

I carefully pushed the door to my room open, my face already feeling the physical side effects of embarrassment. I'd left my bed unmade and my clothes on the floor. I mean sure, Aimee's side was way worse than mine usually... but still. Messy. Would Lianna care? I didn't think so, but there was always that little chance, the one that your thoughts wouldn't leave alone.

"Um, sorry about the mess," I told her with an annoyingly shy smile. Why was I still feeling shy? We had just slept together... but like, in a non-sexual way.

"People always say that, but then there's only like three— holy fuck," she said, blurring the last as she laid eyes on my roommate's mess at the same time that I did.

Papers were literally covering her side of the room, along with assorted stationery and little candy wrappers. The perpetrator of the mess sat amidst it, happily chewing on candy while she looked up at us.

"Hey Gladie!" she smiled, her eyebrows rising in sync with the corners of her lips as she saw Lianna behind me. "...And hello Lianna, I'm Aimee. Nice to finally meet you properly. Without clumsy here messing it up."

Lianna gave a reserved little laugh. "Yeah, she is pretty clumsy isn't she?" As she spoke, I felt fingertips flutter just briefly over my back. Oh my goodness. My whole body lit up in goosebumps, and it was all I could do not to react to her touch.

"Glade?" she asked, stepping up from behind me. "Weren't we in a rush?"

"Oh! Right!" I said, nodding like a bobblehead. Might have gotten distracted there.

I rushed over to my side of the room, and made for the computer chair, only to turn around and quickly begin fixing my bed. Lianna was going to sit there, I didn't want her to sit on a messy bed.

"I can do that," she told me, with just a hint of command in her tone. "You do your thing."

She pushed me gently towards my desk and computer, her hands soft on my tense shoulders. I gave a little shiver, I was so aware of every touch between us, my whole body reacting with a rolling wave of goosebumps. I really liked it when she touched me. Like, really really liked it. Was it too late to pull out of the competition and just...

No, concentrate! I had a job to do!

Pulling my chair out, I sat down heavily and opened my laptop, beginning the process of booting it up. A process which took all of like three seconds, because modern laptops were like that. Then I was starting the client and logging into the chat with the club using the alternate account I'd made.

I cringed as I saw them talking about how I hadn't turned up yet and rushed to apologise.

Meadow: Sorry! I didn't sleep in my room last night! I had to rush back, I'm sorry!

Lianna began choking on laughter behind me, and I turned to find her eyes wide. "You realise what they're going to think with you saying that right?"

"No... what?" I blinked, confused. She just gestured back at the screen.

Scoplake: Lol nice. Why'd you come to this shit if you were getting laid?

Oh. *Oh.*

Meadow: Oh! No... it wasn't like that!

Dang, this was embarrassing! Lianna was laughing about it too. Did that mean she thought the idea of sleeping with me in that way was ridiculous? The very idea that she was laughing for that reason had pain lancing through my heart.

The teasing from the people in the club only got worse with my denial, and I had to tab away so that I couldn't keep seeing it and get stressed out. Well, any more stressed than I already was. I couldn't figure out where to look, so I just stared at my feet and waited for it to end. Ugh, why did my heart have to hurt like this?

"Oh..." Lianna sighed, laughter coming to a halt. "I'm sorry, I didn't think..."

"Yeah, careful with her," Aimee said, startling me into looking up at where she was now leaning against the partition wall. "She's an anxious one. Skittish as all hell. Should have seen her face when we first met!"

“Do you have *any* shame at all?” I asked, almost but not quite begging her to stop talking.

“Nope,” she grinned, disappearing back behind the partition. I gave the spot she’d just vacated a glare that I’d never have sent to her directly. Pesky roommate.

Lianna made a small sound which caused me to turn, finding her mouth open and her expression unreadable. We stared at each other for several seconds before she took a deep breath and glanced over to where Aimee had been. Leaning forward quickly, she wrapped her arms around me, chin coming to rest on my shoulder. “Sorry for laughing.”

