Summary

preath au loosely based on the “Tea for Two” Youtube series by Jubilee where two strangers are set up on a blind date, served tea, and ask each other 36 questions published by the New York Times that are meant to make two strangers fall in love.

Notes

hi! thanks so much for reading! this is my first time ever writing a fic so pls go easy on me lol. hope you like it!
Christen doesn’t know why she agreed to this. Maybe it’s because she usually spends her Friday nights alone on Youtube binge watching Jubilee’s Tea for Two and subconsciously wishing it wasn’t just her on the couch cuddled up under the blankets. She knows that being single has taught her more than she could imagine, but sometimes she just yearned for someone to spend nights like this with her.

Though, she would never admit that to Kelley. Time and time again, her best friend of a roommate tried to set her up on blind dates telling Christen to “put herself out there.” Christen, obviously, always replied that she was okay with being single. Kelley never believed it.

But now, she finally agreed to go on one blind date if that meant Kelley would stop pestering her. She had no idea that Kelley knew about her slight obsession with the Youtube series. So when she walked into the small room where the freckled-faced woman had told her to be at 6 p.m. that Friday night, she was pleasantly surprised, and secretly excited, that the set up was so similar to that of the Tea for Two videos. There was greenery hung up around the room, an orange tint lighting up the white walls as golden hour was nearing outside, and a small, intimate set up on the ground including a tea set and pillows surrounding it.

Despite not necessarily being excited about the idea of going on a blind date, she decided to still make herself seem presentable, just in case. She decided to wear a pair of light blue high-waisted mom jeans and a crop top that showed the smallest bit of her stomach. She stopped her effort there, though, letting her hair down in its natural, wild curls.

She was again pleasantly surprised, and even more secretly excited, when a pretty woman walked through the doors 5 minutes after she arrived.

“Hi, I’m Tobin. I’m Kelley’s friend. Wait- you must know that already, sorry.” The woman said as she scratched the back of her neck and sent her eyes to the ground. Christen giggled, thankful that she wasn’t the only one that was nervous.

Tobin had on a pair of black skinny jeans that were ripped at the knees and a plain white t-shirt that was baggy on her. Her hair was down in soft waves, strands tucked lightly behind each ear, framing her face just right.

“Hi, Tobin. I’m Christen, also Kelley’s friend, but I’m going to assume you know that already.” Christen winked at the other girl, teasing Tobin just a bit to ease the nerves, while sticking her hand out for her to shake. Tobin accepted it as she looked into the green eyes, realizing right away that it would be difficult to pay attention when she could get lost in the emerald so quickly.

When Tobin realized she had stopped shaking Christen’s hand and was just holding it at that point, all while blatantly staring into Christen’s eyes, she quickly coughed a bit and dropped her hand, staring at the plushy pillows on the ground for them to sit on.

“Should we uh- should we sit?” Tobin avoided eye contact again, partially because she was embarrassed that she stared at the gorgeous girl for so long and partially because she knew if she looked back into those eyes, she more than likely wouldn’t be able to speak again.

“Um, yeah. That sounds good.” Christen replied, also sort of flustered, as they both moved to sit on either side of the tea kettle and two teacups.
“I’m not sure if you’ve ever heard of it, but there’s a Youtube series I love watching called ‘Tea for Two’ that is almost exactly like this. I think Kelley did this on purpose because I enjoy watching the videos so much.” Christen rambled a bit while settling herself on the pillows.

“Yeah, actually. I love watching those too. Jubilee puts out some really good content.” Tobin said through a wide smile while looking up to meet Christen’s eyes and, once again, being blown away again by just how sweet they were.

“Oh my gosh, really?! I never talk about them with Kel because I’m afraid they’re too cheesy for her, and probably most people.” The green-eyed girl let out excitedly (which Tobin found incredibly endearing).

“Well, if it’s cheesy then consider me the super stinky kind, because I love them.” Tobin tried to joke but quickly realized how stupid it was to say that.

Christen let out a loud laugh while Tobin blushed and quickly tried to clean up the mess she sent herself into. “I mean- I’m not- I don’t know why I said that. I’m sorry. I’m not stinky. I shower regularly.”

“Hey, it’s okay. I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have laughed, it was just really cute… and cheesy.” Christen winked again (or attempted to, given her “winks” were really one-squinted-eye blinks), sending Tobin into a blushing, mushy mess all over again, causing her to cover her face with both hands. Christen let out a soft chuckle, already loving how quickly she was able to joke with the other girl and how adorable she looked when she was embarrassed.

“Well, if it’s cheesy then consider me the super stinky kind, because I love them.” Tobin tried to joke but quickly realized how stupid it was to say that.

“I can.” Tobin answered, needing a moment to not talk and possibly send herself into another mess.

SET I

Tobin pulled out the first card from the stack. “Given the choice of anyone in the world, whom would you want as a dinner guest?”

“Do they have to be alive?”

“I’m not sure. It doesn’t specify but let’s go ahead and do dead or alive.”

Christen pondered for a moment. “I think I would have to choose Sojourner Truth.”

“Who’s that?”

“To me, she’s the original intersectional activist. She advocated for women and people of color in the 1800s and it’s just really interesting to me, today, to see how we still see the same oppression against the same types of people despite the ongoing fight against it. I think she’s a hero for us here today, given what she fought for when she was alive.”

Tobin was awestruck. They were only on the first question and she was already afraid that there was absolutely nothing wrong with the woman sitting across from her. She was beautiful. She was funny. She was sweet. She was intelligent.
“I have no idea how to follow that.”

Christen laughed. “Well who would you invite?”

“Um, I guess I would invite Doris Burke. She’s a basketball reporter. I grew up with sports in my life constantly, mostly soccer, but I enjoyed basketball almost as much. Doris, she’s just the bomb,”

Another giggle, “She works in a field of mostly men but she’s earned the respect of those men, as crazy as it sounds for a woman to have to earn that. But anyway, she earned their respect not because she had to but because she’s just so good. She knows the game so well and has just done so much with her knowledge despite being a woman in a male-dominated industry, sport, and just all around world I guess.”

“That’s amazing. I’m not sure why you were worried to follow what I said when you just said that.”

Tobin looked right into those eyes again. Christen didn’t even say anything crazy, but somehow she managed to settle Tobin’s smallest insecurity without even knowing it.

“How about some tea?” Tobin asked, already overwhelmed and ready for a slight break even though they had only gotten through one question of the 36.

“Sure! I wonder what kind there is… hmmm how about…. earl grey?” Christen asked while looking up at Tobin and holding a small packet in her hands.

“Uh, yeah, sure.” Tobin said distractedly. Those eyes were going to be the death of her.

“I like tea but I’m a total coffee monster and I’m sort of wishing this was coffee right now.” Christen mentioned through a light laugh.

“Oh, me too. Don’t even try to talk to me in the morning if I haven’t had my coffee. It won’t be pretty.”

“I highly doubt that. You’ve got a pretty face so that must mean mornings with you are pretty, too.”

That’s it. I’m not going to last 35 more questions with her. Tobin thought to herself as her cheeks went red and her stomach did that thing where she knew what was happening was good.

“Sorry, too much, too soon?” Christen asked hesitantly.

“No! Sorry, I’m just uh, a little nervous I guess. Thank you, by the way. You’ve got a pretty face too.” Her smile was shy as she let herself be open about her thoughts. Christen simply grinned a little wider and muttered a polite thank you.

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They asked a few more questions, getting more comfortable with each other as they went on. Tobin even got Christen to laugh a few more times. Christen learned that Tobin was a photographer and they were currently sitting in what she usually used as her studio. Being a journalist, Christen couldn’t help but think how easily their lives could mesh.

“Alright, question four.” Christen continued on, “What would constitute a perfect day for you?”

“Mmm. The beach.” Tobin hummed as she closed her eyes and tilted her head back slightly while hugging her knees.

“The beach?”
“The beach.”

“Why so?”

“It’s my favorite place in the world. The water, the sand, the sun, the surfing, the easiness of it all. Nothing beats the feeling of the sand under my feet and the sun on my face and my arms in the water when I paddle out on my board.”

“You surf?” Christen was loving just how passionate Tobin seemed to be about this.

“Yeah, sometimes.” Tobin smiled modestly.

“That’s so cool. I always wish I could learn to do something like that but I can never bring myself to do it.”

“Why not?” Tobin wondered.

“I don’t know. Something about it is just really intimidating and it pushes me away.”

“Would you let me try to teach you sometime, maybe?”

“Yeah, maybe.” Christen gave a lopsided smile, smitten that Tobin basically just asked her out for a second time, and at her favorite place for a ‘perfect day’ to top it all off.

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“Name three things you and your partner appear to have in common.” Tobin read off the card.

“How about we do this one together?”

“Yeah, okay.” Tobin smiled, loving the idea.

“Okay, well for starters, we’re both friends with Kelley.” Christen laughed as she pointed one finger up, holding the tip of it with her other hand.

Tobin chuckled, “Yeah, I guess she did a pretty good job at actually successfully setting me up with someone whose company I enjoy.”

“Well then I guess we also appear to both enjoy each other’s company.” Christen pointed up a second finger cutely while biting down on her bottom lip in a toothy grin.

“You’re gonna have to stop that.” Tobin chuckled.

“Stop what?” The green eyed girl asked, confused and worried she had done something wrong.

“Biting your lip like that. I can’t decide whether I find it adorable or hot, but I think it’s both.” Tobin was definitely more confident now.

“I guess we have number three then because I, too, find you both adorable and very hot.” Christen concluded as she raised her third finger and smirked at the hazel-eyed girl across from her.

Tobin was screwed.

SET II

“If you knew that in one year you would die suddenly, would you change anything about the way
you are now living? Why?” Tobin read aloud.

The silence lingered for a moment.

Christen sighed. “I don’t really know. A part of me wants to say nothing because that would mean that I’m living how exactly how I want to. But I also know that is kind of impossible, or at least not really so easily attainable. I like my life, love it even. I have a good, stable job as a journalist. I have the most supportive family on Earth, some really amazing friends whom I adore. I have two dogs, Morena and Khaleesi, that are my entire world,” Christen smiled to herself, “but there’s still always that missing piece, you know?”

**Yeah, I know. But I think I’m looking right at it.**

“I don’t want to say that I need someone romantically to keep me happy. I am happy, I just-” Christen sucked in a small breath, “I guess it wouldn’t hurt… to have someone, I mean. To love someone. To let someone love me. But again, I couldn’t really change that for myself in a heartbeat if I knew I was going to die in a year.”

“Hopefully that might happen soon? Finding someone?” Tobin looked at her with hopeful eyes, asking if she could possibly be Christen’s ‘someone’ without outright saying it.

“Yeah. I really hope it will.” Christen smiled at her, understanding the unspoken question.

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They had reached question 22 now, hearts showing a little more with every question answered.

“Alternate sharing something you consider a positive characteristic of your partner. Share a total of five items.” Christen read excitedly with a wide smile on her face.

“You’re really, really positive.” Tobin said without hesitating. “Even when you were talking about the missing piece in your life, you somehow managed to bring up every good thing you have going for you and that’s really dope.”

Christen eyes softened and her smile grew wider that it already was. “You’re really easygoing. I think it’s safe to say that we were both nervous when we first got here but now, you’re just so laidback and it’s refreshing.”

“You have the most beautiful eyes I’ve ever seen” Tobin mentioned in an almost whisper, looking deep into the green she was quickly favoring over her usual blue of the ocean and the sky. The sun was just about to set and the light that hit Christen’s face illuminated her green eyes enough to be able to bring out the small bits of gold in them. Tobin swore to herself that Christen’s eyes shimmered in the light like this and was wishing that she would get to see them like so again.

They were finding themselves more focused on their physical attributes as opposed to mentioning the “positive characteristics” like they were meant to.

“You have the cutest smile. It’s contagious and makes me want to smile. And your-”

“I thought we were supposed to take turns?” Tobin teased. Christen just laughed and softly apologized.

Tobin got them back on track.

“You care. A lot. You can’t find that in everyone these days. But it comes so easy to you. You care
about your family and your friends and your dogs. You care about people you’ve never met because they are living in unjust conditions. I think if everyone cared as much as you do, we wouldn’t be dealing with half the shit we are right now in this world.” Christen’s heart was threatening to beat out of her chest at this point.

“You make me feel special. I know we’ve only just met and still have so much to learn about each other but you say things like that to me and just make me feel really, really special.”

“You are special.” Tobin affirmed.

“You are too. So special.” The last part came out in a whisper.

SET III

At this point in the night, the sun had set and the fairy lights hung around the room lit up the small space. Having already shared short summaries of their life stories, their greatest accomplishments, their most terrible memories, and so much more, it was safe to say that they were very comfortable with each other now.

The tea set and tray had also been moved out of the way, giving them more room to spread out and get comfortable. They still sat across from each other, only now closer. Christen had her legs criss-crossed and Tobin sat right in front of her and to the side a little in order to stretch her legs out right next to Christen.

“Question 26-” Christen began.

“26 already?” Tobin wondered aloud with disappointment obvious in her voice.

“I know. I feel the same way, love.” Christen sent Tobin a sad smile and rubbed a comforting hand on her knee. It was the first time either of them had used a term of endearment throughout the night, but it couldn’t feel more right. Tobin was giddy. Really giddy. She wanted nothing more than to hold Christen’s hand and just touch her. She felt so connected to the woman and couldn’t push away her desire to just hold her in any way she could.

So she did. She scooted closer, her torso now to the side of Christen as opposed to her legs, gently grabbed the hand that was on her knee in the process, and rubbed her thumb along the soft knuckles, resting their clasped hands on top on Christen’s knee that was closest to her. “I don’t want this to end.” She spoke truthfully to her green eyed date.

