**Going out**

“I’m sorry, but I just can’t do this anymore.”

He says to me, on what was supposed to be a romantic, moonlit night. He lets go of my hand, and looks me straight in the eyes, the sincerest face I’ve seen on him in all our time together.

“Let’s break up.”

“What the fuck!?” I yell out in exasperation, while faceplanted onto the table. “The hell does he mean *I can’t do this anymore,* huh? That almost makes it sound like *I* was the problem. Meanwhile, this little fucker can barely pull up his goddamn pants on his own! How does that make any sense? You get what I’m saying, right?”

I look up to the other side of the table, where my last solace in these dark times was sitting.

She just nods solemnly, taking another sip from her juice(?), before reaching out and rubbing my head for a moment.

“You tried your best, didn’t you?” she says.

“I did! I really tried to make it work with this dumbass.”

I down half my beer, yelling ‘Fuck you, Devin!’ out for the whole world to know.

“Shit,” I say, laying my head on the table again. “Maybe I just need to spend less time per guy…but then I feel like I might kick ‘the one’ to the curb without realizing it, you know?”

I heave a heavy sigh, while she flags the waiter for another drink.

“At the same time, wasting months on every fuckass dude I ‘click’ with on a dating app doesn’t exactly give me many chances. That’s like, five guys a year at max. Six if I swap ‘m out *real* quick.”

“A tag team?”

“Pft, yeah. Like all of them lining up going, ‘Mom says it’s my turn on the Triss Train – destination Disasterville.’”

She covers her mouth and lets out a muted(?) giggle. I smile a little as well.

“You know, I’ve never seen you with a partner before,” I continue. “Are you not interested in dating?”

She tilts her head a little and thinks, holding a single finger to the corner of her mouth.

“I’m happy as I am,” she says.

“Mm, that sounds nice. Yet here I am, a chick with no apparent head to be found, chasing love like I won’t survive another day without it.”

I heave another sigh, as the waiter brings over her drink – which she promptly nudges over to me instead.

A perfect timing, as my ample mug had been relieved of its contents not long ago.

“You’re so nice, Tessa,” I say in response to her gesture. “If only that Kevin had learned a thing or two from you.”

She smiles softly at me as an epiphany strikes me.

“I should just go out with you instead!”

By the time I finish my sentence, Tessa has become occupied nibbling on the complimentary cashews served with our drinks.

“Tess?”

She turns back to me.

“Sorry, I assumed you were saying something nonsensical again.”

“You’re so mean, Tess,” I say in response to her comment. “If only you could know how serious I am.”

She has a puzzled look on her face, as if asking *How serious are you?*

“I am more serious than I’ve ever been,” I say, grabbing her hand firmly with both of mine.

She does her little giggle, immediately brushing my comment off as a joke – which, while it was, somehow annoyed me just enough to tease her a bit further.

At least until she takes it seriously.

“I’m not joking,” I say, putting on my most sincere face.

“Really?” she asks with some hints of surprise.

“Really,” I respond. “I want to give it a shot.”

She considers it for longer than I’d expect, as I prepare the line that’ll leave her howling in laughter after she says no.

“Okay,” she answers.

Hm?

“Okay?” I ask.

“Okay,” she answers with hints of a sweet smile. “Let’s do it.”

I stare at her for a moment.

“No, sorry, I, uhh…was joking actually,” I awkwardly let out.

“Is that so? Nevermind then.”

She nonchalantly returns to her cashews, as if nothing of significance had just occurred.

“Jeez, this is the worst,” I say, faceplanting once more as I lament the death of both my joke and my relationship.

I wake up with a splitting headache. I grasp my head, as if I might be able to mould the pain away.

I get up groggily, before realizing that, to be honest, it really is not as bad as I was expecting. Considering how early in the evening my last memory was, combined with infamous ability to hold back after drinking, this has ended up quite manageable. Which, frankly, can only mean one thing.

I look over to my nightstand to find a full glass of water. Wedged under it, a paper note is peeking out.

‘*Make sure you drink it all.*

*I’ve left a get-well present for you in the fridge.*

*Love,  
Tess.*‘

As expected, it seems I’ve been taken care of again.

The glass does not go down easily, but I know better than to ignore instructions. I then try to drag myself out to the living room – with moderate success. Meanwhile, I think back to the last time I went drinking with that fucker Devin. Although it (quite literally) pains me to use my head in this state, I clearly recall him getting plastered way before me, then having to drag his sorry ass home first before stumbling back.

I vow to give Tess the princess treatment next time she’s over, as I open up the fridge to scour for breakfast, as well as see what this alleged present is all about. Inside, I find a batch of home-made scones.

You baked fucking scones? Am I King Charles or what?

I generously spread out my jam and cream (which she must’ve bought on top) and, with a quick bite, am immediately reminded why these are my favourite. Feeling like a god damn princess myself, I snap a picture with the cone still in hand.

*‘They were delicious,’* I add as text, before sending it Tess’ way. As I see the message timestamp come up, it finally dawns on me that it’s almost afternoon already.

I mourn the loss of my morning classes while effortlessly deciding that I’ve missed them now anyway – I might as well take my time and enjoy here.

