



## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

**THE MORNING THAT** followed the evening on which Schmidt and Elise finally went on a date, had a rather familiar tone and setting to it. It began with Schmidt waking up to the sounds coming from the kitchen, only to find a sleeping Elise next to him, but instead of being shocked and surprised by the warmth of her body against his bare chest, Schmidt inched a tad closer and le a loving kiss on her cheek. For a while, he lingered and just enjoyed the happiness he felt around her, and the progress that was visible when you compared the present to the day they first met.

As soon as he found the strength within him to leave the bed and Elise, Schmidt got up and put on his kimono to cover his otherwise bare body, reminding him of the activities of the previous night, which caused the grin on his face. Glancing swi ly at Elise, and then at his laptop, Schmidt came up with a plan that was somewhat lame to be honest, but at the same time too brilliant to pass — a er all, he was, well, he was Schmidt and therefore unable to ignore the opportunity to gloat because of his undeniable success with Elise. Though to him, she wasn't just another woman to fool around with, but something much more special, and he wanted her to see that.

Grabbing his laptop, Schmidt sneaked over to Elise's side of the bed and carefully shook the woman to wake her up in a gentle, peaceful manner. What he was planning on doing was rather abrupt and no doubt an unpleasant way to wake up, so Schmidt decided it would be the best to so ly shake Elise awake and flash a fond smile at her as her eyes slowly opened. A quiet chuckle slipped from between Schmidt's lips before he pressed them against her forehead, making her smile whilst she slowly woke up from what he believed was a wonderful dream, concluding from the happy expression on her face.

"Morning, you beautiful angel. I'm sorry for what I'm about to do. Hope you had a good rest", he smirked mischievously, and the apology in the middle of the sentence alerted Elise but she barely had time to sit up when the man had already leaped outside the room and used his laptop to play Queen's Don't Stop Me Now. Elise broke into laughter, and quickly climbed up from the bed and a er pulling on her overalls from last night, she ran to the doorway from where she smiled at Schmidt.

As the happy song blasted throughout the lo and Jess, Nick and Winston were staring at Schmidt with judgment evident in their eyes, Schmidt himself was twirling around in his kimono and shaking his hands in the air along the music. Somehow he managed to throw his legs in the air like a can can dancer, surprising not only Elise but the rest of his roommates and as they all laughed fondly at their friend, Schmidt grinned widely and partied for a reason that still remained unknown to everyone except Elise.

"Jess, I know you're gonna be enraged, but I say this with pride", Schmidt spoke formally and walked over to the Douchebag Jar, pulling out money and stung it in. "Elise and I had sex. And it was incredible", Schmidt announced then, and as Elise covered her face with her palms and turned red, Jess did just as he had suspected and ran over to the man to hit him with her tiny fists. Elise walked out of the bedroom and smiled shyly as she approached Nick and Winston, but instead of judging her, the latter o ered her a cup of tea and she gladly took it. As she sipped on the orange-flavored hot tea and Winston and Nick had their morning co ee, Jess and Schmidt argued in the living room.

Clearing her throat, Elise glanced at her friends and feared what their answer might be, but nonetheless, she released the question that was slowly eating her from within. "Does she disapprove? Do you guys disapprove?", Elise questioned quietly, not sure what she'd do if their reaction would be negative, but much to her relief and delight, both of the men in her company shook their heads.

"Nah, don't worry. It's just— The way he literally announced it was by far one of his greatest douchebag moments. And there's a lot of douchebag moments, Ellie. He has an Irish walking cape and driving moccasins, Nick explained, and Elise drowned a chuckle with a gulp of her morning tea. Sometimes she struggled to understand why she had fallen in love with such a huge dork, but then she reminded herself that he was rather perfect, even with his flaws, and forgot all about the doubt in her heart. Fondly smiling, she looked at Schmidt, who was still talking to Jess but the conversation had lost its hostile shade and was now leaning more towards supportive.

"Really, Elise. Since the beginning, we've all seen the way Schmidt looks at you and to be honest, we have kind of been waiting for this day to arrive. So, nothing but support for you guys", Winston assured and caused relief to take Elise over in the most calming, comforting way she could only imagine. With a happy sigh, she nodded and thanked the men for the nice comments before finishing her tea and then washing the mug.