“I know, Tobs. Me either. But we still have 10 more questions after this and hopefully another date?” Christen asked while squeezing Tobin’s hand gently.

“Definitely another date, Chris.” Tobin’s eyes squinted with just how wide her smile was in that moment, also deciding to give Christen a nickname in return.

“Good.” Christen smiled back. “Okay. Complete this sentence: ‘I wish I had someone with whom I could share…’” She read from the card as she looked up to the big hazel orbs she already loved, still holding Tobin’s hand in her own.

“My faith. I grew up Christian and it’s still a humongous part of my life. Of course I don’t expect my partner to be Christian or believe in God because they feel like they have to just for me. I would never force that on anyone. I think that’s every person’s own decision. But I would like to have someone with whom I could just share my experience. God to me is the embodiment of love, no matter who you are or what you believe or what you do. And I guess if I could just share that love with someone and be able to pray for them and talk to God about them, I would be really happy.”
“That was really beautiful, Tobin.” Christen said with the softest eyes ever. “I’m going to be honest, I didn’t grow up in a very religious household and I’m still not a very religious person, but I am very spiritual and very open to learning and listening.” She gave Tobin a wide grin.

“That’s more than I could ever wish for.” Tobin pulled their hands to her lips and gently kissed the spot between two of Christen’s knuckles. She felt like she wanted to burst. Not just because of what Christen just said, but because she was so overwhelmed with emotions. She had only met the girl a few hours prior to this moment, but these questions and the answers Christen was presenting had her pulled and locked in. “What about you? What do you wish to share with someone.”

Christen thought back to previous Friday nights where she was watching moments just like theirs on a screen, sitting under a big blanket, a glass of wine in hand, her two dogs at her feet, and an empty spot next to her.

“Just my life.” Christen took a long pause. “It sounds silly, but I would watch these videos on my own, subconsciously wishing that I could have someone to watch them with. Not the videos specifically, but just someone to sit on my couch with me cuddled under the blankets while watching TV. Someone I could go to sleep next to and wake up and make coffee with. Someone I could walk my dogs with. Someone I could text while I was bored with nothing to do at work. Someone to take home to my family. I’m happy with my life. I just want to be happier while sharing it with someone, I guess.”

“I get that.” Tobin stared at Christen with complete understanding. “Kelley always bugs me about being ‘single and lonely’ but I don’t think I am. I mean, I’m single, but I don’t think that necessarily equates to lonely. I think one of the most important things, if not the most important thing, when entering a new relationship is knowing that you, independently, are ready for that. I’ve always thought that you have to love yourself in order to let someone else love you. I guess being single has taught me how to do that. I wouldn’t want to jump into something expecting my happiness to come from someone else. That’s just asking for heartbreak. I know that as long as I’m happy and I love myself, I will have enough of both to give that to someone else and still take care of myself.”

They just stared at each other knowing that they were on the same page, faces filled with gratitude because, somehow, they both ended up in this small room saying exactly what the other longed to hear from a potential partner.

“I think we might have to give Kel more credit. This is going far too well to just think that we got lucky we were the two she picked to set up.” Christen laughed.

“Noo Chris, then it’s gonna get to her head and we’ll never hear the end of it.” Tobin whined in a joking manner tugging on Christen’s hand a bit like a little kid, pout on her lips and all. Christen laughed, leaning in closer to Tobin the slightest bit but letting go of the hand she had been holding. Tobin only pouted harder.

The dark haired girl moved a small chunk of stray hair from in front of Tobin’s face to behind her ear, letting her hand rest on Tobin’s cheek and softly rubbing a thumb on the cheekbone as she pulled back. “Stop pouting. You’re too cute and I can’t take it.” Christen admitted.

Tobin’s pout turned into a full on grin as she leaned into Christen’s hand on her cheek. “Hold my hand then.” Tobin said cheekily.

“Oh you’re gonna be needy, aren’t you?” Christen teased.

“I can’t help it with you.” Tobin flirted with a wink as she moved to lay on her side, one hand supporting her head, the other resting right in front of her stomach.
Christen’s stomach fluttered but she just rolled her eyes jokingly and grabbed the unoccupied hand, content with the contact. “What a baby.”

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“When did you last cry in front of another person? By yourself?”

They were both laying down now. Tobin was still in the same position on her side with her head propped up by a hand. Christen was on her back with one hand on her stomach and the other laid in between her and the beauty next to her who played with her fingers.

They both took a moment to themselves to reflect.

“I think the last person I cried in front of was my sister, Tyler.” The dark haired girl started. “My mom has had some health issues for a while,”

“I’m sorry.” Tobin softly interjected.

“No, that’s okay. She’s okay right now. But I last cried in front of my older sister because of that. We were at the hospital and I was already having a rough week and I just couldn’t take it anymore. I thank the universe everyday for my sisters; both of them. They both have so much of my mom in them and in that moment, when I was scared for my mom, having my sister hold me while I cried was almost like having my mom hold me.”

They let the silence linger for a while, Tobin letting Christen take a moment for herself.

“The last time I cried by myself was the other night though.” Christen laughed at herself remembering the moment. “I had gotten home from work and sat down to watch a movie thinking it would be a cute rom-com but it was actually the most heartbreaking movie ever and I was a wreck on my couch at home all alone being a crybaby.” She continued laughing at herself, Tobin chucking along lightly, as she rolled onto her side as well to face the caramel-eyed girl, her head now laying on her bent arm over a pillow. “What about you? When did you last cry?”

Tobin let out a deep sigh as her honey eyes looked up, avoiding Christen’s. “In front of someone else was a while ago, now. I don’t cry very often. I’m not a robot or anything, I have feelings. I just usually like to wait til I’m alone to cry. I was with this girl at the time and we had been together for a few years. I thought everything was going well and we were getting close to taking the next step in our relationship, which would have been a proposal, but I guess I was wrong.” She paused for a moment, now looking down at Christen’s fingers as she continued to play with them. “It turns out she had been cheating, for a while actually. After I found out, she tried to convince me that she only wanted me. I broke right then and there. I cared about her a lot, loved her even. To be disrespected and blindsided like that - it sucks and I just couldn’t hold in my tears anymore.”

“I’m sorry, babe.” Christen spoke up, looking at Tobin with sad eyes, causing Tobin to finally look at her. “You didn’t deserve that; no one does, but especially you. You have such a sweet soul and deserve to be loved and respected and valued by whoever is lucky enough to call you theirs.”

Tobin moved to lay in the same position Christen was. “Thank you.” She said as she looked into Christen’s eyes. “It’s scary - letting someone in again. It’s scary.”

Christen just placed her hand on Tobin’s cheek again as she moved in to lightly kiss her jaw. “I know, love. I know this is all really soon but I get the feeling that we’re on the same page here. If this goes somewhere, I promise you I’m going to do everything I can to make you so happy and feel so loved because you deserve it.”
Tobin simply connected her forehead to Christen’s and closed her eyes. “I know you will. Thank you.”

They stayed like that for a moment before Christen pulled back slightly, overwhelmed by the proximity of their faces and what it made her want to do. She thought back to Tobin’s answer and wondered why the girl preferred to cry alone. “What about the last time you cried by yourself?” She pushed a little bit.

Another sigh. “Um, probably a few weeks ago. I had just gotten off FaceTime with my nephews and my sister. All my family lives in New Jersey, where I grew up, and since I moved to LA, I don’t get to see them very often. But anyway, it was just a random FaceTime call and my nephews were being so silly. Like, the biggest goofs,” Tobin smiled to herself.

“Sounds like they’re like you.” Christen teased with a small smile and sweet eyes.

“Yeah, yeah. But anyway, I got off the call and just started crying. I really, really miss them. Sometimes I wanna pick everything up and go back just for them, but it’s not that easy. Don’t get me wrong, I love LA and I love what I’m doing here, but sometimes I feel like I’m missing out on so much. They’re growing so fast and I’m not there to see it. It hit me when I was on the phone with them, but I didn’t want to cry in front of them - or my sister and worry her - so I waited til I hung up.” Her voice wavered.

“Tobin.” Christen said in a voice that sounded like she was hurting for Tobin. “Tobin, look at me.” The caramel eyes looked up but they were glossed with threatening tears. “Honey,” Christen let out, dragging the e out and looking at Tobin with so much care. “It’s okay. You can cry. Don’t feel like you have to wait until no one is around to let it out. It’s not good, love.”

Tobin just shut her eyes, forcing a tear to roll down her cheek and onto her nose due to her sideways position. Christen wiped it off immediately. Tobin simply nodded.

“Sorry. I just really miss them, you know?”

“Don’t apologize for your emotions. You’re allowed to cry when you need to. It’s only human.”

“Yeah, I’m learning.”

“That’s all you can do.”

Tobin nodded again. “Okay, next question.”

Christen looked at her with cautious eyes but continued on, reading the next card aloud. “Tell your partner something you like about them already.”

“I like these types of questions” Tobin said with a smile, nose still slightly runny.

“Me too.” Christen smiled back.

“Everything. I like everything about you already.” Tobin let out without falter. Christen laughed lightly at Tobin’s bluntness. “Seriously, Chris. I know everyone has their flaws and no one is perfect, but everything I know about you so far, I like. It’s the small things like the way your nose crinkles when you laugh or smile or the way you bite your lip or the fact that you can’t actually wink but you keep doing it anyway.”

“Hey!”
“Sorry, babe. You’re winking with both eyes.” Tobin laughed at the pout on Christen’s face before continuing, “But it’s also the bigger things. Like the fact that we’ve known each other for only a few hours and yet you’re willing to learn about my faith and you’re telling me that you’ll do everything in your power to be your best to me and you’re letting me cry to you, and then wiping my tears to top it all off. I told you, I hardly ever cry in front of other people. But you make me feel so comfortable and I finally, for once, let myself go in front of someone. And I can’t thank you enough for it.”

They smiled at each other goofily.

“I don’t kiss on first dates and you’re making it incredibly hard for me not to kiss you right now.” Tobin let out a belly laugh before grabbing Christen’s face and smothering her cheeks in kisses. “How about these kisses? Huh?”

“I like those kisses.” Christen said as she held onto Tobin’s wrists, giggling as her nose crinkled again.

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“Alright, Tobs, we’ve reached the end of the questions.”

“Wait! There’s one more card.”

“Stare into each other’s eyes for four minutes.” Christen read after picked the last card up.

“Four minutes?!? That’s a long time!”

“Hey! Are you trying to say that you can’t stand looking at me for that long?” Christen gave Tobin a pointed look but was of course only kidding.

“NO! No! I love looking at you. But your eyes do something to me and four minutes is a long time. I don’t know how I’m going to last without dying.”

“Well do your best to stay alive for me, yeah? You promised me a second date and I’m kind of looking forward to it.”

“Okay, but just for you.” Tobin gave her a goofy grin before pulling out her phone to set a timer. “Aaaaaand go.”

The night could not have gone better and it showed in their eyes. Green looked into hazel and hazel into green. Every emotion from the night was felt in this moment. They giggled a few times at the sort of awkward silence that came with the task but quickly settled themselves and looked deeper into each other’s souls. They had gotten up from laying down just for this last moment and were now sitting directly in front of one another, both with their legs pulled up to their chests. Tobin’s feet were placed on the outsides of Christen’s to maintain close contact, even though they were holding hands on top of their knees through it all. They occasionally took turns placing gentle kisses to the back of each other’s hands in order to communicate without words. As the four minutes were coming to a close, Christen spoke up, despite the rules.

“I know we’re not supposed to talk but I really want to kiss you right now.” She admitted while looking back and forth between Tobin’s eyes.

Tobin smirked. “Chris, you said you don’t kiss on firs-”

She couldn’t finish her sentence before Christen’s hands grabbed her face and there were lips on her
own. Christen kissed her with so much emotion and she melted right into it, giving back just as much emotion. The timer went off, bringing them back into the moment. Christen pulled away as she heard the ringtone, but leaving a few small pecks on Tobin’s lips before completely letting go.

Tobin turned off the annoying alarm before turning her attention back to Christen with an astonished look on her face.

“I did tell you that you were making it hard for me not to kiss you.”
the beach? the beach.

Chapter Summary

Christen and Tobin go on that promised second date but not without a little teasing from Kelley first.

Chapter Notes

aaaand we’re back! I got some requests for a follow up and kinda just started writing one to see what would happen and then got sucked in and couldn’t stop so here you go, I guess? I’m sorry if the quality of writing isn’t as great, given I wrote this in like a day. Anyway, enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

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“YOU GUYS KISSED?!?”

“Kelley, calm down or I’m not saying another word.”

“I fucking knew it! I knew you two were meant for each other! Holy shit, I can’t believe I did that.”

The moment Christen walked through the door with the same lazy smile that hadn’t left her face since Tobin kissed her goodbye with a promise of texting her about their second date, Kelley knew that the night went superb. She immediately ushered Christen to the couch and bombarded her with questions, not even giving Christen the time to kick her shoes off at the door and definitely not caring that she was being nosy and annoying her best friend.

Christen wanted to play it cool, not wanting to give her roommate the satisfaction of successfully setting the two girls up together. But, she knew Kelley knew her way too well and would see right through it. So she told her the truth.

She gave her best friend a rundown of the date, explaining how they were both nervous at the beginning but as the questions kept coming, they got comfortable with each other. She smiled a little too wide for her own good when she told Kelley about Tobin wanting to hold her hand the entire time, to which the freckled girl whispered, “That needy ass bitch,” with a knowing smirk on her face, making Christen giggle at the memory of her calling Tobin needy during the date (and Tobin not denying it).

