

A Recipe for Eggnog

It was a cold morning in late November and Markus only had one thing on his mind: When did his best friend and roommate Harvey become so attractive? On a fundamental, logical level Markus understood that puberty hit Harvey in such a way to make him attractive, in that boy band member kind of way. He could understand how someone could be into him, But now *he* was becoming attracted to him. They had known each other in elementary school, went through middle and high school together and even graduated the same college, and in all that time Markus never had any feelings for Harvey besides friendship.

He was shaken out of his introspection by Harvey speaking up. "Hey, Markus? The eggs?" What did he mean, the eggs,? Markus smelled the air and *oh shit the eggs were almost burning he was about to screw up their breakfast and those were the last eggs they had and it was his turn to go get the groceries and he wanted to put it off for as long as possible considering the lockdown and oh shit oh fuck okay plate plate plate*, Markus was downright panicking trying to scramble for a plate to put the eggs on. He saved them at the last second.

"Shit, sorry Vee, hope you don't mind them being over hard." With the eggs out of the frying pan, it was easy for Markus to finish preparing breakfast.

"Hey, it happens, at least they're still edible and the place is standing. Why'd you zone out like that though?" As Markus put the plate in front of Harvey, his eyes wandered over him, how Harvey was balling his fists up in a relaxed position, how his posture was softened and nowhere near as aggressive as during high school. Were Harvey's eyes always this pretty? Were his lips always this soft? Markus wanted to just lean forward and-

"Lips." He managed to tear himself out of that train of thought at the last second. Harvey was his roommate, his best friend, and as far as he knew both of them were straight. Their college dorm conversations about their mutual attraction to women were honest and sincere and lacking any of the usual macho talk he overheard in locker rooms during gym class. Harvey awkwardly laughed, wiggling in his seat ever so slightly.

"Quarantine making you stir crazy too, huh? Do you miss going on dates and hanging out with girls that much?" Markus looked away in embarrassment, but Harvey cleared his throat to make him look back. "You know, if you're that desperate, I could pretend to be a girl for you." Markus gulped in surprise at Harvey's proposition. Harvey, for his part, was blushing up a storm, his eyes turned down and away from Markus, his hands in his lap, fidgeting with his thumbs. It wasn't a suggestion Markus was expecting from Harvey, and so to preemptively shut himself up and prevent himself from saying something stupid he gobbled down his breakfast in seconds, and while rushing to his bedroom called out

"Sorry, just realised I have a Zoom meeting this morning in a minute see you later bye." with the speed of a certain blue hedgehog. With one turn of his key to make sure his door was locked, Markus crashed into his bed, face first, and screamed into his pillow. "Vee, why'd you have to go and suggest something like that you idiot you complete dumbass *you absolute oblivious little shit!*" After about three minutes of this, Markus got himself together enough to analyse his feelings further.

Up until two weeks ago, he was certain he was only into women, but developing feelings for Harvey threw a wrench in that theory. He started wondering whether he might be bi, and so to test the waters started picturing all kinds of men. Buff dudes, dad bod chubby guys, twinkies, femboys, hunks, normal dudes. All of them shared the same emotional response from him: He'd be into them if they were women. Imagining Harvey made his heart race though, like a horse in the Kentucky Derby.

Vee, for their part, was stunned by Markus rushing off to his bedroom and locking the door. It was Sunday, after all, neither of them had work, Vee knew that for sure. With a sigh, they began eating their breakfast. Even with Markus messing up the eggs it was still good, Vee simply adored his cooking skills. Had they not been roommates in college as well, Vee would have sustained themselves on instant ramen. Vee knew that Markus must have rushed off due to their suggestion, but they couldn't really think of other ways to subtly check whether Markus would be transphobic if Vee was to come out. Hell, Vee wasn't even completely sure if they were trans or not, they hadn't really had the option to experiment with presentation and pronouns and names in quarantine due to worrying over how Markus would react.