It became quiet for a while, but then, the residents of 4D heard the door open and shut and all of them fell into temporary shock due to someone entering their home, but as soon as they walked to the front door, they broke into smiles. Well, all expect Elise, who had never seen the man in his life, but everyone else seemed to react positively to the stranger in their foyer, dropping his bags to the floor and giving a stern look to the people he was standing in front of.

"I got one question for you", the tall man at the front door spoke, and approached Schmidt and Nick before placing his hands on their shoulders. "You guys ready to party?", he then continued, dragging out the last word and going higher until his voice disappeared entirely, and the other men — and Jess — erupted into cheers and claps to support the thought. And even though Elise had no clue who he was, she smiled and clapped too, despite being afraid of entering to know more people. It seemed that new people kept entering her life, and truthfully, she wasn't social or outgoing enough to deal with it but she couldn't escape the situations too easily, either.

"Wait— who's this? Hey, girl, I'm Coach", the man introduced himself, and nodded at Elise with a grin widening his lips, and she had just opened her mouth to tell her own name but Schmidt was quicker and did it for her — though he added something extra to the end, and Elise could feel her heart going crazy already.

"This is Elise, my girlfriend"  
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Coach had taken the guys out to a strip club, while Elise was accompanied by Cece and Jess at Nick's bar where they aimed to drink and talk about men — Jess was upset over Nick, for whom she had apparently grown feelings, and Elise was still shocked a er Schmidt had called her his girlfriend. They hadn't discussed their relationship very o icially yet, and therefore she wasn't sure what they were, and it seemed Schmidt felt the same way despite calling Elise his girlfriend, but as soon as the word had le his mouth his eyes had widened and he had surprised himself too. Perhaps it was what Elise wanted — to date Schmidt, but still, she hadn't processed the change in their relationship properly yet and that was why the girls' night out proved to be useful.

Elise needed someone to talk to, and there was no one better than Jess and Cece, both women, both Elise's good friends, if not the best. Elise had phoned Emma as well, in the hopes of some advice but also to catch up on things and tell her that she had been right, and things with Schmidt had worked out well. Until he decided to call Elise his girlfriend, changing everything and stirring the waters until the poor woman felt like drowning underneath the pressure and stress over labeling their relationship. She had already figured out that a part of her was excited and eager to make things o icial with him, but an even bigger part was worried because her experiences on relationship weren't so wonderful, nor with a happy ending. She wasn't so much worried about Schmidt, but about the possibility that Schmidt would not like her as much as he initially thought he might.

And therefore, it was Jess and Cece's job to cheer Elise up and make her feel something true and real, and strong enough to convince her to take the next step, whether it was further or backwards. They were all three seated by the bar, where they decided to unwind a er Elise had taken care of the comic store and closed the place by the dark hours of the night. Perhaps soon enough, she'd have money to hire some people so she wouldn't have to take care of everything by herself.

"So... You and Schmidt, huh?", Cece broke the tension and the thick silence between the three ladies, and just the thought of a relationship with someone, anyone caused Elise to shiver. She had grown to fear dating, mostly because she doubted herself so much, and in her opinion, Schmidt was something way too great for her, out of her league and beyond her. Yet it seemed he had fallen for her, but admittedly, Elise was scared that he would fall out of love eventually. Just like Thomas.

It seemed Jess had read Elise's mind, as she then placed her hand atop Elise's shaky one and o ered her an assuring smile. "If you're worried about the end of the relationship, and that you'll end up getting hurt like you did with Thomas, I promise you, Schmidt would take this very seriously. He wouldn't hurt you, or treat you like Thomas did", Jess guaranteed with a convincing smile, squeezing Elise's hand gently. Biting on her lip, Elise looked down at their hands and smiled slightly at the thought of being spoiled by Schmidt, which was something she wasn't usually very into but she wouldn't mind being Schmidt's girl, and the target of all his love and a ection.

