



CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

AS ALWAYS, ELISE was happy to go to work once Monday arrived again, especially when she was planning on interviewing some people she could potentially hire to do some of the work she was now handling all by herself. She enjoyed running her own business, but it was exhausting and often impossible to get everything done, more than ever. Her Nick had helped her with advertising the place. Comic Planet was doing good, and since Elise had the money, she had figured it was only smart to get someone to sit behind the counter or at least somehow relieve the pile of work she had to deal with all alone at the moment.

Elise wasn't the only one with plans — her thoroughly thinking about his big surprise for days, Schmidt had arranged some things and was quite certain his proposal was going to be epic. And he was planning on doing it soon too, as in, today. He had informed his roommates as well in order to earn their assistance and as long as Nick would stay away from Elise and not reveal the secret, everything would go just well. The plan was simple, though evidently Schmidt was concerned that something would go wrong, or that Elise would reject him for some reason he still hadn't completely figured out. But in the end, Schmidt was feeling rather confident, partly because it wasn't just a plain old proposal, but something amazing.

They parted their ways in the morning and as Elise left for work, Schmidt stayed behind in 4D and started to plot with their friends, going through the plan very profoundly and making sure everything would go just as he had imagined. Whilst the residents of apartment 4D schemed the perfect proposal, Elise indeed headed for Comic Planet, where she instantly put on her rock playlist before sitting by her laptop and waiting for the first applicant to arrive.

To be honest, Elise was nervous about talking to other people, even though it should have been the other way around. She tried to remind herself of that, how she was the boss and in total control, and therefore she had nothing to worry about. Except if she gave the proper vibe, if her hair looked good, if she would be able to hold herself together. Elise wasn't sure how, but she was trying to maintain a calm appearance and it seemed she succeeded, even if she was nervous as hell when the first person walked in and stated she was there for the job at the store.

It was just how Elise had expected it to go, though with a little less awkwardness and a bit more confidence, but the questions she asked were rather basic but essential, and the woman seemed to have the right answers to each and every one of them. However, Elise couldn't help her nature and therefore started to grow skeptical due to the first applicant's flawless answers and attitude — would she steal money from the register, be disrespectful, screw everything up? Nevertheless, Elise promised to give her call by the end of the week and tell her if she got the job or not, before proceeding to interview more people.

With time, Elise found her favorite questions to ask, her preferred answers and from somewhere, she even discovered the ability to smile at the people she was, surprisingly, talking quite bravely to. It was a whole new side of Elise, it was the literal boss side coming out of her and so far, she was liking it. She was reasonable but firm, somehow confident but not too proud or smug for being in a higher position. In her opinion, to be honest, she was doing one hell of a job with the simple task of the day.

Once the interviews were over and Elise had made notes, she opened the store for the day and customers began flooding in with excitement. The realization of still being alone for the couple of days before any official hiring made Elise sigh, but she had managed well so far and therefore she put on a smile and got to work like she was used to — helping people with whatever they needed, smiling and waving as they came in and walked out, offering service by the counter. And in a way, it was actually quite lovely.

Eventually the day came to an end, though closing the shop didn't mean Elise was free to leave. With a sigh, Elise lowered the volume of the music as she usually did in the evening to bring a calmer atmosphere around, and then walked around the store to pick up fallen comics, clean up the few spilled drinks and make sure everything was in place and looking good. She had barely made it back to the counter, tapping her finger against the desk along the Muse song playing quietly from the speakers and glancing down at her slowly filling notebook, when suddenly she heard a strange sound from behind her and quickly faced the direction of the unidentified noise.

"Oh god this is like an episode of Supernatural", Elise muttered to herself as she looked around, worried over her safety but once she saw a single comic on the floor where it had dropped, a sigh of relief slipped from between her lips. Carefully walking over to the comic book that had fallen from its shelf, Elise glanced around but ended up picking up the comic, already about to place it in the shelf only to then realize it was one she had never before seen, and her looking a bit harder, she understood some things about the cover.

It wasn't an X-Men comic or something equally familiar, it was a new, shiny comic book and on the cover of it were six people, two in the middle and the other four surrounding them. After glancing at the title, Elise brought her gaze back to the characters drawn on the front of the comic and slowly, she began to see the resemblance between them and her friends. In the corner, it was obviously Jess with her glasses and adorable grin, and next to her was Nick, who was high-fiving Winston. On the other side of the cover were comic Cece and comic Coach, both of them smiling widely at the two in the middle — Elise and Schmidt, the man down on one knee and the woman carrying a heavily surprised look on her face.