Christen continued on telling Kelley about the intimacy of the questions and how close it brought the two girls together. Kelley simply gave Christen a soft smile, knowing each of the girl’s hardships and being happy that they were able to open up to one another.

“Yeah, so, I thought the questions were finished but of course I forgot about the ‘stare at each other for four minutes’ task. I guess I just couldn’t handle staring at her that long and I, like, needed to kiss
her. So I did?” Christen’s smile was shy and slightly guilty.

“Wait, wait, wait. You kissed her? Christen! You never kiss on first dates! That’s like rule number one on your list of dating rules!” Kelley laughed at the green eyed girl, still shocked at the news of the kiss but now even more intrigued at the news of Christen being the one who initiated it.

“I know. I don’t know what’s happening!” Christen groaned while covering her face with her hands, clearly embarrassed by her eagerness.

Kelley let out another loud laugh, “You’re fucking smitten is what’s happening. Holy shit, I’m calling Tobin. I can’t believe this.”

“KELLEY, NO!” Christen exclaimed while reaching out in an attempt to hold Kelley down on the couch.

“No, Kelley! Yes!” The woman laughed while slipping away to grab her phone.

“Oh, fuck.” Christen whispered to herself.

As Kelley walked back to the couch, Christen heard the ringing on speaker already and sunk herself low into the cushions, not prepared for what was about to happen.

“Uh, hello?” Tobin answered, sounding nervous but, nevertheless, making Christen’s insides go crazy and heart speed up at the sound of her voice alone.

“Tobino! This is your good friend Kelley here! Remember me? Yeah, you’re welcome for setting you up with Christen. In fact, she’s right here. Christen, say hi to your lover.”

“Kelley!” Christen’s eyes were about to pop out of her head from how wide her eyes shot open.

Kelley cackled. “What? Did you not just finish telling me that you kissed her?”

“Oh my god.” Christen sank even lower into the couch and covered her face with her hands.

“Chris! You told her!? I told you her head didn’t need to get any bigger!” Tobin exclaimed through the phone, clearly also embarrassed.

“She would have seen right through me! Babe, I’m sorry – oh fuck.”

“BAAAABE?!” Kelley all but screamed in a scratchy voice from laughing so hard as her eyes went wide and she let out yet another hearty laugh, throwing her head back and clenching her stomach.

Christen and Tobin both groaned at the same time.

Kelley calmed herself just enough to wipe a tear produced from her laughing fit and keep teasing. “Holy shit. You guys are unbelievable. Like, I knew when I set you guys up that it was the most brilliant idea I’ve ever had, but I didn’t expect this.”

“I’m sorry, Tobs. I tried to stop her from calling you.” Christen said in the most apologetic voice she could muster up through her embarrassed state.

“You didn’t wanna talk to me?” Tobin said so cutely you could hear the pout on her lips in the moment.

“Okay, ew. You’ve known each other for less than a day and you’re already grossly adorable. I’ve had enough, goodnight. Don’t have phone sex with my phone.” Kelley said with her face scrunched
up as she dropped her phone on the couch and left to her bedroom, not bothering to hang up the call.

“Oh my god.” Christen groaned while throwing a pillow at Kelley as she walked away.

Christen waited until she heard Kelley’s door shut to grab the phone and take it off speaker.

“Tobs? You still there?” She questioned softly as she pressed the phone to her ear.

A light chuckle was heard as Tobin said, “Yeah, is she gone?”

“Yeah. Oh, God. I’m so sorry. I didn’t think she was gonna go and call you so quickly. I can’t believe her-”

“Hey, Chris?” Tobin interrupted the worried ramble that came out of Christen’s mouth.

“Yeah?”

“You’re cute when you’re flustered.”

Christen felt her cheeks heat up and her stomach flip. “Tobin,” she whined into the phone, still embarrassed by the whole fiasco.

“Whaaaat? You are!” Tobin chuckled and then paused for a moment. “I miss you already.” They both smiled wide from each end of the call.

“Yeah? Maybe you should take me out on that second date if you miss me so much.” Christen flirted with a grin.

“How about a lazy Sunday at the beach?” The photographer asked without hesitating.

“In two days? Man, you really do miss me.”

“You know I do. So is that a yes?”

Christen chuckled. “As if I would say no.”

“Great.” Tobin’s giddiness came creeping up again as she felt her cheeks cramp up from smiling so wide. “I can’t wait to see you, love.”

“Back at you, honey.”

“Okay. I’ll let you go before Kelley comes back looking for her phone. I’ll text you with the details tomorrow, okay? Goodnight, Chris. Sleep tight and don’t let the bedbugs bite.”

“You’re so cute. Goodnight, love. Sweet dreams.” Christen said sweetly.

“Bye.” Tobin whispered, wanting to prolong the call as long as possible.

“Bye.” Christen whispered back before she pulled the phone from her ear and hung up.

She let out a content sigh as she closed her eyes and threw her head back to rest on the edge of the sofa.

“You are disgustingly sprung.” Kelley said as she walked back into the living room to retrieve her phone.
Tobin sent Christen a text Saturday morning that read, “Good morning, pretty girl! I hope the bed bugs didn’t bite. How does me picking you up at 9 tomorrow morning for breakfast sound? I’ll bring you some coffee and then after breakfast we can head to the beach and we can just chill for the day and maybe I can teach you how to surf? :)

Christen smiled as she read the message that awaited her as she woke from her slumber.

“Coffee, food, and the beach? You really know how to treat a girl. That sounds amazing, I can’t wait. Oh, and good morning back to you, gorgeous ;)” was her reply.

So, there she stood Sunday morning, anxiously checking her bag to make sure she had everything she needed for the day, awaiting Tobin’s arrival.

“I can’t believe you guys only lasted two days without having to see each other again.” Kelley badgered lightheartedly from her spot at the kitchen counter as she sipped her morning coffee, still trying to wake herself up.

Christen was about to reprimand the freckled girl for teasing again but the doorbell rang before she could say anything. Instead, she sent Kelley a look that said ‘Please, I beg, don’t say anything.’

Kelley just rolled her eyes teasingly as she hid her smirk behind her coffee mug.

When Christen opened the door, she saw Tobin standing in light blue, ripped denim shorts, a white tank top, bikini straps tied around her neck, a maroon snapback placed backward on her head lightly, and holding two coffees in her hand, smiling goofily as she was met with the green eyes.

“Good morning, pretty girl.” Tobin said, referring to her good morning text from the day before, giving her that contagious smile as she moved in to wrap her arms around Christen’s waist as best she could, two cups full of coffee in her hands and all.

“Good morning, stinky.” Christen gave her a sly grin as she wrapped her arms around Tobin’s neck, teasing the girl about her cheesy slip up from their date.

Tobin groaned, unwrapping her arms from the girl and pushing Christen’s hips away with the back of her hands that were holding the cups.

Christen laughed and grabbed Tobin’s forearms, quickly wrapping them back around herself as she moved her lips to the honey-eyed girl’s jaw and mumbling, “Okay, okay. I’m sorry,” through a smile against the skin. Also referring to her own good morning text, she said, “Good morning, gorgeous,” and left a few light kisses to the skin under her lips.

“Mmm, is that gonna be a thing?”

“What, me calling you stinky? I mean, it can be but-” Christen feigned innocence as she pulled her face away from Tobin’s and furrowed her eyebrows.


“I know, babe. I’m sorry, you’re just too easy to tease. I promise I’m done now.” She winked at the other girl while giggling. “And yes, it can be our thing if you want it to be, gorgeous.”

“I want it to be.” Tobin smiled, still holding the girl by the waist. “I brought you coffee, as promised.” She mentioned while unwrapping her arms from the girl and holding the cups up.
“My savior. Thank you, love.” Christen said in a grateful voice before kissing Tobin’s cheek sweetly and taking the cup from the girl’s outstretched hand. She immediately took a sip, needing her caffeine fix, and hummed. “Hmm, that’s good. Come inside real quick while I grab my stuff? Watch out for Kel, though. She’s already teasing.”

“Oh no.” Tobin said through a chuckle and following Christen inside, secretly looking the girl up and down from behind, appreciating the black high waisted shorts with fringed ends and the yellow tank top that the beauty decided to wear.

She must have stared a bit too long, though, because before she knew it-

“Already checking her out? Geez, Tobs, get a grip.” Kelley stated as she caught the girl.

Tobin’s face went red at the comment whilst Christen groaned Kelley’s name.

“Good morning, Tobin.” Kelley said from her seat at the counter with a wicked grin as Morena and Khaleesi ran up to the woman, excited by the new company.

“Good morning, Kel.” Tobin replied with a slight sigh, cheeks still rosy from being caught, and petting the dogs, happy for a distraction.

Christen grabbed her bag quickly, wanting to leave as soon as possible, and began nudging Tobin towards the door. “Alright, Kel. We’re leaving now. Bye, babies!” Christen rubbed each of the dogs’ heads on her way out.

“Aw, so soon?” Her smirk grew wider.

“Goodbye, Kelley.” Christen called out sternly.

“Have her back by 10 sharp, Tobin!” Kelley yelled before the door shut closed and she laughed to herself while shaking her head.

“Those fools.” She said into the empty air.

///

On the way to breakfast, Christen teased Tobin slightly for checking her out while she wasn’t looking.

“You know, babe, I don’t mind if you look. You don’t have to be sneaky about it.”

///

At the breakfast spot Tobin took them to, Christen ordered an açaí bowl, wanting a healthy meal, whilst the other girl ordered the pancake special that came with whipped cream and strawberries on top.

“She’s a fool.” Christen giggled.

“Hmm?” The girl hummed, too consumed with her meal to actually say something.

“You got a little something on your face.”

Tobin just looked at her while chewing a big bite of pancake.

Christen laughed again while reaching over the table to wipe the whipped cream off the corner of
Tobin’s mouth. Tobin stopped chewing when Christen sucked her thumb clean and said, “Mmm, sweet.”

///

To say Tobin was flustered was an understatement. Christen kept teasing her and she was having a hard time pulling herself together. It didn’t help that by the time they settled themselves at the beach, Christen immediately peeled her clothes off, leaving her in a black and white bikini, and asked Tobin to spray her with sunscreen, saying something about not wanting to get skin cancer.

Tobin was oh so thankful that it was spray sunscreen and not the lotion kind. She wasn’t sure that she would be okay if she had to touch the beauty in front of her like that. She did her best not to gawk at the girl, not wanting to be disrespectful. But Christen caught on to the nervous state of her date and smirked while saying, “You okay there, Tobs?”

Tobin’s face went red for what felt like the 50th time that morning. Once she calmed her nerves, she finally said, “You know what? I’m not even gonna try to hide it. You’re absolutely gorgeous and it’s doing things to me. I’m sorry in advance for my staring but you’re just - wow.” She handed Christen the spray can back as she began to peel her own clothes off, not giving the younger girl the chance to thank her.

Christen was just as blatant as Tobin was, her jaw slacking open as the caramel-eyed girl’s abs flexed when her arms raised to take her tank top off.

It must be from the surfing. Christen thought to herself.

Tobin caught Christen staring too and was pleased knowing she was finally getting back after being tortured herself.

“You okay there, Chris?” Tobin questioned with a knowing smirk, mocking Christen’s question from a few moments before.

Christen couldn’t help but chuckle. “No. You’re really hot and it’s doing things to me.” She winked.

Tobin smirked harder. “You gonna spray me, or what? You don’t want me getting skin cancer, do you?”

“Definitely not. Turn around, hot stuff.”

“Chris, if you wanna stare at my butt, you don’t have to use this as an excuse,” Tobin said in fake exasperation.

“Yeah, yeah, you caught me. Now let me spray you.” She joked back while scrunching her nose and sticking her tongue out, making Tobin laugh.

///

“Chris?”

“Hmm?”

“Will you go in the water with me now? You’ve been laying out here for like ever. Aren’t you burning from the heat?” Tobin pleaded while rubbing a hand on Christen’s back.

“Mmm. That’s nice.” Christen smiled with her eyes still closed, only half of her face showing from
her position on her stomach, face resting sideways with an arm shielding a portion of it.

“Chriiiis,” Tobin whined like a kid.

“Yes, love?”

“Go in the water with me, pleaaase?” She whined again.

Christen pushed herself onto her elbows and opened her eyes to be met with a bored, pouting Tobin laying on her side.

“You’re the cutest. C’mon, then. Let’s go swim.” She said as she moved to get up from her towel.

“Yes.” Tobin whispered in victory as she moved to get up as well.

They started walking to the water before Christen halted and said “Wait!”

Tobin stopped too as she looked at the girl with concern. “What? What hap-”

“Race ya!” Christen took off for the water without waiting for Tobin, laughing loudly.

“Hmph, okay. We’re racing then.” Tobin laughed out in disbelief as she sprinted off to chase the girl.

She caught up to Christen right as they were about to reach the water and grabbed her by the waist, lifting her off the ground. “Caught ya!” Christen squealed and yelled Tobin’s name as her body was lifted from behind.

“Tobin, oh my god. The water is freezing! Put me down!”

“You want me to put you down? But the water is freezing!” Tobin said, her voice impish.

“You wouldn’t dare.” Christen’s eyes widened.

“You asked me to put you down. So, as you wish, lovely.”

“TOBIN-”

It was too late. Tobin had let go of Christen’s waist and the girl splashed into the ocean water while screaming, coming back up with her eyes clenched and her mouth in an ‘o’ shape. She wiped the water from her eyes and shot them open, looking at Tobin in disbelief. Tobin had a mischievous smirk on her face.