"Yeah, that guy was a serious jerk, heeey. Now, Schmidt may act like a douchebag sometimes and he sleeps with a lot of women, but that only means that when he does want to get into a relationship, it's real. He's in love with you, Elise, and I can tell it's not going to fade any time soon. You don't need to be worried about getting your heart broken, because I'm willing to bet, if someone even looks at you the wrong way, Schmidt's already getting out his thumb ring", Cece nodded and caused Elise to laugh out loud at the image she now struggled to get out of her head. But it was a good point — they were all good points, and to be honest, a er being convinced that her fears were pointless, Elise couldn't find anything to stop her from dating Schmidt.

"I think I want this. A relationship with him", Elise then admitted, whilst she nodded and smiled at Cece and Jess, both of them cheering at Elise's final decision.

Yes, she was o en insecure and her self-esteem was quite low, but with Schmidt, it would no doubt get li ed to the clouds. She knew he would make her feel good about herself and treat her like a princess, and perhaps that was just what she needed. With Thomas, she had to look over her shoulder all the time and live in worry and fear of not being good enough, which in the end proved to be true. But with Schmidt, she could relax and be truly happy.

Perhaps, soon enough, Elise would o icially be Schmidt's girlfriend — something that she had, frankly, dreamed of since she first saw him.

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The point of a strip club was to have fun — that was what Coach kept telling Schmidt, who was doing the actual opposite. Instead of having fun, wasting his money on lap dances and drinks, all Schmidt was able to do was worry about Elise and the fact that he had called her his girlfriend. That was huge, and while Elise's negative reaction truly frightened Schmidt, it was also scary to realize that he wanted that. He was head over heels for the woman, absolutely in love and he did want to call her his girlfriend, spoil her with his undying love and have the right to kiss her lips and hold her in her arms whenever he wanted to. He wanted the chick flick cliché, he wanted the romantic candlelit dinners, he wanted the emotional proposal and he wanted the white picket fence and two kids. He wanted Elise.

"But what if she doesn't want me?", Schmidt sighed and looked at Nick, who was much to his delight, just as tired as he was and therefore unwilling to party like Coach wished to do. The man was urging them to party until the sunrise, but Schmidt and Nick both wanted to go home to their girls — yes, apparently Nick and Jess were getting serious now, and if only things worked out the right way, so would Schmidt and Elise. Nick shook his head in disbelief as a response and gave his friend a reassuring smile to calm the man down, as he was, more or less, freaking out like never before.

"Elise wants you, don't worry. You just have to understand that she's really shy and insecure and since things with her ex didn't work out very well, she might be scared too. Give her time, Schmidt", Nick explained and patted his friend's shoulder in a comforting manner in order to calm poor Schmidt down, and frankly, he miserably failed but at least he made an attempt. But the list of things that would ease Schmidt's apprehension was quite short and as he was completely unable to relax, he just kept on bouncing his leg up and down and bothering his brain with the endless possibilities of how things with Elise would work out.

He hadn't felt something this big and serious in a long time, and it scared him too, not just Elise. Schmidt o en seemed so confident and vain, and admittedly, perhaps he did display those traits but deep inside, he was still insecure at times and carried real feelings and a heart of gold. He was a good person, and capable of falling in love as well and as soon as he had met Elise, that had happened. But it was no wonder, because the woman was like an angel on Earth, so pure and innocent and beautiful, and Schmidt just wanted to hold her in his arms and never let go — protect her from the evil in the world until the end of times and provide her endless loving and caring. The a ection in him ran so deep, he had ended up calling Elise his girlfriend, and he was praying that it didn't ruin everything they had, because if that were to happen, Schmidt already knew he'd end up crying his eyes out.

"I think you should talk to Ellie. Help me out, buddy. We have to deal with Coach, so stop pouting and let me see your face. A erwards, I'll help you with Elise", Nick suggested then, breaking the silence between them again and pointing at Coach, who was dancing wildly and celebrating what he called freedom, but in reality, was a break-up he clearly didn't manage to handle.

With a sigh, Schmidt nodded in agreement and smiled at Nick, "Thank you, Nicholas. I'll help you. As long as you do the opposite, and don't try to help me at all because you'll just get me into a deeper mess. Love you, bro."

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**i thought about including coach for a long time and then decided that damn, i just have to write him in. this was a bit of a filler but?? eh (:**  
**thank you so much for 3K reads!!**

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