With shaky hands, Elise opened the comic book and began reading. On the first page, was Jess telling her roommates how there was a new comic book store opening near their location and on the next one, was Elise in her Fall Out Boy tee and blushing at the angel comment Schmidt had made on the opening night of her store. Every page was filled with something they had been through, from the time Schmidt tried to teach Elise flirting to the Halloween on which Nick punched Elise and Schmidt punched Nick as payback. Every single moment had been drawn with surprisingly much detail, for example the night on which Elise moved to 4D and Schmidt had given her a big hug on the couch, which led into falling asleep on his arms.

It was downright beautiful, and for sure Elise was already crying and shaking as she turned each page warily, completely unprepared of what she would find next but the temptation was impossible to resist. The comic was quite thick due to having all of their little memories in it, but it didn't take Elise too long to devour the whole story and near the end. Almost at the end, they were on the cruise and Elise read a moment of Schmidt revealing his plans to Winston, how he was going to propose to Elise, and as she turned the next page, she gasped at the moment they hadn't yet experienced.

She was almost at the end, when suddenly the sound of music coming from her laptop startled her and the familiar tune of a Queen song made Elise smile. She turned around, assuming to find Schmidt by her laptop but instead, he was right there, in front of her and down on one knee. Gasping, Elise placed her hands against her mouth and cried quietly, certain that she was going to faint but she tried to stay in the moment as Schmidt took out a small velvet box and with a fond, loving smile, looked up into Elise's eyes.

"Elise, my love. Are you certain angels aren't real? Because on the night I first met you, I was so sure you were one and that belief has only grown through the time I have been lucky enough to know you for. You are just amazing, from inside to outside and ever since we met, I've been waiting for this moment. I fell in love with you right away, and I want to tell you that every day for the rest of my life. I love you and I adore you and I will never stop, so here I am, asking you to make my dream come true and make me the happiest man in the world in the process", Schmidt explained and as Elise exhaled shakily, absolutely amazed by the surprise he had put together, the man opened the box and revealed a shiny, beautiful and classy engagement ring that took her breath away instantly.

"Elise, will you marry me?"

And how could Elise say no? Shaking and breathing heavily, Elise dropped her hands from her mouth and after swallowing thickly, she rapidly nodded her head. "Yes", she could barely whisper, her voice nearly inaudible but concluding from the bright, wide smile on Schmidt's lips, he had heard and therefore, he gently took Elise's hand and slipped the stunning ring on her finger.

Jumping up, Schmidt took Elise in his arms and pressed their lips together in an explosive, fiery kiss filled with happiness and pure love for each other, as their roommates revealed themselves from around the store. Winston popped open a bottle of champagne, whilst Jess blew out some confetti and it was a proper celebration in Comic Planet, as Schmidt and Elise kissed and began slowly rocking back and forth along the music that was filling the room along with the happy cheers from their friends. Smiling fondly at each other, Elise and Schmidt let the kiss break but they still remained on each other's arms and danced carefully to the music.

"I love you", Elise whispered as she lowered her head onto Schmidt's shoulder with a sigh, her eyes closing as soon as she was leaning onto him and feeling comfortable. They were barely moving, just rocking back and forth, from side to side along the music and it was peaceful and calm, even if their friends were celebrating and there was still some confetti raining down onto them. Still, as long as Elise was with Schmidt, things were good and she had nothing to worry about.

"I love you too", Schmidt smiled as he held her hand gently and made a sudden move by twirling her around, and then catching her back to his arms gladly. The two danced so lightly around the comic store, until their roommates ran over to them with champagne and insisted on making a toast to celebrate the engagement. Schmidt and Elise broke apart but stood beside each other before taking the champagne glasses from Nick and Coach, before Jess raised hers and cleared her throat in order to say a few words. Winston lowered the volume of the music to make it easier for her, and after shooting him a thankful smile, Jess directed it to Schmidt and Elise.

Happily smiling and tilting her head to the side in adoration, Jess signed, "Schmidt and Elise. Schmelize. You know, Urban Dictionary defines the word shipas matching two people together as a couple, or my personal favorite — "The act of shoving the heads of two people together and yelling NOW KISS". And I totally ship you guys. You two belong together, we've all seen that since the beginning and I'm so happy you've realized that too. It was only a matter of time when you'd get engaged, really. I wish you guys the best and lots of luck and happiness, okay, I love you both!", Jess gave an impressive speech, one that caused Elise to get emotional again but she tried to keep the tears away, though it was a doomed attempt from the very beginning. However, she had the right to cry, because Jess' speech was definitely something, and it seemed Schmidt was tearing up too.

"Yeah, okay, you two are OTP. The OTP. Congrats on the engagement, Schmelize", Winston added, and with that they raised their glasses and after clinking them together, shared a drink to celebrate the fact that soon enough, the two dorks who had dreamed of each other since day one, were getting married.

It was something Elise had surely imagined, but never expected to come true. But she knew, she was doing the right thing and with the right person — and she would gladly be Mrs. Schmidt.

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