And they really did care for Markus' opinion of them. He had always been there for Vee, protecting them from harm, encouraging them to do their best, making sure they were doing okay. Markus being half a foot taller than them only made what they believed to be a one sided crush worse. Nevermind that they had been holding in the crush since college. They finished breakfast, did the dishes, and sat down on the couch, waiting for Markus to walk out of his bedroom to join them.

It took Markus a further two hours to calm down enough to exit his room and join Vee on the couch. Vee was sitting with their knees to their chest, holding them close. While they always felt safe around Markus, they couldn't help but worry about what he was going to say. With a deep breath, Vee began talking. "Hey, Markus? Just, for no reason whatsoever, what do you think about trans people?"

The question caught Markus off guard, but he took it in stride and confidently answered. "One of my exes was trans, we broke up when said ex came out to me."

Vee's heart rate sped up somewhat, their palms got a bit sweaty. "What, why? Why'd you break up with someone who is trans?"

"Because he was a trans dude? A straight trans dude at that. It really made it easy to figure out what wasn't working about the relationship." Vee visibly relaxed after that answer, letting out the breath they hadn't realised they were holding in. "It's kinda sad that he tried to repress by dating me though. Glad I sucked so much as a boyfriend he stopped repressing." Markus laughed, but his laugh was clearly pained.

"Come on Markus, you make a great boyfriend, I'm sure." Vee replied, repositioning on the couch to be facing Markus even with their knees to their chest.

"All the girls I've dated broke up with me after a month, every time, I clearly don't make a good boyfriend."

"Their loss, then. They never spend enough time with you to get to know you, up close and personal, how kind and gentle and sweet you can be, how you look out for people you care about, how you wouldn't hate your best friend if-" Vee stopped themselves, they were already blushing somewhat, but if they kept going with that train

of thought they wouldn't be able to take those words back. Markus turned to face Vee head on, the compliments getting to him as well.

"Wouldn't hate my best friend if what, Vee?" Vee took a deep breath, balled their fist up and breathed out.

"If your best friend admitted they were questioning their gender." There was silence after those words left Vee's lips, despite it being only seconds long it felt like hours, hours through which Markus' face went on a journey.

"Oh. OH. OH! Shit, Vee, okay, how can I help?" Markus had stood up, ready for anything, so Vee gently pulled him back down to the couch by the sleeve of his hoodie, smiling.

"I want to try she/her pronouns, I don't feel like I've earned them in any way, but that feeling won't go away until I test them." Vee's heart felt lighter than air in that moment, she was breathing easier than she had breathed before.

"Okay, yeah, she pronouns for you I can do very easily, what about name, changing that too?"

"Victoria, I like it and it lets me keep the Vee nickname. I like it. Maybe it's just familiarity with it and the fact you've used it since high school for me, but it felt more like my name than my old one, you know?"

Markus nodded, and cleared his throat. "Right, testing, testing, one two three. This is my roommate Victoria. She is my best friend and a very lovely-" Markus paused there, giving Victoria a look.

"Girl."

"A very lovely girl. I've known her since we were children. One time, she flew off of a swing and hurt her knee to the point I had to carry her all the way home."

"Why'd you go for that story in your little test for me?" Victoria was smiling from ear to ear, it was extremely audible in her voice.

"Because it's much cuter than 'One time, she carried my drunk ass home after I had a very bad breakup with a girl who tried to enforce toxic masculinity on me more than a Karen tries to push it on her child'."

"Ooof, yeah, fuck she was baaaaad. You mixed liquors that night and I had to hold your hair back as you puked."

"That was the straw that broke the camel's back: she told me to get a haircut while using two slurs in the sentence, and I stood my ground, she didn't like it, so I ran."

"And then I had to sneak in in the middle of the night after seeing her leave for Hercules McToxicFace to grab all your stuff because you were black out drunk." Victoria threw her arms in the air for emphasis while Markus sat down again, loosening all his muscles. His attraction had an extremely simple explanation: Vee was most likely a girl, and he had noticed her femininity start subtly blossoming in mannerisms while the two of them were stuck in lockdown.