“What happened, Chris? I thought you wanted me to let you go?” Tobin said all too sweetly.

“You’re unbelievable.” Christen scoffed with her eyes squinted. “You know, you were being real cute up until now. I was even thinking about maybe rewarding you with another kiss but you may have just ruined it.”

Tobin’s eyes shot wide and she immediately spit out, “Okay! I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I’m sorry! Forgive me? Pleeeaaaaase???” while hugging the curly haired girl tight around the waist.

“Nuh-uh. You thought you were being slick dropping me in the water like that. It’s too late. Sorry.” Christen feigned annoyance as she lightly pushed against Tobin’s chest.

Tobin kissed her cheek. “How about now? Please?”
“I don’t know. One kiss isn’t selling it.” Christen said with a smirk.

Tobin grinned and peppered Christen’s entire face in quick, light, messy kisses as she gripped her waist tighter. Christen giggled uncontrollably, breaking her façade.

“Now?” Tobin question with a wide smile.

“Hmm, I don’t know-”

“Chris! Stop teasing!”

Christen laughed and grabbed the surfer by the chin, bringing her lips up to the other girl’s. “So impatient.” She whispered against the plump, slightly parted lips that awaited her own before finally giving in and kissing Tobin.

Her arms found their way to the back of Tobin’s neck and she lightly scratched the baby hairs she found there while sucking lightly on the girl’s bottom lip. Tobin’s body nearly went limp, barely being able to stand in the water.

“Hmm. I like doing that.” The photographer hummed happily against Christen’s lips.

The journalist giggled. “Yeah? You know what I like doing?”

“What’s that?” Tobin said, a happy grin on her face as she looked at Christen through hooded eyes.

“This.” Christen pushed Tobin backwards by the shoulders, sending the girl straight into the water.

Tobin came back up laughing. “I deserved that.”

Christen just laughed as she helped the girl back up, pulling her into yet another sweet kiss.

///

The girls had both laid out in the sun for a little while longer after their fun in the water, each occasionally running light fingers along the other’s back or arms.

Eventually, Tobin convinced Christen to try surfing just once. Christen reluctantly agreed, wanting to both keep her promise to the girl and break out of her comfort zone, which she found herself doing a lot of with Tobin.

Christen was scared out on the surfboard, but Tobin reassured her with sweet words.

“I got you, baby. It’s not that bad, I promise. I wouldn’t put you on this board if I thought it would hurt you.”

Christen’s insides churned. “You just called me ‘baby.’” She said with an unbeatable smile.

Tobin let out a laugh and said, “Chris, we’ve called each other almost every sweet name in the book already and this is only our second date.”

“I know, but baby feels different! Don’t judge me, just let me have my moment.”

Tobin laughed again, “Alright, dork, whatever you say.” She winked at the green eyed girl before turning around and catching sight of the perfect wave for Christen to ride. “Okay, Chris, moment’s up. You ready? Start paddling!” She gave the surfboard a push forward as Christen laughed and shouted, “I guess!”
The dark-haired girl stood and rode the wave for a total of maybe seven seconds before losing her footing and falling into the water. When her head popped back up, she exclaimed, “Tobs, did you see me?!? I stood up!! Oh my gosh! I finally did it!” She laughed in disbelief.

Tobin laughed too as she swam over to Christen and said, “I saw you, babe! I told you you could do it!”

///

When the sun began its descent, they both threw on their hoodies and leggings before it got too cold. Tobin sat down on the blanket, pulling her hood over her head and spread her legs, patting the spot between them for Christen to settle in. Christen smiled sweetly and made herself comfortable against the other girl, sitting back and letting out a content sigh as Tobin pressed a cheek against her head.

Tobin placed her arms along the green-eyed girl’s, lacing her fingers through Christen’s from behind, and wrapping their arms around the girl’s front. She placed a long kiss on the side of Christen’s head, slightly tasting the salt of the ocean, but not minding it all. “Thank you for coming with me today.”

Christen leaned her head up and smiled at Tobin. “Thank you for inviting me. And thank you for teaching me how to surf. I had a lot of fun.”

Tobin looked down at the girl in her arms, taken aback by the light of the sun hitting her face and illuminating her green eyes yet again. She noticed some freckles that she hadn’t before and swooned at how adorable they made the girl look. She kissed the space between Christen’s eyebrows, just on the slope of her nose and whispered, “I can’t get over just how beautiful you are. Or how happy you’re making me already.”

Christen placed a soft kiss to Tobin’s jaw above her and Tobin chuckled, noticing how often Christen liked to kiss her there. The silence lingered for a bit as they watched the clouds above them turn pink and the sky turn a dark shade of blue.

“Do you think we’re moving too fast?” Tobin questioned hesitantly.

Christen moved one of her hands on top of Tobin’s, reversing their positions, and rubbed her knuckles while asking, “Do you?”

Tobin sighed, frustrated with herself for changing the mood so drastically in what could have been a perfect moment, but needing to get it out of her system. “I don’t know. Like, looking in from an outside perspective, I’d probably call us crazy. I mean, we’ve known each other a whole three days - two and a half if we’re being honest. And we’re already kissing and calling each other pet names and acting like we’ve known each other our whole lives,” she paused. Christen was growing worried, her stomach knotting at Tobin’s tone but completely understanding. She’d be lying if she said the same thoughts hadn’t crept up on her at random points throughout the day. “But,” Tobin continued, “I also feel like Friday night brought us so unbelievably close, it’s hard to ignore those feelings and the desire to call you sweet names and kiss you and hold you. I think you said it perfectly the other night, we still have so much to learn about each other and this is all so soon, but it feels so damn right.” She let out a breathy chuckle. “I really like you, Chris. I’m scared that it’s all happening so quickly and that it might get fucked up somewhere along the line, but I don’t wanna fight it. I like you, a lot, and I want to kiss you and cuddle you and call you baby. So I’m gonna let it happen, as long as you do.”

“Tobin.” The honey eyes looked down to meet the green ones. “I really like you too and I want you to kiss me and cuddle me and call me baby. So kiss me.” She repeated Tobin’s words and smiled so
wide her eyes squinted. Tobin laughed and kissed the other girl deeply while cradling her. When they finally parted, Christen’s face was adorned with a sweet, soft smile as spoke up again. “Thank you for talking to me. I agree with you, completely. Friday night was so intimate; it made me feel so close to you. I think talking like this is what keeps bringing us closer. So let’s keep talking, yeah? Let’s keep an open, honest line of communication with each other and listen to and understand what the other needs so that we can keep this going. I don’t want it to get fucked up somewhere along the line, either.”

Tobin nodded and kissed her again.

“God, I’m so glad that’s out of the way now.” The photographer sighed while laughing lightly.

“Me too, baby. Now watch the sunset with me before it’s gone.” Christen laughed along as she turned her head back toward the ocean.

“You just called me ‘baby.’” Tobin whispered in Christen’s ear while squeezing her waist.

Christen laughed and simply countered, “Yeah, and what about it?”

“And I love it. You’re right, it does feel different.”

Chapter End Notes

GOD, I write a lot of fluff, it’s gross. Anywho, thanks so much for reading and for leaving such sweet comments about my work. I was only planning on posting tea for two, but I received more requests for more than expected so, here we are I guess?? pls leave more comments so I know what’s up?? thx so much! who knows, maybe we’ll see another part?? ;))

p.s. I may have some other one shot ideas if y’all are willing to read??
just wanna be with you

Chapter Summary

Christen has a long day at work. Tobin gets worried.

Chapter Notes

short update to fill you in on these softies. thanks for reading!

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Christen woke up Monday morning feeling lighter than air. She smiled to herself remembering Tobin walking to her front door to say goodnight.

“I don’t want you to go in.” Tobin pouted, arms resting lazily around Christen’s waist, but still just tight enough to keep her there.

“Babe, I don't want to either but I have work in the morning, remember?” She grazed the back of her hand lightly against Tobin’s cheek, hating having to leave the girl after a day like the one they just spent together.

“Yeah, yeah. You're a working woman with obligations. I just want a few more kisses, please? I already miss you and you’re not even gone yet.” The pout on her lips never faded and her eyes were the sweetest kind of sad. She didn’t know when she would be able to see Christen again, knowing both women had work responsibilities and would likely be occupied during the week.

Christen kissed her protruding bottom lip so lightly, it almost tickled. She looked Tobin in the eyes before giving her another kiss in the same spot, this time with slight more force in hopes of eradicating the woman’s sadness. “Stop pouting, baby. You use it against me and it’s not fair. Also, I don’t like seeing you sad. I said I was gonna try to make you as happy as I could, didn’t I?”

The light-haired girl stuck her head into the space between Christen’s shoulder and neck, nodding lightly. She inhaled deeply, wanting to absorb as much of the girl as she could before she had to let her go.

“You are, Chris. So much more than you know.” Tobin said in a hushed, muffled voice from the fabric of Christen’s hoodie, almost making it difficult for the woman to understand her. After a moment, she removed herself from the space and placed her forehead against Christen’s, looking straight into the green eyes that looked gray in the dark of the night. She smiled guiltily and whispered, “I’m just being greedy and wanna spend all the time in the world with you and I’m not getting my way.”

Christen gave her another kiss; this time, a full one. Tobin’s hands found their way to the journalist’s face, palms along her jaw and fingers placed on both sides of her ears, pulling her closer and deepening what was meant to be a soft, quick kiss. She still kept it innocent, though, just wanting to
spend these last few moments with her girl and feeling no pressure to make the moment anything more than just that.

She sighed when she finally let Christen’s lips slip out of her own, but still cradling her face. “Okay, I guess I’ll talk to you tomorrow?”

“You guess?” Christen’s tone was lighthearted, knowing the girl was just trying to make some sort of plan of when she would have some sort of contact with the her next.

“No. I’ll talk to you tomorrow. Sor-”

“Stop it. You know I was only teasing.”

She could only nod, her eyes shy before saying, “Okay. I’ll talk to you tomorrow. Sleep tight, baby. Thank you for today.”

“Goodnight, honey. Thank you for today. Have some sweet dreams, okay?” She gave her one last kiss, “for the road,” she said, before pulling out of Tobin’s hold on her and walking into her home, smiling to herself yet again.

She was in bed, showered, and ready to sleep before she pulled out her phone, a thought coming to her head, and texting Tobin, “You make me happy, too. So much more than you know.” She didn’t expect a response, knowing Tobin was probably either still driving or had just gotten home and was showering, so she put her phone away and allowed herself to sleep.

Christen grabbed her phone off her bedside table to be met with three texts from Tobin.

tobs: God, I miss you so much already.

tobs: I wish I was holding you right now.

tobs: I probably won’t be awake when you wake up for work. I don't have a shoot til 2 in the afternoon. So, good morning, pretty girl. Go write some kickass stories for the world to read.

She smiled to herself, eyes still sleepy but heart wide awake. She typed out a response saying, “You’re seriously the cutest ever. Good morning, gorgeous. Lucky you, getting to sleep in. I can’t wait to hold you again, whenever that is.”

She put her phone down again before getting out of bed to let the dogs out and start some coffee.

But when she walked into the kitchen, head down from her exhaustion but still smiling, she was startled when-

“Ah, good morning, my dear best friend.” Kelley was sitting in the same exact spot at the kitchen counter again, holding a cup of coffee between both hands just below her mouth, her wicked grin still smacked on her lips from the day before.

“Shit, Kel. What the fuck? What are you doing awake right now? You don’t ever wake up this early.”

Kelley was a professional soccer player for the LAFC. She and Christen knew each other from their college days at Stanford and decided to move in together once Kelley got drafted by the club team. Hence, Kelley had no business being awake at 6 in the morning when her practice didn’t begin until 11 a.m.
“Oh, Christen. Did you really think I was going to let you leave to work without telling me all about this second date of yours with a certain photographer friend of mine? Spill, sweet cheeks. Coffee is already ready.”

“Kelley. You did not wake up at 6 in the morning just to ask me about the date. You’re a psycho.”

“Aren’t we all. Spill.”

Christen grabbed a rather large mug out of the cupboard and moved to pour herself coffee, needing extra this morning just to get through Kelley’s interrogation.

“What do you want me to tell you? We went to breakfast and then to the beach where we hung out and she taught me how to surf a bit, exactly like I told you it would be on Saturday.”

“Okay, yes. But like, details, sister. I set you two up. I deserve to know how it’s going.”

“It’s been two dates, Kel. It’s going.”

“You and I both know that’s such bullshit, Christen. You came home over the moon on Friday. I think ‘it’s going’ is a bit of an understatement, don’t you?”

Christen sighed, looking down at her mug. “Yeah. It’s going, really fast. Any other time this would have scared me off by now. But, I don’t know, she makes it all different.” She took a pause, debating about whether or not to tell Kelley about her talk with Tobin during the sunset. She decided to, knowing Kelley would have some sort of insight on Tobin. “We had a talk. About how fast this is going, I mean. And we’re thankfully on the same page. We’re both terrified at what might happen but we’re gonna try this. We agreed to make communication a top priority. I really like her. And it scares me. And I know she feels the exact same, which I’m trying to find comfort in,” another long pause, “I really like her and she really likes me and when I’m with her, none of that other bullshit matters because it just feels that simple.” She had a lazy grin on her face while staring at her coffee.

“Chris.” Kelley spoke in a comforting tone, not teasing for the first time.

Christen looked up finally, intrigued by the way her best friend was approaching this.

