I wait impatiently for my last class of the day to end as I doodle in my notebook. The teacher rambles about life at home as she often does, something about her husband or the divorce or a turkey she saw in the backyard. I have her fully tuned out (as I often do when she gets like this) and I'm itching to see Merri. I notice one of my classmates come in late and flash a slip. Not just any classmate, either- that's Minerva, a friend of mine that I didn't see during lunch. I smile halfheartedly at her but she doesn't notice. That, or she deliberately ignores me. I fight the urge to fret about whether she's still mad at me.

Not that I have anything to apologize for. She's the one who started making accusations- in public- that I've been

acting weird! So what if Merrick and I have been closer recently? I know she's, like, maaaybe into him (it's hard to tell), but like- come on girl, jealousy isn't healthy! It's not my fault she isn't his type, after all. But...wait.

My pencil slows to a stop halfway through shading in a bird. I frown as I recall something. She...is his type, though, or at least, she is more his type than I am- she's cuter than me, better at doing makeup (I think so anyway), shares more of his weirdo nerd interests, and all. She's even a better artist than I am, when her ADHD shuts up long enough to let her create. Shouldn't...she be winning? I mean. I'm GLAD not, obviously. My loyal Merry is mine and I want it that way. But even knowing that, I can't shake that it feels implausible somehow I got to him first.

I shake my head. I won't let my relationship be undermined like that, not by something unbecoming like pity. I resume working on my cute little bird drawing. The teacher keeps going with her rambling. Minerva hurriedly grabs her book and a mechanical pencil so she can get to taking notes.

I decide to offer her mine on the way home, as a sort of olive branch. As much as I adore him, I shouldn't allow him to drive wedges in my other relationships like this. Besides, I've known her for a long time. She's bailed me out of worse, I owe it to her. I flip back a few pages and...

Damn. We really didn't learn *anything* this class period. I roll my eyes and flip back to the bird doodle. The teacher must have tenure or something, I figure. I'll just offer

to catch Minerva up on what she missed after class ends, then. That sounds fun.

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"Oh yeah, you did miss class yesterday, didn't you..." I say quietly to Minerva as I perform the daily ritual of swapping my things between my backpack and locker. It's been a few days since the first time that happened. She stands closeby, her brown hair sporting the little braids that she likes. She stands awkwardly, with her hands clasped nervously in front of her. I try not to interrogate the "why" on that front. It seems like it would be rude, you know? "What've you been doing?"

"Well, after my outburst a week or so ago, I've been seeing the councilor..." she says softly as I finish and close my locker. "I

didn't like her at first, but...you know, it's funny. I can't remember quite...why? She's *so* pretty..." here she giggles and swishes her waist around like a lovesick schoolgirl. I chuckle along with her for the sake of politeness. Has Minerva always liked girls...? Not that it's my business, of course! I just...I'm pretty sure she hasn't. Not that I know of, in any case. "Gossh...oh. Heck!" She wriggles adorably. "I um...she told me to apologize. To you. About that, whole. Thing that happened." She laughs nervously. "And uh. Yeah. That. I'm sorry."

"Forrrr~?" I tease, well aware that she's really floundering here. She's apologizing, I can bully her a little. That's allowed.

"For um..." she squirms and fidgets. Her eyes dance all about. I suspect for a

moment she was strongarmed into this- after all, that *was* how she made it sound- but I dismiss those doubts. Normally when someone forces an apology and they hesitate to say it, they seem...upset. Begrudging, I guess? But here- here she seems honestly more like she's just *confused.* "Well...for the other day." She nods and swallows, then seems to gain confidence as commitment forces momentum onto her. "Yes. Exactly that." Those words are spoken with a stance and tone more assertive and confident than I'm accoustumed to from her. "I'm sorry for yelling at you about Merrick the other day." She deflates as soon as she's finished the sentence, like an actor stepping backstage and exhaling the essence of the character they'd assumed.

"Apology accepted!" I reassure her with a soft giggle. I walk up and kiss her on the cheek. I have no idea *why,* mind you, but it needed to happen. We've never done that before. Maybe that's why our friendship broke down so easily. Best to be careful.

I kiss her again on the other cheek. It feels good and right. More kisses mean more friendship, I guess. Without realizing what I'm doing I move my lips to hers and give her another little kiss. We're standing so wonderfully close now. I owe her councilor. Losing Nerry over something as trivial as boy jealousy would be silly. She blushes super intensely and leans backwards- not a "get away from me" kind of maneauver, just a shy one. I resist the urge to follow her and settle for sensually placing my

hands around hers. "We're besties, darling," I purr gently. "I forgive you completely."

"Th...thank you...?" Minerva stammers. I take the hint and back off slightly, even though I *really* wanna kiss her some more. Just feathery little pecks all over her face, you know, to be super friendly. Boundaries come first.

"I'm sorry, myself," I say as I think back to our argument the other day. "I was...mean. Much moreso than nessecary." I had to see the counselor about it too but that's neither here nor there. "You wanna come over, maybe? Mom's cooking today, I know your parents aren't...very good at that."

"Um...sure. Just let me...let my parents know."