I froze for a second as her arms went around me, but in moments I was leaning back into the hug, enjoying the way her soft hair felt against the fluff of my day old bun. I should probably redo it at some point, otherwise my hair would wrap itself up into knots and I’d be untangling it for hours. “It’s fine,” I smiled. “I’m not actually as fragile as Aimee makes me out to be.”

“Oh... your face was just...” she murmured, faltering again.

I cuddled closer for just a second before breaking out of the hug, and shaking my head I plastered the bravest expression I could muster onto my face. “Don’t worry about it. Anyway, I’ll see if they’re done, maybe they will actually start this thing sometime soon.”

“They’d better, I rushed out of bed for this,” she said, that smile I loved returning to her face. “I had a pretty girl next to me and everything. It was really comfortable.”

Oh gosh. There went my cheeks all over again, heating up like the surface of the sun. Well, not actually that much, because otherwise the whole room would be burned to a crisp. Lianna was in the room, so it needed to stay unburnt.

Turning around, partially in order to hide my blush from her, I checked to see what was happening in the chat. Looked like things were finally underway. Six people were trying out for the midlane position, so we’d be facing off against each other in a one versus one duel. I wasn’t sure about the effectiveness of these tryouts, but hey, this was tailor made for me to win. I just had to not get too cocky and showy in front of Lianna.

I was slated to fight some random in fifteen minutes or so, which meant I actually had time to kill. That time was very quickly used up explaining the basics of the game to Lianna, who seemed to actually understand all the jargon I was throwing at her after only a little effort on her

part. It was nice, explaining league to someone who was actually interested in listening and learning. Maybe I could get her to play with me someday...

When my time came around, I hopped into the lobby and waited for the club people to set everything up. On a whim I decided to look up my opponent's stats online and found him... wanting. My goodness, this guy was... well it was clear he was doing his best, which unfortunately put him down in the middle of the silver rank. Silver being the third from the bottom, after iron and bronze.

"Finally, we're in champ select now," I sighed, leaning forward and frowning. This was blind pick, where neither myself or my opponent could see who the other was playing until we were in the game.

"Champ select is where you pick which character you're going to play right?" Lianna asked, and I nodded, making an affirmative noise.

"I need to pick a champion that doesn't have too many hard counters, because I might be way better than the guy I'm against, but I could still lose in a terrible match up," I told her, flicking through various options in my head. I needed something safe, but something that allowed me to be a little flashy for my audience. Both the girl in my room and the club people.

"Okay... I'm going to chose Leblanc. She's a sort of magician lady who teleports all over the place and is really tricky and stuff," I said, doing a terrible job of explaining the character. Truth was that she had a very high skill ceiling, and if you could start scraping up against that, you'd be able to outplay a lot of stuff. There was just a lot to explain.

"Okay... is she cute?" Lianna asked casually. That pulled me up short. I turned around and stared at her, then kinda shrugged. "She's okay, her base skin is pretty boring, obviously designed by dudes and stuff, but some of her later skins are... cute I guess. I've never thought about it."

"That's like, the first thing I examine whenever I'm watching a movie or a TV show," she confessed, looking abashedly away for a moment. "Shallow, I know... but still."

Fudge, she thought I was judging her! "Oh, I wasn't thinking that!" I clarified. "I um, yeah. Girls are a new development for me."

"Cute," she grinned, observing me with a tilt to her head and lidded eyes. Oh gosh, why was she looking at me like that?

"We called it *The Mystery*," Aimee said, wandering around the corner again. She sat down on my bed and crossed her legs, looking intrigued by my screen. "Sorry, I can hear everything that's going on, we're in the same room and shit... figured I may as well be social. Unless I'm disturbing your weird ass date or whatever."

"Oh, um... no this is just..." I squeaked, going properly red now. Shit the game was starting.