“I know you, and I know Tobin. I set you guys up because I just had this weird feeling that you two would be really good for each other. The whole date idea was because I walked in on it playing on the TV while you were passed out on the couch and I watched a bit of it to see what your obsession was. I genuinely had no idea it would come to be this. But I’m seriously so happy for you both, teasing aside. Chris, you both deserve someone. I think you both deserve each other. You have to be the most considerate, loving person I’ve ever met, and she could really use that. And Tobin... she’s a good one. She had it rough and it almost messed her up, but she knew better, and she is better. I think it’s time. I think you two could be really great for each other.” She and Christen smiled at each other softly. “Not to mention, you both gave me that ‘I’m happy being single’ bullshit-”

“We were.”

“Oh, so you’re no longer single?” Kelley raised her eyebrows, the corners of her lips curling up.

Christen’s breath got caught in the back of her throat. She was single. She had only been on two dates with the girl with the honey eyes and she already wanted to be hers; felt like she was Tobin’s and vice versa, but it had been 4 days.

4 days and she wanted nothing but to be Tobin’s. She sighed, tired of her thoughts and it was still
only just past 6 in the morning.

“Yes, I’m single.” She let out.

“Chris. I didn't mean to upset you.”

“No, you didn’t. Just...”

“Hey. It’s okay. It’ll get there, I know it.” The soccer player sent her best friend a gentle smile. “Go get ready for work before you’re late.”

“And whose fault would that be?” Christen rolled her eyes as she put her empty mug in the sink.

“Your girlfriend’s!” Kelley called out as her roommate walked away to get ready.

///

Christen was having a busy day at work. She got called into 3 last minute meetings all before lunch and she needed to finish her story, and start her others, by the end of the day if she wanted it published. She kept thinking back to Tobin’s text, trying to find some motivation to “write some kickass stories for the world to read,” but she just wanted to check her phone to see if Tobin had replied yet. She couldn’t, though. She needed to finish her story, without distractions, if she ever wanted to get home tonight. On top of it all, she worked through her lunch and was absolutely starving.

Come 7:30 p.m., she submitted her story, gathered her belongings, and all but rushed to her car to finally get some food in her system. She didn’t bother checking her phone, only focused on getting to that Greek restaurant down the road to pick up food to take home.

When she did get home, Kelley was out, likely at dinner with Alex. She warmed her food in the microwave and finally pulled her phone out while waiting, only to be met with a series of messages from her new favorite person.

(9:04 a.m.) tobs: Sorry, I just woke up. 9 o’clock, not bad for me;) Good morning, pretty girl (again)

(9:05 a.m.) tobs: I can’t wait to hold you either. I wish I could right now.

(1:36 p.m.) tobs: I’m heading into my shoot now to set up. I hope work is treating you well today :)

(4:49 p.m.) tobs: I miss you like crazy :

(5:37 p.m.) tobs: Hey. You okay, chris?

(6:13 p.m.) tobs: I just talked to Kelley. She laughed at me because I said I hadn’t heard back from you all day and asked if she had talked to you. I believe the words specifically were, “Tobin, you’re a doofus, you know that? Christen wouldn’t ignore you. She’s like, totally into you, dude. She’s probably just writing and hasn’t looked at her phone. She’s weird like that.”

(6:15 p.m.) tobs: sorry for freaking out. I feel stupid now.

Christen’s heart swelled with adoration for the woman. She laughed lightly to herself before calling the contact, wanting nothing more than to hear her voice after the eventful day she had.

“Uh, hello? Chris?”
Christen chuckled mildly at Tobin’s worried tone. “Hi, baby. It’s me.” She let out softly.

She heard Tobin let out a sigh but she didn’t say anything.

“What’s going on?” She questioned, concerned by the girl’s silence.

“Yeah. Yeah, sorry.” There was a small moment of silence before Tobin spoke up again, rambling out, “I’m sorry about earlier. I probably seemed like a creep texting you so many times. I was just worried and I didn't know if something happened and I just wanted to talk to you so bad because—”

“Hey, hey, hey. Slow down, babe.”

“Sorry.” Tobin’s voice was sheepish.

“Stop apologizing.”

“Sorry.”

Christen laughed. “Tobin, what’s got you so worked up?”

“You.” There was another pause. “I can’t control myself with you. It scares me. I feel like it’s gonna scare you away. I mean, I texted you seven times today. I couldn't stop myself. I just wanted to know everything was okay. I didn't know if I did something or if something happened. Which led me to reaching out to Kelley. And then after that, I felt stupid for acting like that. I mean, we had fun yesterday and you told me how much you like me and I told you how much I like you. And then Kelley just reaffirmed that to me today. And I was stupid for worrying. I just don’t want you to slip away, especially so soon. It seems too good to be true.”

“You.” Tobin was just swarmed at work, honey. I’m sorry for worrying you. I promise, I’m not going to slip away. I’m already in too deep to even think about going anywhere. I like you so much and I miss you and I wish you were here holding me because I’m exhausted. And I’m barely eating.”

“Baby, that’s not good.” Christen could tell Tobin was frowning through the phone.

“I know, but I had to finish one of my stories and start the others that just got approved. Plus, I got called into a bunch of meetings that were all last minute. I didn’t really have a moment to eat. And I’m sorry for not answering you all day. Kels was right; I don’t check my phone at all if I’m writing and really need to get it done. I don’t want to get distracted. I should have warned you before-hand. It wouldn’t have happened like this.”

“You have nothing to apologize for, Christen. I was the one who went overboard.”

“It was cute.”

Tobin laughed incredulously. “Yeah, me texting you seven times today, losing my mind over the fact that you hadn’t responded, being a clingy girlfriend was totally cute.”

It slipped before she could stop it. Christen’s heart practically ripped through her chest at the term used by accident. Tobin’s hands went numb and mouth went dry.

“Fuck - I’m sorry. I didn’t mean - I don’t- ugh.” She let out a groan, frustrated with herself for her seemingly chronic fuck up syndrome.

“Tobin.” The green-eyed girl called softly.
“Yeah?” She sounded tired and defeated.

“It’s okay, baby.” She let Tobin take a moment before saying, “Wanna know a secret?”

“Hm?”

“I had a slip up this morning, too. Kel was teasing about us and our insistence on being happy and single to which I replied that we were happy and single, in the past tense, no longer being single.” They both chuckled at their eagerness. “This is fast. I think we should wait a little bit for that, but we both know we both want it, eventually. I just don’t wanna rush into it and mess it up. Just promise me one thing?”

“Of course.”

“You’re mine.”

Tobin smiled for the first time that night.

“Yeah, baby. I’m yours. As long as you’re mine.”

They couldn’t see each other, but they both knew that their grins were mirrored, each not being able to wipe the smile off their face. Four days, two dates, numerous texts, a few calls, and they were both head over heels for each other already.

“Good. I like the sound of that.” Christen smiled into the phone.

“I love the sound of that.”

“You’re sappy, you know that?”

“Don’t act like you don’t love it.”

“I never said I didn’t. You’re so cute, I just wanna kiss you.”

“Ugh, Chris, stop. That’s all I’ve been thinking about all day and it’s absolute torture. I miss your lips.”

“Just my lips?” Christen teased.

“No. I miss your green eyes and your smile and your giggles and your hugs. You give really good hugs.”

“Ugh, this is so annoying. I just wanna be with you.”

“Just wanna be with you, only you. No matter where life takes us, nothing can break us apart! You know it’s true, I just wanna be with you.”

Christen was practically cackling. “Oh my god. Tobin, you did not just sing High School Musical to me.”

Tobin laughed too, “Oh, but I did, baby. You’re my Stanford girl, like Gabriella.”

Christen let out another loud laugh. “Gosh, when you said you were so cheesy it was stinky, you meant it.”

“I’m never gonna live that down, am I?” Tobin chuckled, starting to accept her nervous slip up from
their first date.

“Never, babe. Sorry ‘bout it.”

“No you’re not.” Tobin laughed.

“No, I’m not. You’re right.” Christen admitted while laughing along.

“Whatsoever. You’re so mean.”

“My poor baby.” Christen cooed.

Tobin just hummed, loving the affectionate words.

“When can I see you again, love?” Christen asked, eager to make plans to see each other again. Her body practically ached to be held in the other girl's arms once again.

“Don’t ask me that question. I’d show up at your doorstep right now if it was up to me.”

Christen chuckled, “That’s tempting. Kelley’s not home to tease us either.”

“Noooo, no, no, no. Don’t tell me that because I will really show up.”

“Okay, okay. What’s your schedule like this week?”

“Hmm, I have another shoot tomorrow on location towards Malibu so I’m gonna have to travel a bit. And then Wednesday I have to edit all day so I can start getting pictures out. But Thursday or Friday works for me if it works for you.”

“I have a dinner meeting to interview someone on Thursday night,” Christen frowned, “But I’m free Friday after work,” she offered.

“Four full days?” Tobin complained.

“Babe, we’ve seen each other twice in four days already.” Christen reminded.

“Yeah, but I miss you and I wanna see you like, now.” Tobin said as if it was obvious, making Christen giggle.

“I miss you too, honey. So Friday night, then. We can do it, babe.” Christen yawned.

“Okay. I guess I’ll live. Go finish eating and go to sleep, love. I know you’re tired.”

“I can’t help it. I wanna talk to you all the time.” Christen said cutely but yawned again. “Okay, yeah. I’m exhausted. Sorry, Tobs.”

“It’s okay, baby. You had a long day. Goodnight, don’t let the bed bugs bite.”

“Goodnight, sweets. Can’t wait to see you.”

They hung up, both smiling to themselves in their own silence.

Christen was about to lay down to sleep when her phone buzzed, lighting up her dark room with a notification from none other than ‘tobs.’

(12:08 a.m.) tobs: I’m already counting down the days til Friday. I’ll have you back in my arms in just under four days now, baby.
God, she was in deep.
On Tuesday morning, Christen surprisingly woke up to a recent text from Tobin wishing her a good day and explaining that she was up so early to beat traffic and get to her location with time before her shoot to scout out good spots. Christen smiled at the fact that Tobin was texting her every morning the same way, calling her ‘pretty girl’ and sending her words of encouragement for work. She liked this. She wanted more of it. She sent back her “good morning, gorgeous” text and wished the girl good luck with her shoot and a fun day in Malibu.

She had just finished showering and was going to blow dry her hair when her phone buzzed again with a text from Tobin that read “Just got settled here and being back at the beach makes me miss you even more.” Attached was a series of three photos: one of the teal blue water and foggy marine layer, one of Tobin’s feet in the grainy sand, and the last a selfie of Tobin holding her very expensive looking Canon camera up to her face, squinting one eye and smiling.

She lingers on the last photo longer than the others, zooming in on Tobin’s face and grinning at the details she finds. Tobin’s half squinted face is embellished with small creases on one side of her nose and next to a single eye. Her smile is so wide that it makes her cheeks look extra squishy but still holding that perfect structure in her cheekbones and defined jawline. Her teeth are bright and her eyes the same (or rather, the one eye that was open). Her hair is in its natural wavy state again, falling over her shoulders so beautifully. She has that same maroon snapback on that said ‘bodega’ on the front of it on her head backwards again. She seemed to wear it a lot. Christen wasn’t going to complain, though. She thought she looked hot in it.

Christen finds herself laughing lightly to no one but herself. She was so infatuated with this girl, even she was amused by it.

cris: I don’t know how many times I’m going to tell you this or if I’ll ever stop, but you’re literally the most adorable person in this universe.
She got a reply back almost immediately.

tobs: The entire universe? Even cuter than the little aliens waiting for us on mars? Wow, you must really like me.

Christen laughed again, shaking her head at Tobin’s playfulness.

chris: You’re such a dork. If you consider those things cute then, yes, even cuter than whatever else there may be out there. I don’t even need to see them to know. And yes, I really, really like you.

chris: I need to keep getting ready for work or I’ll be late. Have fun at your shoot today. Take some pretty pictures of the ocean for me<3

tobs: Okay, fiiiiiine. Have a good day at work, love. I’ll miss you.

Christen’s heart fluttered at the message. Simple things like Tobin acknowledging her with terms of endearment or constantly telling her she misses her had Christen’s insides turning and she loved it. It was a bit overwhelming, but in a good way.

Thankfully, Christen’s work day was not nearly as busy as the day prior. She was able to enjoy and respond to the few pictures and messages Tobin sent her.

She even got caught smiling too hard at her phone, getting teased by her coworkers, Julie and Crystal.

That night, she and Tobin texted about their days and everything and nothing, just for the sake of being able to talk to each other. Before she fell asleep, she read a last message from Tobin that said, “Almost just 2 days now. I can’t wait.”

///

On Wednesday, things took a bit of a turn.

Kelley received a text from Tobin around 11 a.m. asking for Christen’s work address. Kelley responded asking what she needed it for, not yet giving it to her.

Tobito: Uhhhh, I may or may not be planning to surprise her with lunch.

The freckled woman laughed to herself, shaking her head.

Kelley: Good God, Tobin. I thought you guys had a date on Friday? You are SPRUNG.

Attached to the message was a pin drop of Christen’s work address.

Tobin simply typed out a “Thanks,” and attempted to carry on with her editing, her eyes growing tired of staring at her computer screen for so long.

She knew Christen had lunch at noon, so she decided to take a break from her work and head out to pick up food before lunch rush hour traffic kicked in.

Just her luck though, the food took a bit longer than anticipated and she caught some traffic after leaving the restaurant. She arrived at the building just after 12:15 and hoped Christen hadn’t left yet or hadn’t begun eating. She scrambled for her phone and called the girl in a rush.

Christen, unfortunately, had already left for lunch at a small cafe with Julie and Crystal. She had just finished ordering when her phone buzzed insistently in her purse. The moment she saw “tobs” on her
screen, her heart raced and cheeks went aflame. Crystal caught on and raised an eyebrow while
asking if Christen was alright.

