



CHAPTER NINE

"**SHOULD WE TALK** about the fact that you saw me naked?"

Schmidt's words caused Elise's head to snap to his direction with blush already creeping up to her cheeks and turning them evidently red under the dim lights in the room. The place was crowded, and so far all Elise had been able to do was slightly regret saying yes to Schmidt and agreeing to go on the roller coaster of emotions, and when she wasn't thinking about that, she was worrying about all the people she was surrounded by. She hadn't expected this many to attend the party, but obviously she had been wrong, and the amount of strangers caused her to fear and succumb, and end up sitting by the table in the corner.

Schmidt grinned, and took a seat next to Elise, who shrugged lightly and looked down into her glass of ice water, with a straw she kept on swirling around to draw her mind away from the panic taking over her thoughts. "Or we could just pretend it never happened?," Elise suggested bravely, and looked up at Schmidt again, who smiled and burst into a fond laughter. However, it wasn't the kind of laughter that frightened Elise, it was the exact opposite. It was calming, adorable, and made it impossible for her to not smile widely at the sound that was slowly becoming her favorite one.

"Yeah, that sounds good too", Schmidt smiled, and took a sip of his own drink whilst the both of them started to look around for no proper reason, but to avoid eye contact with each other perhaps. The silence lasted for a while, but before it crossed the line between reasonable and awkward, Schmidt cleared his throat to get Elise's attention again. "Thank you, Elise, really. This means a lot to me. I hope you're having a good time too, and not just thinking I'm using you", he explained, and the woman shivered at the undeniable kindness in his tone. He seemed like such a vain, cocky man on the outside, but there was no denying the fondness in his eyes, which frankly, made Elise glad that she was sitting down.

The truth was, Elise wasn't enjoying herself very much, but that wasn't Schmidt's fault. It was because she wasn't used to socializing, nor comfortable with big crowds, but just to make Schmidt happy and keep that smile on his face strong and bright, Elise smiled as well, and nodded to assure that she was indeed having fun. She wasn't a fan of lying, but sometimes a little white lie was better than the brutal truth, and as a result, she was an expert at hiding her feelings, and therefore she didn't feel too guilty doing so.

"Okay, I'm going to go and talk to some people. Want to come with?", Schmidt asked with an enthusiastic smile, and even though Elise felt somewhat bad for refusing, she shook her head, but kept the kind smile on her lips. Once she had insisted on being more comfortable sitting aside, Schmidt nodded and disappeared into the crowd — but not before he had placed a quick, gentle kiss on Elise's cheek, a gesture that left them both in shock and surprised. He just couldn't help it, it came so naturally. Both of them tried to ignore it, and not overthink it, but honestly, neither knew for sure whether it was out of the pure desire to do so, or merely for the pretentious relationship of theirs.

Elise sighed, and when she tried to ignore the kiss she could still feel lingering on her cheek, she remembered how out of place she was, surrounded by all those people. Just seeing them all move, it stressed her out and she felt certainly uneasy, but for Schmidt, she sucked it up and dealt with it. She found comfort in drinking, though nothing alcoholic, only water or the occasional soda, but somehow the refreshing drinks calmed her down and for a second, she could close her eyes and enjoy. Evidently, the constant drinking eventually led into the need of using the bathroom, and sighing, Elise stood up and shrugged at the realization that no one probably noticed her anyway.

Except for Schmidt. Schmidt noticed her, in fact, he had been watching her the entire time he didn't spend by her side, and could tell that she was uncomfortable and struggling to be in the party. As soon as she got up and left for the bathroom, Schmidt sighed and excused himself from the company of a few co-workers, and walked over to the DJ to do something he had never thought he would, but he needed to fix the mess he had unknowingly created.

In the bathroom, once Elise was ready to get out, she did the opposite and stayed in. Leaning against the counter and drawing deep inhaleds, she closed her eyes and tried to collect her bravery and confidence from the floor where she had dropped it, allowing people to stomp on it until it barely lived. It was hard, but the thought of Schmidt kept her going, and somehow she found the spark she needed, and pushed the door of the bathroom open to leave it, and walk into the sea of people she considered too many. She didn't get too far however, when her arm was grabbed, and she flinched at the sudden touch but as soon as she turned to see whoever had joined her, her eyes met Schmidt's and she relaxed visibly at the familiar sight.

"You scared me", Elise mumbled shyly, and Schmidt gave her an apologetic look, before offering a hand, which she hesitantly took. The man pulled Elise closer, causing her to blush faintly, but once she remembered the role she had to play, she remained by his side whilst he walked towards the center of the room — something that wonderfully terrified Elise, but as long as she was with Schmidt, nothing was impossible.