"Of course~"

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I sit down. It's after school. I have detention. This is day two, after I had a nasty fight with one of my closest friends. The door opens and...Mistress steps in.

"You'll be serving the rest of your detention with me, Ms. Silkist," she says to me with her usual disarming smile. "I assume that's okay?"

"That's- yes, of course," I answer as I practically jump to my feet. I follow her out of the classroom and through the hallway. The walk to her office isn't very long, but it gives me time to worry. I find myself hoping that, whatever's going on, I'm not in trouble with Mistress too. We step into her

office and she locks the door.

"Good girl. I see you're wearing the shorter skirts I reccomended?"

"Yes Mistress," I answer. It feels good to call her Mistress out loud. "They're comfy just like you said!"

"Are you taking care to ensure you don't accidentally give anyone a view?" She asks as she gently lifts a notebook out of a drawer. She also grabs a pencil. I blink, shocked.

"A view? What do you...mean?" I ask, having zero clue what she meant and therefore being very concerned. "Of my skirt? How exactly would I hide that?" Mistress giggles and jots down some notes. Her smile reassures me that I can't

be in too much trouble...I think.

"Good girl," she says as she writes something down. "Have you worn shorts under them?"

"No, why?"

"Does that make you nervous?"

"No, why?"

"Splendid." She jotted some more down and gestured for me to take a seat. I did so without hesitation. I guess my questions weren't that important. I could go without answers. "I hear you had an...let's call it an altercation, with a friend. A little lady named...let's see..." she reached over and flipped through some papers in a filing cabinet. "A little miss Finkroft. Is this

information accurate, miss Silkist?"

"Yes Mistress," I answer without hesitation even though I want to hide it. "Minerva Finkroft." Mistress nods gently and jots down a few more notes onto the paper. She looks focused but hasn't quite lost the soft edge she normally has about her. "Am I in...trouble?"

"I bailed you out of detention, didn't I?" She says, and then giggles. "I joke, of course. You're serving it here but that doesn't mean you aren't serving it." I'm glad to hear her joking, because it means I'm probably not in too much hot water. I think. "Now, tell me about the altercation. What happened? As I understand it, you two are best friends and don't fight often."

"Well..." I sigh. "She made...some extremely

rude comments about Merry and I." The counselor raised one eyebrow ever so slightly. I pause but I can only be quiet for so long. "She said we were...'inappropriate,' and like...that I kiss and cuddle him too much. I told her that was no way to talk to me about my boyfriend, and she..." I flinch. The memory feels hot, fresh, shameful. "She stood up and raised her voice, and I got up and yelled back, and I said she was just jealous, you know, which *really* upset her, but she was saying that I've been acting weird even before this, and...I don't know." I shrug and feel embarassed. "It escalated. The topic kinda shifted away from Merry onto how I've been acting, I guess. It got...well, it got more intense, like I said..." I sheepishly glance at the counselor to check if I've said anything wrong.

"I see," she says. "Is that all that happened?"

"I mean yeah, I guess," I say. "She stormed off eventually. I sat down and finished my food."

"Good to know, food is important," she reassures me. "Notice anything at home, while we're here?"

"No," I say, "why do you ask?"

"No particular reason," she says and reaches under her desk. "Here. Let's do some stress management exercises. Watch this pocketwatch here..."

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I kiss Merrick on the lips and invade his mouth using my tongue. He melts around me like candy, which pleases me greatly. My hands clutch passionately at the back of his head and I fling a leg around him, knee hooking his hip. I suck eagerly on his plush, thickly lipsticked lips and he gingerly puts his arms around me. After we kiss for a while I recall vaguely that Minerva is there and stop, lest we make her a third wheel. I nuzzle him and look over at her.

"S...sorry," I say with a blush. "Got swept up, haha."

"That's alright besty," she sighs almost...dreamily. I shrug off the urge to

ask what that's about and drop my leg back down. "You haven't really...been here for a minute, have you?" I ask Minerva. Racking my brain doesn't give me anything.

"I guess not, now that I think of it," she replies. She wanders, seeming a tad dazed. Merry and I follow but not before sharing a look of confusion. This behavior seems strange from her. "Everything looks about the same...your dad out on business as usual?"

"Yeah," Merry answers. "Not a huge deal, he always is."

"He always is," I feel almost compelled to chime in. It is as though I am briefly taken up with the motion of some Other, like a hand puppet brought to life and made to

speak with its operator's voice. "Nothing out of the ordinary. Just us girls here!" I continue as the animating pressure chooses yet more lines for me to read. "And Merry, of course. Our sweet little Merry."

"Sweet little Merry~" Minerva sighs happily in agreement. Some part of me stirs with petty agitation. She doesn't get to call him that! "Your makeup looks good, by the way." She smiles at him. I stuff that part of me away as best I can. "You do it yourself, Merry?"

"No, uh..." he answers in a sheepish tone. He blushes a little and reaches up to fiddle with his hair. "It was, actually, mom and Perri that, ah, that. They did it for me." He offers a flustered smile. "They always do." He shrinks nervously. It's all I can do to

resist squealing over poor, sweet little Merry at the top of my lungs and hugging him as hard as I can. Our sweet little Merry...