As I await my response, I absentmindedly scroll up our chat. Ignoring everything from yesterday (it was mostly me crying), I laugh at our silly joking around before ending up on a selfie she took a few weeks ago. *“I’m changing barbers,”* written under some of the bluntest bangs I’ve had the pleasure of laying eyes upon.

*Cute,* I find myself thinking, before her response snaps me out of my thoughts.

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{response text}  
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{Instagram stalking}  
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I shut down the app and wonder what the hell I’ve been doing, before finally heading out to uni.

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{class monologue}  
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I exit class, remembering none of it. As I walk into the hallway, my eyes immediately gravitate towards a wild Tessa, who appears to be chatting with Levin from her course. With just a cursory glance, I immediately understand the situation – poor, lonely Levin is looking for a lover, and my kind to a fault Tessa is, of course, candidate number one.

I understand where you’re coming from, Levin, but I can’t allow you to hit on her so blatantly. She does that cute thing where giggles into her hand, and I immediately start to make my way over at high speed – there’s no way that move won’t be an instakill, after all.

Before I arrive, however, another challenger enters the ring – a lady who looks vaguely as if I may have seen her in past. She reaches up and plants a kiss on Levin’s cheek.

This is obviously her way of trying to pull his attention away from Tessa. There truly are too many losing heroines in this world. I truly weep for you, being faced with such an unbeatable opponent – although Tess is too high aimed for just some guy anyway. Then, Levin puts his arm around the new girl, before kissing her back. Then, the two walk off while Tess waves.

Hm.

While I’m still contemplating the errors of my ways, Tess has suddenly closed the distance – showing up directly in front of me.

“I see you’re feeling better?” she asks.

Finally snapping out of my strange trance, I answer, “Thanks to you.”

She smiles softly at me without a response. Then, she beckons back to the other two.

“Do you know them?”

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Chapter 2??

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{morning after}  
  
  
{playful banter after class}

Suddenly, I feel an arm with an oddly familiar weight behind it around my shoulder.

“Trish, my bish, how the fuck you doing these days? I heard you and Devin finally broke up.”

“Finally? What’s that supposed to mean?” I say to the man hanging onto me.

“Oh come on, you two were about as hopeful as a pair of baby shoes. It was never going to last.”

“Well, it’s a good riddance either way,” I respond.

“You say that, but I bet you got all pissy and drank your tits off again,” he says while snickering right to my face.

“There’s no better way to forget than with a drink in hand.”

“Attagirl, you get it,” he laughs.

But then, he seems to take a closer look, like a detective inspecting the evidence.

“You don’t seem so mad about it though. Usually, you’d be lashing out a few days longer. Will I even need the list of emocore songs I compiled for karaoke?”

“Well, maybe I’ve matured a little more. Have you considered that?”

He busts a gut at that remark – even slapping his leg for added effect.

…

I hate how observant this fucker gets sometimes.  
…

“You done yet?” I ask.

“Ah, yeah, I’m fine,” he says, winding down. “That was a good one though, that was a good one.”

“But for real,” he continues, “I bet there’s something more to it. Did you find a new guy already or what?”

Trying to prevent a reoccurrence of the previous incident that just passed, I take a moment to consider my response.

“So you did, huh?” he says, while I’m still in thought. “I didn’t know you had vultures hanging about.”

“I didn’t even say anything!” I protest, but he just laughs it off again.

“You’re about as subtle as a peacock, Triss.”

I don’t grace the comment with a response.

“Well, I’ll tell you I didn’t have any ‘vultures’, whatever that means.”

“Hmm,’ he goes, seemingly going back into detective mode. After observing my face for a moment, he dials back and looks off into the distance, as if the answer will be there.

Coincidentally, this happens to be the direction where Tessa is exiting right now – who he looks onto like a sharpshooter.

“You had quite a nice vibe going earlier, didn’t you Triss? Don’t tell me…”

I don’t tell him.

“Really? You two actually got together? That’s incredible.”

“Did aliens give you mind-reading tech or something?” I ask, while I wonder what’s supposedly ‘incredible’ about it.

“It came as a bonus with the probe,’ he jokes. “Still, I never knew you liked women.”

“Huh? I don’t”

“The fuck do you mean you don’t? You’re literally dating one.”

“What? That’s like, an exception. I don’t think it means anything.”

He looks me dead in the eye – seemingly staring right into my soul.

“Then, have you fucked yet?’ he asks.

“I’m not telling you that.” I respond plainly.

“That doesn’t sound like a no to me.”

He just looks at me again.

“Did you like it?”

“I’m *definitely* not telling you that.”

“That doesn’t sound like a not to me either.”

He puts his hand on his chin, deep in thought. I’m speechless as a mute right now, so I have no words to break that train either. After a few moments of listening only to the chatter of students in the halls, he finally breaks our mutual silence.

“I think you’d best come with me, Triss.”

“Come with you? To where?”

“Tesco’s,” he says. “I need to get milk.”

Sitting in the passenger seat of Liam’s car while the radio blares shitty mumble rap, I wonder what in the world brought me here.

“Who the fuck put this shit-ass song on?” he says.

“You, dumbass! Instead of explaining what the hell I’m doing here.”

“I’m getting to it okay, I’m getting to it.”