"I was thinking, we're not really giving off the girlfriend-boyfriend vibe, so I thought now is our time to shine, and made a song request for the DJ. Also, I noticed how much you hate this, so I'm sorry for dragging you here, babe", Schmidt explained and flashed a fond smile at Elise, who was quite frankly shaken and utterly flattered by the fact that Schmidt had actually paid attention and noticed. If she hadn't been sure before, then now she was fully convinced that he wasn't just using her, and never would. It seemed he truly cared for her, and it made her palms sweat, and her heart thumped against her chest as pure emotion ran through her veins. Smiling carefully at Schmidt, Elise squeezed his hand slightly, and looked into his eyes as they stopped on the dance floor, right underneath the beam of light that illuminated Schmidt's face in such a beautiful way, Elise swore she was about to swoon.

Elise chuckled, and glanced down while trying to process the amazing gesture he had pulled on her. "I thought Nick told you not to call me babe", she smiled, not that she cared of Nick's opinion, though. If anything she loved hearing Schmidt call her that. "And you made a song request? Schmidt, this might be the sweetest thing anyone has ever done for me. Besides, I don't hate this, I like being here with you — I just don't like the amount of people, I guess?", she responded with a genuine smile pulling her lips up until her cheeks ached in the most bittersweet way ever. Schmidt chuckled so ly, and cradled both of her hands as the song he had asked the DJ to play started to play from the speakers above their heads, catching Elise's attention immediately.

So ly laughing, Elise turned to look at Schmidt again, and nodded approvingly as Heaven's On Fire's KISS blasted throughout the party, and got the people around them moving wildly to the beat. But no one really compared to Schmidt, who was swaying his hips and snapping his fingers to the beat, which was certainly a sight to behold — a bit amusing, but also very charming at the same time. At first, Elise was scared and insecure of dancing in the middle of the room, but when she understood that it was what Schmidt was trying to do, bring her to a state of comfort and relaxation, she decided to let loose and go with it. Swinging her head and hands from side to side to the music, Elise quietly sang the lyrics and made Schmidt laugh fondly at the sudden change of mood.

Schmidt came closer to Elise, whose breath was stolen away in an instant, but instead of sneaking away, she stayed close to him and looked up into his eyes while dancing and swaying around the floor. She wasn't used to dancing in public, but she did so on party by herself which was why she handled a few moves quite well, and Schmidt was just equally talented. Though, it was hard to find something he wasn't brilliant at, especially now that Elise had taught him a lot about rock music and he clearly remembered something.

At some point, Elise realized that most of the people in the party were staring at her and Schmidt, as they stole the show in the middle of the room. For a second, she felt worried and scared of staying there, but then she happened to look over to Schmidt, whose happy smile had turned into something much more intent and deep, and even if he heart left a beat whilst she melted closer. Nearly body to body now, the two of them continued to dance along the KISS song, looking exactly like a couple in love, and silently, the both of them understood that perhaps they were. Perhaps they were in love.

When it seemed that the song was coming to an end, Elise understood exactly how close they were to each other, and that her hand had ended up against his chest, around the tie hanging from his neck and Schmidt was just closing the couple of inches between their bodies. She was too into it to move away, and so, she just swayed to the music and looked up into Schmidt's eyes, whilst the man started to lower his face as if he was going for a kiss. Again. Again they were in this situation — dancing and singing, body to body, and he was leaning for a kiss. His hand had already reached Elise's face, and was cupping the cheek carefully, but then the song faded away and the people around them erupted into cheers and whistles.

Startled by the sudden change in mood, Schmidt took a step away from Elise, and the two of them were suddenly separated and the intensity of the situation slowly faded into nothing but a sweet desire to remain close to each other. Smiling at each other, Schmidt and Elise enjoyed the attention they got, although Elise wasn't one to like being in the spotlight, but right now she was like on cloud nine. She could get used to being Schmidt's girlfriend.

The song changed, and a small chuckle slipped from between Elise's lips as the lyrics burst from the speakers. Schmidt raised an eyebrow at Elise, as if asking for permission for another dance, and even if the slower beat kind of terrified her, she nodded as a yes. As a result, they were supposedly dating, so they had the permission to dance the night away, and that seemed to be the plan. Schmidt neared again, and they ended up in an old-fashioned position, with his hand resting on her waist, and hers thrown over his shoulders as they swayed along the beat, under the dim, deep lights.

"You're a good dancer, you know", Schmidt whispered, and Elise blushed yet again, but luckily she doubted his ability to notice due to the purple, dark lights in the room. Quietly thanking him, Elise tested her boundaries and lowered her head to his shoulder, which made the both of them smile while they continued to slowly move around the room. "Thank you. I appreciate you doing this, Elise", Schmidt added, and this time, the woman didn't answer. Just enjoyed the dance, the peace and the wonderful, incomparable company she had the privilege to be in.

"I, I just died in your arms tonight", Schmidt quietly murmured the lyrics of the rather old, but gold song, and Elise succumbed to a chuckle. If he continued to be so perfect, that could potentially be her fate by the end of the night.