“Yeah, yeah sorry. I just need to take this really quickly. Excuse me.”

She raised herself from her seat and walked to the restroom for some privacy. Christen swiped at the
word ‘answer’ hurriedly before the call could go to voicemail and said, “Hello? Tobin?”

“Hi.” Tobin’s voice was soft and shy. “Um, are you at work right now?”

“No, I’m out for lunch with some of my coworkers. What’s up, babe?”

interrupted. I’ll talk to you later, yeah?” She let out in a rush.

Christen’s eyebrows furrowed at the girl’s odd demeanor. “Don’t apologize. You didn’t know I was
out. Is everything okay, Tobin?”

“Yeah, yeah. Everything is fine. I’ll let you get back to lunch.”

“Tobin.” Christen’s voice was stern and skeptical. She knew something was up.

“Really, Chris. Everything is fine, I promise. Go get back to your coworkers. They’re probably
wondering where you are.” Tobin did her best to not sound defeated. The only reason Christen
didn’t push the matter any further was because her coworkers were indeed waiting on her outside.

“Okay, if you say so. I’ll talk to you later, okay?” Christen’s voice was still very obviously
unbelieving.

“Yeah, I’ll talk to you later. Have a good lunch.” Tobin’s voice wasn’t necessarily upset, but
Christen could tell just by the fact that she wasn’t being her usually goofy, sweet-name-calling self
that there was something she was keeping from her and she did not like it. But she let it go, for now
at least.

“Hey,” she called out before Tobin could hang up.

“Yeah?”

“I miss you.”

Tobin finally smiled a bit, despite her disappointment. “I miss you too. Now, go. I don’t want to give
your friends a bad impression before I even meet them.”

Christen smiled at the thought of introducing Tobin to her friends at some point. She was also
relieved to hear the girl on the other end of the call calm down a bit.


When Christen hung up, Tobin looked over to her passenger seat seeing the brown paper bag filled
with food for two strapped in as if it were a person. She shook her head at herself and backed out of
her parking space.

“Get a grip, Tobin. You’re gonna scare her off.” She said to herself, realizing what she did and
telling herself she needed to slow down.

///
Later that night, Christen stayed true to her word and called Tobin on her way home from work.

“Hello?” Tobin’s voice filled the car through her bluetooth speakers. She didn’t sound as nervous as earlier, but something was still off.

“Hi, Tobs.”

“Hi. Are you driving?” Tobin questioned.

“Yeah, I’m stuck in traffic. That’s probably the only thing I don’t love about LA.” Christen chuckled. She lived maybe 15 miles from her office but it took her an hour and half, on a decent day, to get home after work.

Tobin laughed too, “Yeah, I’ll have to agree with you there.”

The line went quiet for moment, filled with unusual awkwardness, before Christen spoke up. “So you wanna tell me what earlier was all about? Are you okay?”

Tobin clenched her eyes, “Uh, yeah I’m good. No, I don’t really want to explain it.”

“Tobin, we agreed to talk.” Christen frowned. She was a bit disappointed that the girl was being closed off after they had been so open with each other. Everything was going great and she valued being able to be open with Tobin like they were. So Tobin telling her she didn’t want to explain herself scared her.

Tobin knew Christen was right. She just didn’t know how to explain to the girl that she got ahead of herself, yet again, and literally showed up at her work unannounced. She didn’t want to mess anything up, though. She knew Christen was too special to let slip away. So she put her own issues aside and forced herself to explain.

Tobin took a deep sigh before beginning. “I keep fucking up.”

Two outward crescent creases appeared between Christen’s eyebrows, almost like two parentheses that faced away from each other. “What? Tobin, what do you mean?” She was frowning, hard. She didn’t like the vagueness Tobin was letting off.

“I mean that I keep getting ahead of myself and I’m not able to control it and I keep fucking up.”

Christen was still confused. She thought that they were past the whole ‘7 messages in one day’ incident. “Babe, I already told you it wasn’t a big deal-”

“No, Chris. I-” Tobin paused, trying to find the courage to just let it out. She didn’t know why she was making it such a big deal. It just felt like she was too eager when it came to the green-eyed girl. “I may or may not have been outside of your office when I called you earlier.”

Christen’s face softened, realizing that the girl wanted to see her and was surprising her. “Baby,” she cooed.

Tobin kept going, wanting to get it all out before Christen could say anything. “I also may or may not have gotten us lunch and was trying to surprise you because I missed you so much.”

Christen was quietly giggling as she said, “Tobin-” only to be cut off again.

“No, wait. Sorry, I don’t mean to keep cutting you off. I just- I want to explain myself, if that’s okay.” Her voice was nervous again. Christen simply let out an “okay” before biting her lip and
waiting for Tobin to continue.

“I feel like I’m making this a big deal, and it probably shouldn’t be, but I keep feeling like I’m fucking up and I’m beating myself up for it because every time I do, I feel like I’m going to scare you off. And I know you told me I wouldn’t, just like two days ago, but, I don’t know, I still feel like I will. And I don’t mean to. I just really freaking miss you and my clingy ass is having a hard time staying away. So I asked Kelley for your work address and I picked up food and drove off before even thinking about the fact that you probably already had plans or that maybe I should just ask first. I keep letting my feelings get the best of me and not thinking before I do things. I don’t know, I’m sorry. I’ll work on not letting that keep happening.”

Christen was quiet for a moment, sitting in bumper to bumper traffic as the sun set behind her. “Is that so bad, though?” She questioned quietly.

“Huh?” Tobin was confused by the ambiguity of the statement.

“You acting on your feelings. You’re letting what you feel help you decide what to do. Is that so bad?”

Tobin laughed while shaking her head in disbelief, “How are you always so positive?”

Christen smiled at the sound of Tobin’s laughter. “Not the point. Answer my question.”

The honey-eyed girl chuckled again before settling down and saying, “I don’t know, maybe? I’m glad, like over the moon glad, that what I feel for you is so strong and I’m able to act on it. But at the same time, I’m losing control, and I need to be in control of my feelings and actions, y’know?”

“Yeah,” Christen said, understanding what the girl meant. “Why didn’t you wanna tell me? It was sweet. Thank you for trying to surprise me. I’m sorry I wasn’t there.” Her voice was obviously disappointed but still held gratefulness.

“I’m sorry. I guess I was just too embarrassed. After I hung up with you, I looked at the food and literally told myself to calm down. I couldn’t believe I just didn’t think about it. I know we keep talking about this whole ‘time’ thing and- what is this, day 6 of knowing each other? Yeah, day 6, and I just keep telling myself to slow down and take my time with you and then I go and do something like text you a million times or show up at your job with food unannounced. We literally just finished talking about waiting it out until at least Friday because we’re moving so fast. And here I am, not being able to last three days.”

“Honey, please don’t be so hard on yourself about this. I get it. It’s okay. If I’m being honest, all I’ve been able to think about is getting to see you again and wishing it would be sooner. I just keep telling myself the same thing: to slow down.”

Tobin laughed sarcastically, “Well I’m glad one of us has self control.”

Christen laughed too, but chastised the girl for still beating herself up over it, saying, “Tobs, stop.”

“I know, I know. ‘It’s okay.’” She quoted Christen knowingly.

“Yes, it’s more than okay. We’re figuring this out. Together. Now, stop please. I don’t wanna hear another word about you worrying about scaring me off. I already told you it’s not happening. All I wanna hear about is how your day, otherwise, went, how these pictures are turning out, though I’m sure they’re gorgeous, and how excited you are to see me in two days. So please begin because this traffic is killing me.” Christen’s tone was comforting and not bothered in the slightest. The last part of her statement made Tobin smile goofily.
Somehow, every time she got in her own head about something, Christen managed to get her out. And she did it effortlessly. There was no agitation, no discomfort, no pressure. Sure, there were nerves, but that was normal. Tobin’s smile grew tenfold as she excitedly told the girl all about the pictures she managed to get at the shoot in Malibu and how much she was enjoying editing them.

Christen, for once, didn’t mind the traffic so much. As long as she had Tobin’s voice to get her through it, she didn’t care if she had to sit in her car for hours on end.

///

This time around, it was Christen’s turn to plan their Friday night date. She insisted that since Tobin asked her out and planned their beach day, she would plan this one.

But she was stuck. She knew Tobin loved the beach, but they had already done that. She knew Tobin liked sports, but the only thing she knew about sports was that her best friend played professional soccer and she definitely was not going to take Tobin out on a date to one of Kelley’s games. Not yet, at least. She was trying to impress the girl, not torture her with Kelley’s nagging.

All week, Christen tried to get information out of Tobin to think of an idea of what to do. She was attempting to be as discreet as possible, not wanting to give away that she was struggling with planning a bit. Tobin, thankfully, didn’t even notice. She just thought it was part of their normal conversation.

Christen noticed that somehow, a lot of their conversations turned to art eventually. Not even necessarily photography per se, but just art altogether in its different forms and it struck her. Art.

They lived in Los Angeles, for crying out loud. You could find art anywhere if you wanted to, but there was also an entire area downtown that was dedicated to art and, not far, a street filled with different museums.

On Thursday, Tobin asked what their plans were for the next day. Christen said she wanted to keep it a surprise.

Tobin whined, stating that she didn’t keep her date plan a secret to which Christen replied that she was not Tobin and the girl wouldn’t be able to break it out of her.

Tobin huffed and said something along the lines of, “Whatever. You’re lucky I like you,” in a voice that didn’t sound annoyed at all.

///

On Friday, Christen messaged Tobin first, knowing the girl was still asleep since she had no work for the day.

(7:17 a.m.) chris: Good morning, gorgeous. I finallyyyyy get to see you today!!! I can’t wait. Let me know when you wake up<3

She felt like it was a holiday of some sort. She woke up just as excited as she used to wake up on Christmas morning as a kid, only this time, she got Tobin as her present instead of a new journal. (Yep. She was the kid that asked for a journal instead of a new game.)

Tobin replied around 10 a.m. as soon as she had woken up.

(10:16 a.m.) tobs: Good morning, pretty girl <333 I’m so excited, you don’t even know. What’s the plan, babe??
Christen grinned down at her phone knowing Tobin was trying to get some information out of her.

(10:19 a.m.) chris: Nice try, hun. All you need to know is to dress casual and (if you want) you can bring your camera. I know you take pictures for a living so you may not want to. Totally up to you, babe. I made sure I could get out a bit early today so wanna meet me at 3ish outside my office? I mean, you do know where it is after all ;)

Tobin rolled her eyes at the teasing, still sleepy and not up to protest it.

(10:21 a.m.) tobs: ha ha. My camera, huh? Wonder what we’re doing…

(10:22 a.m.) tobs: I’ll be there at 3:15, if that’s okay?

(10:22 a.m.) chris: Perfect. Can’t wait to see youuuuu.

Christen’s nerves picked up slightly after putting her phone down. It was partially excitement, but also had to do with the fact that she really hoped Tobin liked what she had planned. After their amazing second date and what seemed like the longest week ever, she just wanted both of them to enjoy it. But she also hoped that Tobin would be pleased with the artistic side of it all.

At three o’clock, Christen shut her computer off and sped to the restroom to change into more casual clothes for their date. She settled on a pair of light wash high-waisted jeans with fringe at the ankles and a simple black halter tank top that she tucked in. She brought along a light cardigan that was long enough to reach the back of her knees for later in the night, just in case, but it was Los Angeles; it hardly ever got cold.

At exactly 3:15, she received a text from Tobin letting her know she was outside. She shoved her work clothes into her bag, grabbed her phone, and rushed out the door, waving goodbye to Julie and Crystal as she passed them by.

On the elevator ride down to the parking lot, Christen rubbed her sweaty palms on her jeans and checked her hair in the reflection of the mirrored elevator walls.

Meanwhile, Tobin was sitting against the hood of her car while nervously tapping a random beat against it with her knuckles, her camera bag set just behind her on top of the hood of the vehicle. She puffed her cheeks out as she let out breath and thought to herself, “Why am I so nervous? We’ve done this before.”

Before she could think about it any further, a gorgeous green-eyed girl appeared out of the doors of the building. Both of their faces lit up as they caught sight of each other. Christen’s eyes squinted from her smile and Tobin bit her lip to try to contain herself. Christen sped up and took wider steps as she got closer to the girl and Tobin pushed herself off her car as Christen approached quickly.

As soon as Christen was close enough, Tobin wrapped her arms around the girl’s waist and lifted her up, spinning them in circles. Christen squealed as she wrapped one arm around Tobin’s neck and held onto her bags with the other. Christen’s occupied hands made it a bit awkward, but it was still perfect to them.

Tobin looked up at the girl still in her arms after she stopped spinning and muttered a “hi” with a giant grin. Christen smiled back, whispering her own “hi” whilst cradling Tobin’s neck in her one available hand and attaching the tips of their noses, scrunching her own adorably. God, did it make Tobin want to kiss her right then and there but she knew they were only right outside of Christen’s workplace and anyone could see them. She didn’t want anyone to think of Christen as anything less than completely professional, so she kept her lips to herself for the time being and set the girl in her
arms back on the ground.

“I’m driving. Are you ready to go?” Christen asked as Tobin’s arms stayed locked around her waist.

“Mhmm.” Tobin nodded her head and untangled her arms from around the girl, grabbing her camera bag with one hand and allowing Christen to tug her along by the other.

“I missed you so much.” Christen said as she turned to look at Tobin who was still slightly behind her and brought their hands up to her lips to kiss Tobin’s knuckles.