"Awww, you're so sweet~" I coo over him in a high pitched voice accompanied by a bright smile. I turn to my besty, feeling self-satisfied. "Yup! Mom and I help our sweet little Merry do his cute little makeup eeeevery morning! Isn't that wonderful?" I brag. I put one hand all posh on my sternum and puff out my chest a bit too, in a classical sort of self-important princess kind of way. Asserting my dominance is fun.

"Aww, that is cute," Minerva says as she nods along and looks his face over in detail. Part of me wonders if she's scrutinizing my handiwork for flaws to

critique but I know better than to listen to it. We've been Bee Eff Effs for what, most of our lives now? She wouldn't be *that* bitter, no matter how robbed she felt. "I never actually thought about how you might look...dolled up like that," she says. Her voice sounds almost contemplative this time. She softens her gaze and her head tilts sideways a bit. "It's...a good look on you, Merry," she says with a slight blush of her own. It bothers me a little less this time. I suppose that's nothing too strange- she's complimenting my handiwork as much as she is flattering him, really.

"Tha-thank you, Minerva," Merry says with another flustered little giggle. "Are you...still upset about..." I feel something twist in my stomach as he works up courage. No, you fool! Leave that be! There's seriously no need to bring that up

right now, it hasn't even been two weeks! I gesture wildly at him to stop. He sees it, he notices! He trails off. He has no idea what I'm trying to communicate.

*No! Fuckin'...STOP! ABORT! RIGHT NOW!* I want to scream. I feel certain my face must be glowing crimson. He wantches me confused, his face evoking a golden retriever whose owner did in fact not throw the ball. *CHANGE TOPIC, DUMMY! NOW!*

"About..." his voice weakly pitters back to life like a struggling lawnmower engine, "a-about, you know..." he does a gesture of his own using both hands. This one is demure and timid. He points with uncertainty back and forth between himself and I. "...us? Being, like...a couple now?" God DAMNIT.

"I mean...not...really," she laughs. If I didn't know any better I'd say she sounded robotic and stiff. Her tone comes across naturally enough, but the pacing of her words has some kind of quality that I can't place, but it makes me feel like I'm watching a stage show by unprepared ametuers. "I had an outburst, I had time to chill out, I saw a counselor about it," she explains. "We're cool now. At least, I think we are?" She stops and glances my way. I nod along and smile, which prompts her to continue. "And like-" she sounds less stilted from here out- "I don't know, thinking about it? I can't even fully recall why it bothered me so much. I try to recall what was driving me during my...outburst..." she slows to a stop for a moment and looks apologetic, "but it's just so...fuzzy. I get embarassed thinking about it honestly. I'm...sorry, Perri." She offers me

a nice inviting smile. "BFFs?" Her arms open wide for a hug. I feel moved.

I am moved.

Literally.

When did I get my arms around-

"BFFs!" I cry with wild abandon. My mouth dives onto the soft, kissable texture of her skin and I shower my besty's face in quick little kisses, mostly her cheeks and her bright enticing lips. She giggles and squirms but I'm holding her tight...so tight. I love my best friend. I love Minerva. I haven't kissed her enough. I won't let go until I have.

"Perriiiii!" My bestest sweetest tastiest kissable-est friend in the whole wide world

whines with a great big grin during her earnest but misguided attempts to escape. "Heyyyyy!"

"I'll stop if you tell me to," I giggle. I keep kissing.

"Well no," she admits with the cutest puppy dog expression I've ever seen. "Keep kissing me, b-but-" I cram my tongue into her mouth to silence her. She goes compliently quiet and begins to lick my tongue. Hers lavishes mine in touches and sliding strokes as I squeeze her body against me. Even though this is a nice friendly make out session, I still make sure to adjust my grip. I move my arms away from their barbaric position clamped around hers.

One goes low and wraps around her hips

to press her waist firmer against mine. The other slips up under her armpit, the lays itself across the skin of her upper back. I rub softly, then take that hand sliiiiithering up her neck and into her soft, silky hair to clutch the back of her head. My more inexperienced friend reciprocates, but her movements are not as fluid, as graceful, as...friendly. I feel suddenly proud to be such a good friend, teaching my besty how to make out. I press my boobs up against hers and kiss harder to reassure her that I'm in charge. She tries to resist for a moment but it doesn't last. Her nature guides her back into rosey, sweet, sapphic submission where she belongs. She moans a delicious little moan that enters my mouth before it escapes hers. I rub the back of her head. I grind my crotch against her. She groans pathetically, now well aware who calls the shots in our beautiful

relationship.

Relationship? Friendship.

*Friendships are a kind of relationship,* a memory reminds me. It speaks in an older female voice, one carrying a role of guidance and authority. Its kindness and welcoming gentleness compel me to see things how it says.

Of course...

Our relationship. Mmm.

She slip my tongue out of its newest sheath and offer my BFF a confident grin. She pants, looking shocked but also excited.

"My...first kiss..." she whimpers.

"Good girl," I purr. "Now give me your second."