"My bad, still in the awkwardly pining stage then?" she continued, causing me to duck down like her words were bullets fired over my head. I turned to the game and concentrated like my life depended on it. Who was I facing? Yasuo... okay, dashy samurai dude. Could be worse, I guess. Hopefully this dude was one of those Yasuo players who thought he was hot crap but actually sucked poop through a straw.

"Uh, we did just sleep in the same bed together, we're not quite that bad," Lianna laughed awkwardly, sounding a little defensive.

"Too far, my bad..." Aimee replied apologetically. "It's just cute, that's all."

Time to interrupt that topic of conversation before things got even weirder. "I'm facing Yasuo, he's a guy who can dash through people and swing a samurai sword around," I said, a little too loud. "A lot of people like to play as him because he's got that cool factor and he's fun, but not a lot of people are actually good at him."

"Oh, is he one of those ones that the edgy people play?" Lianna asked, leaning forward and passing me a grateful look. "That seems to translate pretty much anywhere you go in nerddom."

I gave a snort. "Yeah, he's kinda like that." I didn't mention that my champion pool was definitely bordering on edgelord levels too.

The game finished loading, and it was time to play. The rules were first to five kills or two towers destroyed, and so I planned accordingly. There would be no point building for late game, so I decided to buy a bunch of items that I wouldn't normally go for if I was playing a real match.

The girls behind me went quiet as I got into the zone, beginning the dance that happened at the start of each match, where you sent out little probing attacks to see how much your opponent was going to let you get away with. It very quickly became evident that my opponent was going to let me do pretty much whatever the hell I wanted. I took him apart for my first kill before either of us had a chance to go back and buy items.

The second encounter was just as one-sided, and the third... and then I was leaning back in my chair without having so much as gotten sweaty palms. The poor guy hadn't stood a chance, like a rat trying to square up against a steamroller. A steamroller who narrated each crunch and crack to the two girls watching, because the steamroller barely had to concentrate. I turned around in my chair and grinned.

"So you won?" Lianna asked after it was over.

"Yup," I nodded, feeling a little full of myself. "That guy wasn't very good... I was kinda showing off at the end there."

Her voice took on a teasing note. "I could tell. When's your next match?"

"Uh, it depends when the others finish I guess." I honestly had no idea, since matches could go on for a short time, like mine had, or a long time.

"That was actually kinda fun to watch," Aimee commented. "Once I understood what the hell was happening that is. A guy I used to fuck on and off would play it, but he never really bothered to explain what was happening in the game. Just looked like a bunch of flashy lights."

Smiling wryly, Lianna said, "Yeah same here, except not the fucking guys thing. They talk about it at work sometimes, one dude even brings his laptop in and plays. Obviously I only half pay attention at best, and all of them had so many fucking *opinions* about it. Really tiring."

"Trust me, it's worse when you're relying on those people to win you a ranked match," I laughed, although there was a part of me that was crying internally. The number of times I'd lost an important game because one or more of my team decided to throw a tantrum over something small and silly...

Lianna gave a laugh and reached out to theatrically cup my cheek. "You are truly a strong soul to endure such hardship."

Of course, almost as soon as she'd done that, our smiles fell away and we were left staring into each other's eyes. Gosh they were so dark though, and yet so full of life. The way her pupil expanded as we continued to hold gazes, the way they flickered as she glanced between from one of my eyes to the other.

No one ever talks about how hard it is to look into *both* of a person's eyes when you're this close. You have to choose one, but I could never choose, I had to give both of them equal attention, because they were both beautiful.

Aimee's voice broke through like a brick through a window. "Glade? I think your next match is starting." Lianna and I both twitched and jerked away to look at her as she rolled her eyes at us. "Fucking lesbians, I swear," she groaned. "Pining later, dunking fools now." Neither of us lesbians argued with her statement.

The following matches were all varying degrees of easy, and so I spent some more time educating the two behind me on the game I both loved and hated passionately. That is, until I came up against my last opponent.

"Oh fuck." I felt my blood turn to ice. "It's Jack."

Lianna was the first to respond, her tone both confused and worried. "What? Who's Jack?"