Tobin smiled back and said, “Missed you more, love,” while winking and squeezing Christen’s hand.

Once they were settled in their seats, Tobin looked over to Christen with a smug smile and said, “So do I finally get to know what we’re doing?”

Christen laughed and shook her head. “I’m not spilling. I mean, it’s not like super amazing but I hope you’ll like it. But again, don’t set your expectations too high because—”

Tobin shut the girl up by grabbing one of Christen’s hands in her own and bringing it up to her lips, kissing it a few times and saying, “Stop worrying. I’ll love whatever it is as long as I’m with you,” against the skin and kissing it again.

Christen smirked, trying to hide her blush, and said, “Already being charming, are we?”

Tobin laughed and brought the hand up to her lips again. She held it softly in both hands this time, kissing it gently after looking up at Christen and saying, “For you, m’lady, always,” in a weird accent, acting like Christen was some sort of royalty.

“You’re a dork.” Christen laughed before pulling out of her parking space, reluctantly pulling her hand free of Tobin’s grasp to steer the wheel. Though, as soon as they were on the streets and Christen rested her arm on the center console, Tobin took the free hand back into her own. Christen smiled at that, loving the contact with the girl.

As soon as they pulled up to the first red light, Christen leaned over to Tobin’s seat and grabbed her chin, pulling her in for an all too quick, but still sweet kiss. “I wanted to do that as soon as I saw you but we were still at my work,” she said as she settled herself back into her seat and began driving again.

Tobin leaned her head against the headrest while looking over at Christen with a dopey smile and simply said, “Me too.”

Tobin refused to let go of Christen’s hand since she first grabbed hold of it, but Christen needed it to make turns far too many times along the drive for Tobin’s liking. Every time Christen let go of her hand, Tobin would pout and Christen would laugh, going back to grab her hand again every time after. Eventually, Tobin grew tired of the on-again-off-again contact and settled for just resting a hand on Christen’s closest thigh, rubbing her thumb back and forth every so often.

As Christen took a freeway exit towards the large Downtown Los Angeles buildings, Tobin looked over at her with a small smile.

“Are we going downtown?”

“Maaaybe.” Christen teased.
“What are we doing?” Tobin knew Downtown LA was filled with everything, so the location told her absolutely nothing about their plans.

“Baby, we’re almost there. Hold your horses and stop trying to ruin the surprise.”

“I don’t own any horses so I can’t possibly hold them, Chris. C’mon, just a hint, pleeeaaase?”


Tobin huffed and pouted as she finally took her hand off of Christen’s leg to cross her arms.

“Ooooh, no you don’t. No pouting. You have to stop using that on me.” Christen laughed from the driver’s seat.

“Is it working?” Tobin smirked.

“Nope. Not today, honey. Sorry.” Christen said as she shook her head and pulled into a parking lot. Tobin was too busy whining the entire time to even realize where they were or that they had arrived. They honey-eyed girl looked out the window and didn’t recognize anything around her. All she saw was tall buildings and people walking down the streets. She had no idea where they were.

She turned to Christen with the most adorable, confused expression on her face and said, “Huh? Where are we? What are we doing?”

Christen laughed and grabbed her face again. “You’re so cute and you don’t even know it.” She gave Tobin a fast peck that Tobin didn’t even have the chance to reciprocate before getting out of the car and walking over to a random man to pay for their parking space.

Tobin followed her, having no idea what was going on. Christen turned to her and interlocked their fingers. “Ready? We have to walk a few blocks.”

“Yes. I want to know where we’re going.”

“You’ll find out soon enough, babe. Promise.”

“Lead the way then,” Tobin said as Christen began walking in the direction of their destination.

The short walk was relatively quiet. Both girls realized that this was their first time actually holding hands out in public. They were both carrying towels and surfboards on their beach date so they didn’t really even have the option then. They hadn’t even thought about it, in fact. Christen just naturally grabbed her hand as if she had done it a million times before and Tobin let her. Blushes appeared on both of their faces but they were each too concerned about trying to hide their own blush that they didn’t notice each other’s.

As a large, off white cement building that was patterned with holes in the walls came into view, Tobin gasped and tugged on Christen’s hand.

“Chris, are we going there? You’re taking me to The Broad???”

The Broad was a very well known museum in Downtown Los Angeles, most known for its Infinity Room full of lights and mirrors that each person or duo got to experience alone for a short time. Christen being Christen, of course, had reserved their turn after looking into everything and learning that reservations were needed to go in.
“Yeah, have you been already?” Christen was smiling but there was nervousness in her voice.

“No, I’ve been dying to come since it opened years ago! Are you kidding? Thank you, Chris!”

“Oh, thank god. I was really nervous that you had probably already been. That would have been really underwhelming.” Christen chuckled as her nerves slipped away.

“No, this is perfect and it would have been if even if I had already been here before. Thank you.” Tobin looked at her affectionately and squeezed her hand. She wanted to kiss the green-eyed girl badly, in awe of how well Christen already knew what she liked, but she didn’t know what the girl was like with PDA (despite them holding hands) and didn’t want to push it by kissing her.

“You don’t have to thank me, babe. I’m glad you like it,” Christen smiles and squeezed back. “I was thinking we can hit up as many museums on this street as possible before we get too hungry and then we can head out to get food.”

“Oh my god, you’re perfect.”

Christen laughed and pulled on Tobin’s hand, leading her toward the entrance of the museum.

“C’mon. I already have our tickets and I wanna see as much as possible with you.”

The moment they stepped inside the museum, Tobin looked like a little kid in a candy shop. Her eyes grew wide at the sight of dark cement walls around her that were anything but normal.

Despite the outward, rectangular appearance of the museum, the inside walls were curvy and almost looked like archways and tunnels. There was a single escalator going up to the second level that was lit lightly by a yellow light along the glass and surrounded by a tunnel of dark cement.

Christen grinned as Tobin looked around. They hadn’t even seen any exhibited art yet, but she was already loving how Tobin was absorbing it all.

“Where do you wanna go first? We have reservations for the Infinity Room that we need to get in line for in about 30 minutes, but otherwise, you lead the way.”

Tobin’s eyes widened even further. “We’re gonna do the Infinity Room?” She couldn’t hide the excitement in her voice even if she tried.

“C’mon, Tobs. How could I possibly bring you to The Broad and not get us reservations for the Infinity Room? Have a little faith in me.” She was teasing and Tobin knew it.

“You’re right, silly me.” She wanted to tease back but she couldn’t bring herself to think of a witty response. That’s the best she could do in the moment given she was too caught up in a daze over how amazing her date was.

It really blew her mind how spot on Christen was. The fact that she didn’t even have to tell her anything along the lines of wanting to see art or go to art museums, yet she still knew, made Tobin feel understood and like Christen was really paying attention to her.

“Can I kiss you?”

Christen laughed with a somewhat confused face. “You don’t have to ask to kiss me, Tobin. I thought you’d have known that by now.” It was lighthearted.

Tobin turned sheepish. “I know, I just - I didn’t know where you stood with PDA.”
"Tobin, I haven’t let go of your hand since we got out of the car. I’m okay.” There was a small smile on Christen’s face that let off both thankful and teasing vibes.

“Okay, cool.”

There was a pause. Tobin forgot the whole reason they were having that conversation and just carried on without kissing the girl.

Christen laughed but pouted. “I thought you were asking if you could kiss me so that you could do it in the moment.”

“Oh! Oh my god. I was,” she pulled Christen in for a deep, but still publicly appropriate, kiss to try to show her how much she appreciated the thought put into this date. “Sorry, baby. I got caught off guard and forgot. Thank you for this. I really like it.”

They both had toothy grins. Christen’s was mostly because she was so happy that Tobin liked what she planned, but also because she finally called her ‘baby’ after a while having not. Tobin’s was mostly because she was overwhelmed with emotions from how much she liked the girl, but also because Christen’s smile made her smile. It was automatic.

“C’mon. I’m following you.” Christen nodded her head in a random direction, gesturing to start walking.

“Upstairs first?”

“Wherever you want, honey.”

Tobin nodded with a soft smile. “Okay, upstairs then.”

As they were about to get on the escalator, Tobin gasped and pulled Christen to the side to let other people pass.

“What? What happened? I thought you wanted to go upstairs first?”

Tobin laughed, “I do. I just want my camera. I saw a cool shot as we were about to get on the escalator and I’m pretty sure just about every other photographer has the same shot but I don’t even really care. It’s too cool to pass up.” Tobin rambled on as she crouched down to the ground where she momentarily placed her camera bag to get the device out. When she stood back up, she gave Christen another light peck on the lips and said, “Thank you for suggesting I bring my camera. I would have been so upset if I hadn’t brought it.”

Christen doesn’t think she’s stopped smiling since she first reunited with Tobin. “Of course. I had a feeling you would want it but I didn’t want to force you or anything.”

They moved to get back on the escalator where Tobin quickly squatted to get a low shot of the moving stairs and the light at the end of the cement tunnel. Once they were on it, she kept snapping and about a quarter through the escalator ride, she nudged Christen up a few steps above her.

“What? Tobin, no. I didn’t tell you to bring your camera to take pictures of me.” Christen was giggling and sort of embarrassed.

“Shhh. You’re even more of a masterpiece than any piece of art in this entire building. Now hurry before I can’t take the shot anymore.”

Christen’s swooned at Tobin’s words. It was trademark Cheesy Tobin, but she was a sucker for it.
She didn’t know how to pose or what to do for the camera, so she just stood there. She looked at Tobin affectionately for a moment before turning around and facing forward with her back to the photographer.

Tobin was eating it all up. She wasn’t saying anything, mostly because she didn’t want to pressure Christen, but she loved how naturally beautiful the girl was through her lens. Her heart skipped a beat as she took her last shot on the escalator. The light behind Christen created a gorgeous silhouette of the woman’s side profile, all being framed by the arch of the dark cement above them. Part of Christen’s face was illuminated lightly by the dim lights in the tunnel, showcasing her beautiful skin.

This is what she in my eyes. This is what it she is through my lens. She’s perfect in the dark and in the light, separately and simultaneously. Tobin’s thoughts flooded through her mind as she watched the goddess of a woman in front of her.

They toured upstairs for a while, Tobin stopping to take pictures every so often. Her favorite were the ones in front of the “America” neon signs. She was excited to edit them when she got the chance. Tobin realized that most of her pictures had Christen in them somehow. She couldn’t help herself. Christen had no idea she was being photographed. The candidness made Tobin love the pictures even more.

They got a stranger to take a few pictures of them being goofy under the larger-than-life dining room table. They looked unnaturally small compared to the measure of the table above them, making them laugh at how silly they looked.

Eventually, Christen tugged Tobin away from the upstairs art to head downstairs to get in line for their turn in the Infinity Room. As much as Tobin was loving the upstairs galleries, she was unbelievably excited to get to experience the museum’s most popular piece.

Once they stood in line, Christen turned to Tobin and said, “So I reserved two spots because you can either go in alone or with someone else and I didn’t know what you’d want to do. So if you want to go alone, I have it covered—”

“No, I wanna go with you. Thank you, though.” Tobin shook her head and carried on reviewing pictures in her camera. It was simple. Tobin didn’t even consider going alone. She wanted to experience it with Christen.

Christen smiled as she watched the girl scroll through pictures on her camera. That giddy feeling resurfaced at Tobin’s statement. She was secretly hoping to be able to experience the awfully romantic looking room with Tobin, but she wouldn’t have been upset if the girl wanted to go alone.

When they were next in line, Christen explained to the worker that they had two reservations but were only going to use one since they ended up wanting to go in together.

The museum employee smiled at their conjoined hands, taking Christen’s tickets and offering to give them the time for both of their sessions anyway. That made the two girls even more excited as the door in front of them opened and they caught a glimpse of the dark room.

“Oh, you have 90 seconds in here. I’ll open the door when time is up. Enjoy!” The employee stated before closing the door behind them.

The moment the door closed, Christen and Tobin looked at each other and smiled. They took a moment to look around the room and take in its illusionary elements. Each wall around them was mirrored with the exception of the ground that was filled by water around their mini island to stand on. There were lights of several colors hanging from the ceiling by small strings that were almost
impossible to see. The mirrors on the walls made the room look like there were an infinite amount of stars around them. The lights flickered every now and then, dimming and brightening at a random pace. The thickness of the walls closed around them drowned out the loud chatter of people outside, letting them take in the sight in silence. It was dreamy.

“Wow.” The word fell out in a whisper from Tobin’s lips, making Christen turn to her. It was only then that she was able to take in the sight of her date. Tobin was wearing a red Joy Division shirt that fit her loosely along with black baggy pants and a pair of Off White x Nike J1’s. Her hair was tousled in beachy waves that Christen so badly wanted to run her fingers through.

She took a step forward to close the small gap between her and Tobin, leaning into the girl and setting her hands lightly on the photographer’s hips. Tobin was looking up towards the ceiling, still in awe of the sight around her, giving Christen perfect access to her sharp jawline where she placed a light kiss. The contact made Tobin finally look down and smile. Christen wrapped her arms around Tobin’s waist lightly and set her head in the crook of Tobin’s neck whilst Tobin wrapped her arms around Christen’s shoulders and leaned a cheek on the top of Christen’s head.

“You’re so gorgeous,” Christen said into the skin of Tobin’s neck. It made Tobin shiver and Christen noticed. She smiled and placed another small kiss to the skin under her lips on Tobin’s neck before pulling away and saying, “Take your pictures, babe. We don’t have much time in here.”

Tobin had goosebumps along her neck and arms from the intimacy of the moment. She gave Christen a kiss on the forehead before stepping back and pulling her camera from its slung state across her body.

