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Olivia

Sophomore year I received a notification on Snapchat. I had no idea what was coming. It read, “OliviaRose added you!”

“Hey!” Olivia messaged me.

“Hey, what’s up?” I replied.

“I know this must be so weird that I added you but I was wondering if I could talk to you about something?”

“For sure, I’m always here to listen,” I said.

“Okay. Random question... How did you know you like girls?” She asked. That’s a telltale question that queer girls recognize immediately.

“Well, that’s kind of a hard one to explain. I’ve had boyfriends but I caught myself getting crushes on girls. I used to think it meant I wanted to be like them but I realized it was that I wanted to be *with* them. Then, I kissed a girl and everything became clear for me,” I explained.

“Okay yeah, that’s valid,” she replied. I waited for a follow-up message, but none came that night.

We walked by each other in the hallway at school between classes. I smiled at her and she gave me a small nod. I knew more about her than her closest friends. I read between the lines. She didn’t say it outright. She didn’t have to. Nothing was confirmed. But I knew one thing for sure... If there was something to find out, I’d be the first to know.

A new girl entered the picture. The over-romanticizing began. I went through everything: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram. Every photo. Every caption. Trying to figure out who she was.

“I think I want to try to kiss a girl,” she messaged me while I was in class.

“Are you asking me something or telling me?” I replied.

“I think maybe both, if you’d be into that?”

I immediately pulled up her most recent picture on Instagram and started fantasizing what it would feel like to kiss her. Strawberry blonde hair, blue eyes, and perfect teeth. It felt too good to be true. *Maybe she’s just fucking with me?*

The more we messaged, the more real it felt. She was able to be open with me. I wanted to know everything about her. She was obsessed with The Beatles. She told me that she was adopted from Russia. Every new thing I learned pulled me in closer.

“Meet me in the bathroom on the third floor so we can finally kiss,” she messaged me.

I smirked at my phone and messaged back, “I’ll kiss you but the first time is not going to be in our school’s bathroom. I want to do this right.”

“Oh you’re so smooth,” she replied.

Our first kiss wasn’t really any better than it would have been in the school’s bathroom. In fact, it probably would have made for a more interesting story if it happened that way.

We were both busy girls. I was on the varsity softball team and she was on the varsity tennis team. We both had practice almost every day. I loved when our practices were at the same time. The softball field had a decent view of the tennis court and I could watch her play.

We had a rainy day and both of our practices got cancelled. We jumped at the opportunity. “Come over after school today,” I messaged her.

She told me to meet her in the lobby after the final bell, and she would drive us to my house. We were two giggly girls avoiding eye contact on the ride. It was the first time we were together, alone, in person.

My basement was my go-to hook up spot at my house. There was a futon and TV. I would bring girls down there to “watch a movie.” It was the most private part of my house.

I brought her inside and my dad was standing in the kitchen, “Hi Olivia... You were adopted from Russia, what’s that like?”

My face got so red. *What the fuck, dad?* Olivia handled it well. She laughed and explained to him that she was adopted as a baby so she has no real memory of being in Russia.

I was antsy to get her downstairs. I interrupted their conversation, “Okay dad, we’re going to watch a movie.”

I grabbed her hand and practically dragged her down the stairs. I waved my hands around and said, “Well, this is my basement.”

It got silent. We were looking at each other. I stepped closer to her and placed my hands on her waist. I pulled her in and our lips met. Her lips were so soft. She smiled and whispered, “Okay... Yeah... I definitely like this.”

She didn’t stay long. After the movie ended, she kissed me one more time and left. The smile didn’t leave my face that night.

Olivia had her flaws but they didn’t scare me away. She was obsessed with her image. She had an app that told her the best time to post a picture on Instagram. She sent me ten pictures at a time asking which one was the

best. The crazy part was that each picture looked the same to me. Her head would be moved one degree of an angle.

She struggled a lot with what coming out might look like. She didn't want people to look at her differently. She considered taking me to prom with her but apologized when she said yes to a football player.

He posed in a picture, both with big smiles holding up a big sign, "Prom?" There he stood, claiming a piece of her that I would never get. There was a lingering feeling that I was a secret she was running from. She could feel my anxiety surrounding what we were. She handed me a note at school:

Hey Babe,

Well, I'm not really sure where to start since I never write people notes... haha also I apologize for my horrible handwriting. I'm sorry you didn't wake up in the best mood today but I hope you start to cheer up! I cannot wait to hang out with you later today! I just want to hold you in my arms for as long as possible. I'm not sure if you know this but I like you. Like, I really like you. I'm head over heels for you and you're on my mind 24/7! I smile more and laugh more because of you so thanks for being so AMAZING! Have a great day, babe! You're beautiful btw.

*Yours truly,
Olivia*

Her words wrapped around my brain. I believed her. *She really likes me. We can be something. We will be something.*

Prom night was hard to get through. I laid in bed with a messy bun, sweatpants, and a bowl of ice cream. My phone never left my hand. Scrolling through all the posted photos of Olivia with her friends... and this football player by her side. I knew exactly how he must have felt with her in his arms because I'd memorized the feeling.

You can't un-feel that: The jealousy. The yearning. The feeling that it could have been you, smiling next to her in that long, dark blue dress.

She didn't view us as normal. Our feelings weren't enough for her to accept herself.

Coming out at such a young age left me with less patience for those that were still trying to understand their feelings. I pushed her too hard. "We're no different than anyone else. If your friends can't accept you for who you are then they weren't your friends in the first place," I told her.

"I'm just not ready. I can't be where you need me to be," she said.

My first rejection brought out parts of me that I didn't know existed. Rejection from Olivia was more to do with us being at different stages with our sexuality. She wasn't willing to fully embrace hers.

Her actual words meant nothing when all I could hear was that I wasn't enough.

I should have accepted her walking away from us. In reality, I poured myself into her.

I spent more time than I'd like to admit sending her paragraph after paragraph. I believed that if I said the right thing, she'd stay. One text I wrote said, "Olivia, I know you better than anyone else. You pretend not to give a shit what anyone else thinks but it actually consumes every thought you have. You need to be your best but that stops you from appreciating who you are right now. You're everything anyone could ever want."

I didn't know I was capable of that type of yearning and begging. My insecurities were exposed. Desperation dripped out of me with every message I sent. Her cup was overflowing while mine was left empty. She made her decision. Our relationship never got labeled. She went back to her "normal" life. The beautiful, popular athlete. I became the redacted piece of her past.