"You know, you being a girl fits you way better, honestly. Like, before quarantine it looked like you were forcing yourself to move like a dude is expected to, and it was obvious you were forcing it. It was like watching a Barbie try and move like a G.I.Joe, it just doesn't look right. But you've let loose around me, and Christ you're feminine when you let yourself be."

"Shut up, you're making me blush."

Markus got up once again, making his way to the key holder. "No, I will not shut up, I will instead hit the corner store for groceries and to get you something nice to

celebrate coming out. You, in the meantime, go order some clothes online or something. See you soon, Victoria."

As soon as Markus closed the door on his way out, Victoria smiled to herself and got her phone out. 'Well, thanks Markus, I think that was all the questioning I had to get through, being a girl feels right. And I think I deserve a skirt.'

Three days later, Victoria emerged from her bedroom wearing her first ever skirt, a plaid pleated affair that didn't quite reach her knees. Markus gave her a thumbs up while trying to bury the thoughts he was having about Victoria's legs, about running his hands up her smooth skin and under her skirt until he-

Markus barely stopped himself at that moment. Victoria was into girls, she hadn't said otherwise after coming out, and he had to respect that. No matter how into her he was, it couldn't work out. Which was a stupid thought process because Victoria had a major crush on him she never pursued and still felt awkward pursuing as she was now, feeling like she hadn't started reclaiming her body yet. She did a spin, both for her sake and to show her cute skirt off to Markus, but the spin was a bit too enthusiastic and the skirt fabric ended up parallel with the floor. Victoria hadn't noticed, but Markus had, and he was covering his face with both hands, holding back a scream. Victoria's smile lessened though as she took a look at the clock. "I'm nowhere near ready to wear it outside." She entered her room and closed the door, the sound of a zipper coming through muffled. She exited the room shortly, in jeans and her winter coat, plus a mask of course. "Groceries time, see you soon Markus."

Victoria had left the apartment and her door open, her new skirt laying on her bed, and Markus couldn't keep his eyes off of it. It was Victoria's skirt, he shouldn't-

Before he had finished that thought he was already wearing it, his oversized hoodie covering the top of it making it peek out from underneath. And the skirt felt right, he liked how it looked on him, it wasn't just functional like his other clothes, but comfortable and cute and his mind jumped to the thoughts that he shouldn't be wearing it he's a guy *it shouldn't feel right he shouldn't be suddenly getting envious that Victoria gets to be a girl while he is stuck as a guy. The envy was stupid anyways he couldn't do anything about it*, but before he could spiral further the front door opened as Victoria came back. "I was halfway there when I realised I forgot my wall-et..."

Markus had no way out of the room or the situation, so he stood there, paralysed in shame while Victoria approached him, taking his hands in hers and gently rubbing the backs of them with her thumb. "I think it suits you." Her voice was gentle, as if she was holding a tiny kitten. "How does it feel?"

Markus tried to open his mouth a few times, trying to get any words out, it wasn't until Victoria squeezed his hands just a bit tighter in support that he finally managed to speak. "Right. But it shouldn't. I can't be a girl like you."

"Why not?"

"Because I'm nothing like you." Victoria pulled Markus into a hug as they said that.

"You don't have to be like me to be a girl. There's so many different girls out there. If you feel like you want to be a girl, you are one. And I honestly wouldn't have fallen in love with you if you weren't you." Victoria's mouth ran faster than her brain in that moment, and only when Markus asked their question did she finally realise what she had said.

"You... you love me?" The internal screams of both of them were loud enough they almost became external. Victoria's face was immediately as red as a cherry, and she awkwardly nodded. Markus realised there were two options before them. They could either ask since when, to which they didn't know Victoria would answer since high school, or they could just come out and admit their feelings. "I... I love you too." There it was, both of their feelings on the table, the two of them finally aware their attraction was mutual. Victoria got an idea in that moment, to possibly help Markus figure out their turbulent emotions.