»

When it was already dark and late, Schmidt and Elise had finally let the party, after successfully convincing his co-workers that they were indeed dating and he was one hell of a boyfriend. Truthfully, Elise could not understand why she didn't have a girlfriend in the first place, as he seemed rather perfect to him, even with his flaws. Even if he did sometimes need the Douchebag Jar, she loved him nonetheless and would be willing to deal with his quirks, that were perfect to her no matter what. Perhaps that alone was enough to convince her that she was head over heels for him, which was also the reason she was unable to stop smiling when she entered the room she now shared with Jess.

"Oh my gosh, tell me everything!", Jess immediately gushed, and Elise offered a shy shrug along with a smile that matched. Jess sat up on her bed, and made space for the other woman, who quickly sat beside her and let out a deep sigh while slipping on her ballet flats and finding comfort in the freedom it brought. With Jess' help, Elise slipped out of her dress, and as she changed into an oversized Marvel shirt, a pair of comfy shorts and fluffy socks, she shrugged again and tried to think of something to sum up the experience in order to satisfy Jess' hunger for gossip and knowledge.

"I loved it", was Elise's simple answer, but it was enough to make Jess bite her pillow and scream into it in excitement. And here Elise had thought her feelings for Schmidt wouldn't be supported.

The two of them talked about the night for a while, but it was indeed late, and the endless dancing had taken its toll on Elise, who eventually insisted on going to sleep. Though, with sleeping she meant listening to her superhero playlist first. With her earphones plugged in, Elise divd underneath the warm duvet she had brought from the comic store and sighed at the relaxing feeling of a steady mattress under her body. It was way too comfortable to resist, and she was certain that in only a couple of moments she'd be sleeping already, possibly with the music still playing.

Jess couldn't sleep, though. She could only think about Elise and Schmidt, and how badly she wanted to get involved, but when there was a knock on the door of her bedroom, it seemed she wouldn't have to. Tiptoeing to the door, Jess screamed internally and put on a calm face as she opened it, and came face to face with Schmidt, who had already lost the tie and the jacket, and was nervously fiddling with the hem of his white shirt. He looked up from his shaky hands to Jess once the door was answered, and exhaled nervously while grinning way too happily, but she had a feeling what Schmidt was doing there, and therefore didn't judge.

"Uh, hi, Jessica. Is Elise sleep already? There is something I wanted to talk to her about", Schmidt asked carefully and tried to peek into the room, only to see the woman of his dreams sitting on the mattress set out on the floor. Jess smiled and shook her head, causing her curls to fall to her face, but before she had time to swipe them away, she quickly sneaked out of the room and gave Schmidt the chance to go in.

"I'll let the two of you talk, then", Jess grinned, and showed Schmidt finger guns before running into the living room, where he could only except her to eavesdrop, but shrugging it off, he walked in and shut the door behind him.

With a deep exhale, Schmidt looked around the room, and then at Elise as the woman put her phone away at the mention of her name. "Uh, Elise?", Schmidt began carefully, and then sighed, unsure how to form proper sentences of all the thoughts swirling in his mind uncontrollably. But he knew what the point of his speech was, so as long as he'd get it out, perhaps nothing else mattered. "Look, I think you're amazing. And I mean, I really like you. I think you kind of stole my heart the first moment I saw you", Schmidt laughed quietly at himself, and continued to fiddle with his shirt whilst glancing down at his feet.

"I'm not, uh, I'm not usually this... lame. But something about you just makes me weak. Nick tells me it's love, but I don't know. It might be. Anyway, my point is, if you would give me the privilege to take you out on a date, that would be... great. What do you say?", Schmidt finally finished his awkward mess of a speech, but felt relief once he got it out there. Waiting for a response, Schmidt knitted his eyebrows together, and grew concerned when Elise didn't react in any kind of a way. Had he shocked her so terribly?

Schmidt walked a bit closer, and called out Elise's name to get her attention, and eventually he succeeded. The woman turned out, and when Schmidt saw her take out an earphone, his heart sank like an anvil was dropped onto it. So that's why she didn't answer — she never even heard him, and he had been talking to himself. Brilliant

"Oh, Schmidt! I'm sorry, I didn't hear you. What's up?", Elise asked sheepishly smiling, and for a moment, Schmidt just stared at her with a blank expression, feeling like he was on the verge of falling apart entirely. He had admitted that he did have feelings for her, that he wanted to take her on a date, and she hadn't even heard him. And now that he was supposed to repeat himself, he was in shock, and completely unable to ask again, so what came out was entirely different from his initial intentions.

"I just wanted to thank you for tonight", Schmidt fixed the situation, flashing Elise a grateful smile, and she returned the kind expression gladly.

And with that, he left, and another night with neither of them aware of each other's feelings, passed.

»»»

uGHalskd beaNS

but guys, thank you for over 1k!! that means the world to me :
i'm actually really proud of this book so i'm happy it's been
noticed! thank you so much xx

Continue reading next part