish they had something alike to what they did. Yet, all they were, was fairly good friends duetting a Queen song for the sake of the other one's education on rock music. Nick, Jess and Winston were all convinced that if they'd bring up the subject of feelings they obviously carried for each other, both would only deny, but there was no denying those fond smiles amidst the passionately sung lyrics or the tension lingering in the air between them.

The song reached its peak, and as the beat burst through the speakers of Elise's laptop, Schmidt jumped from the couch and in the rush of the moment, he grabbed Elise. Succumbing to a shriek, Elise continued singing as she landed on Schmidt's arms, unable to do anything but enjoy the spinning he engaged in whilst holding her tightly. Elise tossed away the TV remote and Schmidt did the same, leaving just the two of them staring into each other's eyes and following the lyrics as the song was reaching its end.

"So you think you can stone me and spit in my eye?", Elise sang, her voice quite good actually, and Schmidt continued.

"So you think you can love me and leave me to die?", Schmidt picked up where she left off, and the two of them continued to take turns until the beat slowed down and the lyrics eventually came to an end. The song was ending, and so was their dance, as Schmidt lowered her to her feet and dipped her down so their faces were merely inches away. Elise's breath was stolen, and she felt like fainting when Schmidt sang the last words with a careful, flawless tone, and with that, the song officially ended and silence filled the room.

Only then Elise realized where the heat of the moment had gotten them, and she turned red as she remained on Schmidt's arms, looking at the man hovering above her. She felt safe in his hold, admittedly, and it seemed he felt the same action, concluding from the way he began leaning down in a way that certainly resembled their first kiss material. Elise's hands began sweating, and she felt nervous, yet at the same time excited, but the pace Schmidt was moving with was also painfully slow and she wasn't sure if she'd ever get to feel his lips on hers.

However, the silence in the room was broken by loud applause when Jess began clapping her hands together, which startled both Elise and Schmidt, who instantly let go of the woman. Shrieking, Elise collapsed onto the floor and with a thud she landed on her back in a painful manner. Schmidt gave her a look mixed with worry and regret, an apologetic gleam shining in his eyes, but she assured she was alright as she slowly climbed up and found a seat on the couch.

"That was adorable! Clearly, you did a great job with Schmidt, Ellie", Jess grinned, and Elise blushed at the comment, but managed to nod under the many stares directed at her. Schmidt scratched his neck nervously, and began walking away, but not before Nick had given him a meaningful look, which he completely understood yet elected to ignore. Nick went to his room sooner after, and once Jess complimented Elise once more, she left as well, leaving only Elise and Winston in the living room. But once she became unable to handle the awkwardness and the pressure that social situations often caused for her, Elise got up as well, and offered a simple goodbye before heading out with her notebook and a laptop.

Winston sighed heavily, and shook his head whilst standing alone in the empty living room. "All this, and still, I can't have a damn cat."

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**yes i totally just made schmidt and elise duet bohemian rhapsody because I CAN. also because i really like the song whoops.**

**would love some feedback from you guys, leave me some opinions on how you're liking the book so far? (:**

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