"He's um..." Aimee started, before she faltered and looked over at me helplessly. I nodded. "It's okay, she knows."

Aimee blew out a breath and went ahead in explaining the situation for me. "Okay, well then yeah. Jack is Glade's old friend from highschool, from before she... you know, transitioned. He's in the dorms with us, but didn't recognise Glade when he saw her. Also he doesn't know she transitioned and stuff. It's a whole dramarific complicated mess and it's *so juicy*."

Lianna's eyes went wide as she turned to my computer screen. "And now you have to wipe the floor with his face in order to get the position you want."

"You forgot the part where you dated him," I reminded Aimee quietly, trying to keep a cheeky little grin from turning into something larger. She'd been very quick to reverse course on him after our chat over fast food. Not only that, but she'd started testing him, seeing if I was right and how far. It was honestly a little scary. She had more balls than I'd had *before* my surgery.

"I technically still am," she winced. "He's too good in bed, I figure I might as well have my fun before he inevitably does something dickish like you mentioned." Like I said, balls of steel.

I made a gagging sound while Lianna laughed, "So he isn't cool?"

“Oh hell no,” Aimee shook her head. “Dude has an ego the size of a mountain. Problem is that it doesn’t show until you hurt it, then he turns into a fucking manchild.”

“Oh...” grinned the dark eyed girl, her expression turning terrible. “Take the fucker apart then. This will be fun.”

I was so screwed. Both of the two girls on my bed were their own special brand of whirlwind storm, and I’d just inadvertently introduced them. Now they were plotting the downfall of one of my old friends... what was next? World domination? I was barely capable of being a mitigating influence on *one* of them at a time.

“He’s going to recognise my league name!” I said quickly. I didn’t think they really understood the gravity of the situation.

“Whatever happens, we got your back,” Aimee said with grim light in her eyes, like we were a team of spies about to go on a one way mission to save the world or something. “Right, Lianna?” she asked, offering a fist-bump.

“One hundred percent,” Lianna agreed, taking the offer before turning to me with a bloodthirsty expression of her own. “Do it Glade. Ruin him. Breaking fragile male egos is practically in the lesbian job description after all.”

I felt like I was about to panic with the way these two were talking. I mean, this guy was still my friend after all. Or he used to be... I mean, he’d been a bit of a dick all the way back then too. I remembered all the times he would go silent and furious if myself and the other two went against what he wanted. I thought back to how he used to rant in text chat at whichever poor sod got matched on our team in league. You could hear his breathing, each intake of air boiling and heavy.

He wasn’t constantly angry though. So long as we went along with what he wanted, he was fun and chill. He never raised his voice either, even when he was angry. Plus, everyone had flaws, everyone had something that was a little shitty about them.

But... he’d hate it if I beat him here. The kind of cold anger that I would get if I went through with this and beat him... plus the fact that this would inevitably lead to him finding out about my transition... fear crept up through my spine.

Except, I wasn’t a scared little kid to be cowed by silent, deadly looks anymore. Ryan had been hitting on me, and his girlfriend had decided I was cooler than him in a heartbeat. I had better

friends now, nice ones who genuinely cared about me as a person. I could do this. "Alright, goodness... okay. I'm going to... to *fluff* him up," I said with growing confidence. Not enough confidence to swear though. I had to save what I'd gathered for the match.

"*Fluff him up?*" Aimee chortled. "Oh Gladie, you are too precious. Never google that term."

"She really is," Lianna agreed with a small smile, leaning her chin on her hand as her big, gorgeous eyes found mine.

Giving my roommate the side eye for a second, I turned back to my computer and got ready for what was probably going to be a difficult experience. Maybe not in terms of gameplay, but it was definitely going to be tense on an emotional level.

The game swapped into champion select, neither of us able to see each other's names yet. That wouldn't happen until the loading screen to get into the match. I locked in a champion called Fizz, a small fish boy that was yet another annoying dashy champion. I did very well with those types. Jack had chosen Ziggs, a reasonably immobile character that threw bombs everywhere.

