

VI Paige

I became Kim's number one enemy with one text, "Hey Kim. Paige and I need to be up front with you about something... we started seeing each other. We didn't mean for any of this to happen but we got really close kind of fast."

My somewhat-friend, Kim, fell hard for Paige. A girl at our school that was in a two year relationship with a football player. In March of my junior year, I hung out with Kim and Paige a couple times in group settings.

One late night I received a text from Paige, "I'm sorry for texting you outside of the group chat but I need someone to talk to right now and you were the first person I could think of."

I was confused because we'd never had a one-on-one conversation but I wrote back, "Hey there. You're fine. What's up?"

"I can't text Kim but I broke up with my boyfriend. I'm afraid if I text her then she'll think I broke up with him to be with her. I didn't. I'm really sad though. I don't want to be alone. Would it be so weird if I came over tonight? Maybe we could smoke together?"

I didn't realize how many friendship opportunities I was missing when I didn't smoke. It was such an easy way to connect with random people.

I couldn't say no. When she came over, I let her cry to me. She explained that she needed to leave him because she was having complicated thoughts. Paige told me that she liked Kim but not in the way Kim wanted. Though, she did admit that Kim opened her up to the thought of being with a girl.

I had my first smoking buddy. We consistently reached out to each other, "Hey, are you down to smoke?"

We made a goal to create the ultimate smoking playlist. Our favorite singer became G-Eazy. We discovered all of his music together. She was cute when she was passionate about a song. She would sing to it while pretending her phone was a microphone.

I opened up to her about my exes and my mental health problems. She opened up to me about the death of her mom. That was a hard story to hear.

"You're just easy to talk to. I enjoy being around you," she texted me.

"I could make being around me a little more enjoyable for you," I replied.

"Oh yeah? What do you mean by that?" She asked.

"Ah, nevermind. Forget I said that."

She didn't let it go. I put myself in that situation and I decided to see it through, "We could kiss?"

She drove to my house immediately. We were having our typical car session and I leaned over the center console to kiss her. She paused and placed her hand on my cheek, "Let's go to your room."

I shut my car off and got out so fast that I almost forgot my phone.

"Did you... Did you like that?" I asked.

"You couldn't tell? Of course I did," she let out a big laugh.

I smiled. Her laugh was loud and alarming but somehow charming at the same time.

"What have we been doing, Paige?"

"Hanging out? Having a good time? I'm not really sure. Just a few weeks ago we barely knew each other," she answered.

"I think I might kind of have some feelings for you, but please don't let that stress you out. I'm totally fine just being friends. I know you just went through your break up."

"I wouldn't be in your bed right now if I wasn't having those same feelings."

On May 9, 2016 I wrote Paige a poem that ended with asking her to be my girlfriend. She didn't get to answer me until the end of the school day. When we met to walk to the parking lot, she greeted me with a big smile on her face. She handed me a note:

*You wrote me a cute note
(But I don't know what to rhyme note with.)
It was a poem
(Shit I don't know what to rhyme poem with either.)
So you asked me this question
(...I'm done trying to rhyme.)
My answer babe, is...
Wait... kiss me now.*

Paige was the first girl that I got introspective with. Our conversations weren't just about our days or hobbies. We embraced our dreams, ambitions, and imagination. We had this rule that if one of us made an insecure comment then we would have to list five reasons we loved ourselves.

Paige made every day of summer 2016 an adventure even when we had nowhere to go. She brought me up to her bedroom and showed me three joints that she rolled. She said, "Follow me," as she opened her bedroom

window. We crawled out her window. On the roof, I sat in between her legs as we pointed out constellations to each other.

She asked me if we could go to the store to buy decorations for her mother's grave. I helped her shop. We picked out a purple butterfly garden decoration. I drove her to her mother's gravestone. We stood in front of the stone and held hands. She introduced me, "Hi mom, this is my girlfriend. She's been taking good care of me."

Paige loved posting pictures of me. She followed me with her camera like a mom at her child's recital. I cooked dinner for her while wearing my bathing suit after a day of swimming. She posted a story on snapchat, "My girl cooks for me." The funny part is that I'm not even that good at cooking, but she treated me like I was good at everything.

Even work couldn't keep us apart. I brought my dog to the gymnasium that she worked at. She was obsessed with Bailey. During her break, we sat on the grass and all three of us ate ice cream together. It was her idea to let Bailey have his own cup.

On the weekends, she would drive over an hour to my softball tournaments. One time I was standing on the field waiting for the next batter to walk up to the plate. I looked over to the sideline to see Paige saying hello to my dad with Bailey on a leash and flowers in her hand.

Paige surprised me with tickets to see G-Eazy's concert in August. I'm not sure what happened or why it happened but something hit me that night at the concert. I look back at the pictures and see some sort of misery in my eyes.

I held Paige in my arms in front of me as we stood listening to the music. G-Eazy played his song, Tumblr Girls. The lyrics rang in my head like I was having an epiphany. Everyone around us was screaming the song and somehow it felt like they were singing it at me:

*Right now I can't feel my heart
For your feelings there's no place
Yeah, but you knew that from the start
You and I were made of glass, we'd never last
Meant to die, we moved fast and then we crashed*

I stared at the back of her head while pondering our entire relationship. Our bodies were so close but something was keeping my emotions distant. *Maybe we aren't meant to be.* I shoved the thoughts back. *Is she what I*

want? All I could give was a half smile when she turned her head to look at me. *No, this is good. We are good.*

I was quiet for the rest of the night. I couldn't tell if my ears were ringing from the noise outside or inside of my head. I didn't want her to know about the thoughts I was having so I had to compensate with physical affection. I held her and kept closing my eyes attempting to find the feeling of the first time I ever touched her. It never came back.

I couldn't escape those thoughts after the night of the concert. Something was missing for me but I stayed hoping that eventually I would feel the way I was supposed to.

After the concert, I was making fewer jokes. I slowly stopped initiating hang outs or touches. Her laugh that I found so charming became piercing.

Eventually, everything she did annoyed me. I couldn't recognize the cynic I became. We took a walk on our normal trail. She did a cartwheel and let out a laugh. I rolled my eyes and kept walking. I couldn't hide it.

She could feel the tension. But when she brought it up, I blamed my mental health. I isolated myself. Paige could only push so hard.

She texted me, "Text me when you can please."

"I'm talking to my sister about what I should do."

"Okay. You're okay, I'm okay," she said, sounding like she was trying to calm herself down.

"But I don't think we're okay," I sent.

"But we can get okay," she insisted.

"Not right now..." I replied.

"I just wanted to help. But okay we're done then," she stated.

Paige checked herself into an inpatient psych facility the next night. By the time she got discharged, I was already seeing Marissa.