"Want to be girlfriends?"

"G-girlfriends? Like, two girls dating each other? I... I can be a girl that dates girls?" Markus blushed, trying to hide their face with their hands but Victoria wouldn't let go. "I want to be a girl that dates girls." It took all of Markus' strength to look into Victoria's eyes "I... I do want to be girlfriends with you."

"I'm glad." Moments after saying so, Victoria snorted. "Look at us, what typical lesbians, borrowing each other's clothes and we weren't even dating yet."

"At least we skip the Uhauling. Plus there's only one... wait no I already have a skirt." Markus admitted, earning a raised eyebrow from Victoria.

"Where? When? How?"

"The company I work for got flack for being transphobic, so they made it mandatory that everyone had to crossplay at last year's halloween party in a vain publicity stunt. Of course that meant my trans coworkers had to wear costumes for their assigned gender so it backfired tremendously." Markus explained, getting out of the hug and turning Victoria away to take off her skirt. "So I went as Sailor Jupiter. I still have the costume." Markus put her jeans back on to leave the room. "So, uhm, yeah. Sorry for borrowing your skirt, thanks for not getting mad at me." She passed Victoria her wallet. "Here you go, I'll go dig up that costume now."

"Figure out a name too, I'd hate to keep hurting you by using your current one!" Victoria called out as she left the apartment, but she stopped at the threshold for just a moment to say one more thing "Love you, see you soon!"

Markus' pillow would need therapy from all the screaming she was making it endure.

It was the evening of December 5th, and Victoria's girlfriend had ended up choosing her name from the character that inspired her, Sailor Jupiter. It hadn't taken them long to get their butts over to the nearest Planned Parenthood clinic to get an HRT prescription each, and although it was too early for it to have any physical effects, the mental ones were hitting them head on. It also hadn't taken long for them to find styles they liked to wear: While Victoria enjoyed more punkish options, Makoto wore loose and comfortable clothing.

Makoto was busy making dinner for the two of them when there was a suspicious knock on the door. Neither of them was expecting guests, or any sort of delivery. Victoria went to check who it was, only to stumble flat on her ass, the noise of which made Makoto turn to see who was at the door.

A trio of figures stood there. In the center, a dark skinned bishop, whose shepherd's crook shone with an otherworldly light. To his right stood an angel, her halo like a solid gold plate hovering behind her head. And to the bishop's left stood a devil, a pair of torn cuffs on her wrists, the chains of which clanked around whenever she moved, and in her hand a wriggling sack. Makoto spoke up "Victoria, do you know them?"

"I'm... I'm pretty sure this is the real, actual Saint Nicholas."

"And you would be correct, young Victoria." The bishop spoke with a Turkish accent. "Now do tell me, have you two been good girls this year?"

"We've only really embraced being girls for the past two weeks so I'm not sure if that counts?" Makoto answered while helping Victoria off of the floor.

"Let's apply it retroactively, why don't we. Why'd we even come here Nick, both of them are too big to fit in my sack." The devil shook it for emphasis.

"Because this year has been rough on everyone and people deserve nice things." The angel stepped forward and handed each a wrapped up chocolate. "In case you feel like speeding through your transitions. Come on you two, we have Officer Novak to visit." The trio turned and started walking away from the door, leaving Victoria and Makoto utterly confused. Before those three turned the corner, they could hear the devil groan.

"Do you know how heavy cops are to carry? I already got like, twenty of them in here!" And with that, the unexpected trio was gone. Makoto closed the door, pocketed the candy and went back to making dinner.

"I'm glad I'm making curry today, harder to burn a stew. You gonna try that chocolate today?" She asked her girlfriend, who shook her head out of confusion and then shrugged.

"I dunno, if it's really transformation magic it feels more appropriate to save for New Years Eve. Pop them just before midnight and then kiss. I think it'd be cute."

"Yeah, I think so too."

And so they did save it for New Years Eve. And it was cute.
The End.