"What does your character do?" Lianna asked, leaning forward over my shoulder, her hair brushing across my ear. Ah! Proximity alert!

"U-uh, he... does... stuff," I mumbled, any thoughts that might have been in my head replaced by how gosh damn good it felt to have her close.

"Hmm?" she turned her head, nose and lips brushing my ear and cheek.

Oh goodness. I couldn't help but lean in to feel her just a little more, breathing in her warmth. She was so lovely. Aimee sighed. "Lianna, you're distracting her."

"She's not the only one," Lianna mumbled, but she backed off nevertheless. Oh gosh, why was she so... so... gosh. She smelled so nice too, the scent of her body wash overpowering me despite how faint it was. I was just so keyed into everything about her, my senses having calibrated themselves to her specific wavelength or something.

With a deep breath, I realised I was shaking slightly. My hands were jittery and my mind was frazzled. Crap... get it together Glade. Concentrate. What does your character do? "He um... he has two dash moves and... one of them makes him invulnerable while he does it. He is very frustrating to play against, especially for low skilled players like Jack. He personally hates this

champion, so I'm hoping that making him play against it will make him angry, more likely to make mistakes."

"You purposefully picked a character that would make him angry?" Lianna asked incredulously. "That's fucking devious."

Before I could reply, the game loaded in and it was time to get serious. I wasn't going to let anything stop me from doing what needed to be done now. Not even a pretty girl with eyes that seemed to have infinite depth to them.

I did what I'd done every game so far, buying items that would help me earlier rather than later in the game. Then it was off to the middle of the map, my character's little legs waddling comically the whole way. He was an old champion now and in dire need of a visual overhaul. When you had a game last ten years like this one had, it was inevitable that some of the art assets would begin to show their age.

JackOfAll: WTF. BEN?

"Ouch," Lianna said sympathetically from behind me. "He's recognised you I guess."

"Yeah..." I sighed, feeling that vulnerable little part of me take a hit as I saw that name.

JackOfAll: Dude? Wtf are you doing?

Painterlie: Trying out for the midlane position.

He kept trying to message me after that, but I ignored it all and got to work taking him apart. Our first exchange of blows was terribly one-sided. I used Fizz's annoying ability to get out of sticky situations to my advantage, diving deeper onto his side of the front line than I would have on a less mobile character and then retreating using the invulnerability dash.

JackOfAll: That was bullshit. Wtf man, give me a chance??

Instead, I calmly waited for my ability cooldowns to tick over into the ready state again, then dashed in once more. He missed everything as he flailed, desperate to stop the inevitable, but I simply dodged it all and killed him under his own tower. My escape left me on a sliver of health, but that was enough. I teleported back to base and bought more items with the gold I'd just earned by killing him.

It was a moot point however, because Jack had just rage-quit the game. In the club chat he began to rage and rant, throwing an eye opening tantrum that had me turning to look at Aimee. "You date him." I accused.

Funnily enough, I didn't actually feel all that worried that I'd made him angry. He was using the wrong pronouns for me, but the club organisers didn't seem to have noticed the discrepancy. Gamers referred to everyone else as male anyway. Otherwise... I smiled. That had felt good.

"Wow," Aimee laughed, her tone slightly high and stressed. "He did not enjoy that one bit."

"I am so glad I came to watch," Lianna said with a grin that sent a little jolt of electricity straight to my heart. Gosh she was pretty when she grinned. "Nothing makes me happier than seeing egos like that smashed to bits. Cruel, I know... but so satisfying."

My heart wasn't alive with warmth just because she was pretty though. It was the fact that I had real friends beside me now, not at all like the awful power tripping guy that I had just thrashed in league. Having friends, people who were actually, truly in my corner felt wonderful in a way I wasn't sure I'd ever fully experienced.

"Thanks you two..." I grinned bashfully. "I uh... that felt good. I'm happy."