Christen stepped behind the girl, not wanting to get in the way of any pictures but not really having space to hide with mirrors all around her. After a few seconds, she wrapped her arms around Tobin’s waist from behind and rested her chin on the shoulder in front of her. Tobin took a few mirror shots of the moment before grabbing one of Christen’s hands and pulling her in front of the lens.

Christen tried to protest but Tobin quickly shot the words down and insisted that it would only be a few pictures.

If Tobin thought the pictures from earlier on the escalator were her favorite, she was wrong. These were even more stunning. She set her aperture as wide as it could go and fixed her shutter and ISO accordingly.

The result was a barely underexposed photo of a gorgeous green-eyed girl’s face lit by different colors and all different sized bokeh circles from the lights in back of her. Christen wasn’t looking at the lens, she was looking just above it at Tobin. She had a shy smile on her face and her head was slightly tilted. Her eyes held the reflection of the lights around her, letting Tobin quite literally see stars in her eyes.

There it was again. She’s perfect in the dark and in the light, separately and simultaneously.

Tobin clicked her camera off and slung it across her body again, shoving it in back of her. She reached for Christen’s face and placed a series of small kisses on her forehead, then her cheeks, one on each of her eyes, a line of them down her nose, and finally her lips. She had her own eyes open almost the entire time, drinking in the sight of Christen with her eyes closed and lights all around her.

Their kiss was slow. It was soft but held enough just enough force. It wasn’t an overly intimate kiss that would lead to much heavier making out, but rather intimate enough for them both to know exactly what it meant to them. It almost felt confidential. There was no one around them but their
own reflections. No one to see them or know what the kiss meant. They were happy to keep that secret to themselves.

All too soon, the sound of the door clicked and the girls separated but stayed close.

“How’d you like it?” The worker questioned.

Both girls smiled and said, “Amazing,” at the same time.

They carried on touring the lower floor of the museum. There wasn’t as much to photograph on this level, so Tobin kept her camera shut off and opted for holding Christen’s hand instead.

After from the Infinity Room, their second favorite had to be the music room where different screens projected a single person playing a different instrument. The closer you walked to each screen, the more you could hear only that instrument and person singing. At the end of the room was a projected visual of every individual from the other screens all on the same screen and it was easier to hear the song collectively.

The girls stood in the center of the room for a moment just holding each other, appreciating the soothing state that the music brought on.

“Thank you for this. I’m really happy.” Tobin whispered into Christen’s ear. She smiled and said, “Stop thanking me. I was more than happy to. And we’re not done,” before kissing Tobin’s jaw again and leading her toward the exit.

The girl’s walked across the street to the Walt Disney Concert Hall where they walked the outside gardens. There was hardly anyone there so Tobin took the opportunity to press Christen up against one of the high walls that curved around them and kiss her.

This time around, it did lead to a lot more than just simple kissing. Hands clenched shirts, fingers hooked onto belt loops, and soft whimpers were let out before they parted and decided to head out before they got too carried away in public. It was definitely the most heated kiss they had shared thus far and it left each of the girls eager to explore more.

They toured one more museum, the Museum of Contemporary Art, before heading down the street for dinner at Grand Central Market. The museum was small and not of the caliber of The Broad, but they still enjoyed it nonetheless.

The girls were about to walk down the street before Christen remembered where they were.

“Babe, wait. Come this way.”

Tobin was confused but followed her anyway.

“Oh good! It’s open! C’mon,” Christen let out excitedly.

Tobin was still confused but, again, followed her anyway.

They walked up to an orange trolley looking vehicle and Christen paid a man in a booth before pulling Tobin along toward the cart.

“What are we doing? I thought we were gonna go eat?” Tobin pouted, undoubtedly hungry.

“Have you never heard of Angel’s Flight? It’s like an LA gem!”

“Angel’s what?”
Christen laughed and said, “Angel’s flight, babe. It’s just this little trolley train thing that takes you up or down the hill. And I promise food is right at the exit of this.”

Once they stepped inside the trolley, Tobin realized why it was so special. The vehicle was shaped along the hill it was on so the inside was filled with seats at different levels and stairs. It was quite odd compared to usual trolley that was completely horizontal.

They took their seats on opposite sides of the vehicle and held hands across the stairway. They got lucky and no one else joined them on the ride down, giving them the entire vehicle for themselves.

“This reminds me of La La Land now.” Christen smiled at Tobin.

“I never saw it.”

“What?!? But it was so good!”

“It looked kinda cheesy,” Tobin admitted with a small shrug.

“Oh, and you’re not cheesy? I thought you said you were so cheesy you were stinky?” Christen quipped with a smirk.

Tobin’s jaw dropped and she laughed incredulously. “I thought you said you were done with that”

Christen giggled and said, “Touché” before the vehicle jolted forward.

Tobin yelped as she had onto the seat with the hand that wasn’t holding Christen’s.

They both laughed at how jerky the ride was as they held onto anything they could find for stability (including each other).

“This looked a lot more romantic in the movie,” Christen joked.

Tobin leaned forward and slotted her lips with Christen’s, kissing her for a few seconds before pulling away and saying, “How’s that for romantic?”

Christen smiled lazily and said, “I don’t know. You might need to do it again. Just for safe measure, y’know?”

“Just for safe measure,” Tobin agreed before kissing her again.

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Once they crossed the street and entered Grand Central Market, a large space filled with small restaurants, each labeled by their own neon sign, they gave the area a lap before deciding on eating Ramenhood. Though everything looked and smelled delicious, the vegan ramen made with sunflower seed broth seemed the most interesting.

Tobin was more skeptical than Christen, however, claiming something about vegans having a “warped sense of what tastes good.”

Christen was more enticed by the healthiness of the meal and ultimately convinced Tobin to give it a shot.

After a few small slurps of noodles and soup, Tobin decided that maybe some vegans had better taste than others.
Christen teased her for not being as adventurous as she led on, hooking a foot behind one of the girl’s ankles. Tobin only carried on eating with a grin, hungry and not giving in.

“Okay. What was your favorite piece from today?” Christen asked between sips of broth.

“You.” It was quick. It was slick. It was forward. It surprised Christen and caught her off guard, nearly causing her to choke on her soup. Christen wiped her mouth with a napkin in order to occupy herself with something other than Tobin’s statement.

Tobin laughed at Christen’s reaction and leaned forward in her seat, resting an elbow on the metal table and her head on her hand with a sly smile.

Christen opened her mouth to say something but could only laugh again, the words getting stuck in the back of her throat. She bowed her head whilst shaking it and chuckling, trying to avoid Tobin’s intense gaze.

Tobin was surprised. She was usually the one being tripped up by Christen, not the other way around. She decided she liked this shy side of Christen as much as she liked the flirty side.

“I’m being serious, you know.” That caused the green eyes to finally look up through mascara coated eyelashes. A small grin played on Christen’s face as she raked her mind for something to say.

“You’re something else, Heath,” was the best she could come up with.

“Have you seen yourself?” She was getting good.

“Oh, okay. Enough with the flattery. My cheeks are red enough.”

“It’s cute.”

“You’re cute.” Christen sent back quickly.

“Ooooh! Look who’s getting confident now.” Tobin’s eyebrows raised and eyes widened as the corners of her lips pulled further upward.

They were both laughing now. Despite the lightheartedness of the moment, they both couldn’t ignore the major butterflies fluttering around their stomachs and the pounding of their hearts so strong they could feel it against their ribcages.

This was more than just flirting and playfulness. In the moments where it felt like they were teenagers in high school still just getting to know each other (because they were, in fact, still getting to know each other) and their hearts held that feeling that you get in the first stages of a relationship (that sometimes eventually fades away with time), they also knew that the 36 questions and answers they shared a week prior did something unimaginable to them. It was confusing at times, feeling like you don’t know enough about someone to be in love with them but at the same time knowing things that usually wouldn’t have been exposed until much later on in a relationship.

Christen knew things like the fact that Tobin’s worst memory was the day her sister got in a horrible car accident. Tobin knew that Christen’s relationship with her mother was one of the most important to her of all. Christen knew that if Tobin were to die tonight with no communication to anyone, she would most regret not having said thank you again to her parents. Tobin knew that Christen has dreamed of traveling to underdeveloped countries to write about them and help spread awareness about their struggles and needs, but would need more time and resources to make it happen.

All of this they learned within hours of knowing each other. It was what led them to where they are
now. It allowed them to be so comfortable with each other. So open. So understanding.

One week in. Three dates in. *Hearts locked in.*

“You know how we did the 36 questions thing on our first date?” Tobin turned serious.

“I remember,” Christen said with a hint of playfulness in her voice, given it was only a week ago and it seemed like an odd question to ask.

“You know what the title of the article those questions are from is, right?”

“36 Questions That Lead to Love?” Christen’s tone was questioning, not knowing where Tobin was heading.

“Yeah. That one. Do you believe it?” She was suddenly shy.

“Believe what? That the questions lead to love?” Christen’s heart felt like it about to jump out of her mouth, straight onto the table in between them. It was too early to be in love.

*Please, Tobin, slow down. Slow down. Slow down. Don’t say it.* Christen’s voice inside of her head was whispering in the back of her mind.

As if Tobin could hear it, her eyes shot wide and she spat out, “Oh shit. No, I’m not trying to say- no. Not yet. Sorry. I was just- never mind. Sorry.”

Christen let out a breath and leaned her forehead into the space between her thumb and pointer finger. “*Oh, thank god.*” Her head shot up and eyes broadened. Tobin’s face looked hurt and reserved, an odd mix that sent Christen's stomach into knots. “Wait- no. I’m so sorry. That came out so wrong. *Fuck.* That’s not what I meant.”

Christen leaned back into her seat for a moment as Tobin’s shoulders slumped and her head hung low. Abruptly, Christen stood up from her seat and Tobin’s head shot up just as fast. Before Tobin could even question where she was going or if she was leaving, Christen grabbed a chair and dragged it next to Tobin’s, gaining the attention of some people seated next to them, but she didn’t care. She sat sideways in the seat in order to face the girl and placed one hand on Tobin’s closest thigh and slung the other arm on her back, resting her hand on the back of the girl's neck. She leaned forward and pressed her forehead to Tobin’s temple and whispered, “I’m sorry, baby. That’s not what I meant at all. I’m so sorry.”

It was loud in the market, and if it hadn’t been for Christen’s lips being mere centimeters from Tobin’s ear, the words would have probably gone unheard.

“How about we get out of here and find a quieter place to talk? I want to explain myself.” Christen’s voice was louder this time. She wanted to fix this, whatever it was.

"Christen, you don't have to explain yourself. I get it." Tobin *did* get it (partially).

She understood that it was too early for that four letter word. She understood that she presented the question in an alarming manner. She understood that they were taking things slow (or at least trying to). But it didn't hurt any less to hear the relief fall from Christen's mouth at the declaration that Tobin didn't love her. Maybe she was overreacting. Maybe it was old wounds opening up that she needed to stitch back up on her own.

"No, Tobin, but I do. I didn't mean that I'm relieved that you don’t love me. Just- let's get out of here and talk okay? I'm sorry. Is everything okay? *Gosh,* I'm so sorry."
Tobin could only nod, not finding any words to say in the moment. But she did grab Christen's hand on the way out, giving the girl some hope that everything would be okay.

Chapter End Notes

in all honesty I have no idea where I'm going with this so bear with me as I figure it out lmaooo. thanks for reading and once again feel free to leave me comments or asks on my Tumblr @ chrvstenpress.tumblr.com
Christen’s heart was clenching so hard she thought it might implode. She doesn’t know what made her say it. She knows that it was misperceived and she didn’t mean it the way it sounded. But it was still wrong and it still obviously hurt Tobin.

Here she was promising Tobin she’d do everything she could to make her happy and then she goes and lets something slip out of her mouth before she can even comprehend the gravity of her words.

So there they sat on the grass in the middle of Grand Park, a clear view of City Hall in front of them and the occasional stranger walking by some feet away. It was dark and there was no lighting, making it difficult to fully see each other, but Tobin preferred it that way in the moment. Their pants were slightly damp from the dew that had built up on the grass beneath them, but that was the least of their worries for now.

Tobin had immediately sat down with her knees pointing toward the sky and her hands locked around her legs. Christen took that as a sign that she wanted space so she sat a decent distance away from her. It was close enough to tell that she was available to touch or reach out to if she wanted, but far enough to give room and definitely the furthest away they had willingly sat from each other all day.

They sat in silence for a moment. Tobin had nothing to say for now. Christen didn’t know where to start.

“I’m sorry,” is what she decided on.

“You don’t have to apologize, Christen.”

The dark-haired girl took a deep sigh and moved from her position sitting the same way as Tobin to sitting with her legs criss-crossed and her hands in her lap. She looked like a little kid who got in trouble and felt bad. It made her look so small. Tobin wanted to reach out to her, but she didn’t.
Tobin knew that Christen didn’t mean wrong by her comment. The girl had a heart of gold and would never. She could feel Christen’s care and adoration for her in her bones. But something was hitting her right where it hurt.

“Tobin, I—” There was another pause, as if Christen was really thinking about her words now. “Listen, what I said was wrong and unmindful and I’m so sorry.” Tobin opened her mouth again but Christen stopped her. “No, wait.” It wasn’t rude, just urgent. “It was wrong and I’m sorry. Please, let me be sorry. I could see it in your eyes the way it affected you and I don’t want that. I don’t want you to think that I am in any way happy that you don't love me. Gosh, this sounds so weird.”

Tobin was looking at her in the eyes. She looked down at the last comment and pushed a breath out of her nose as a laugh, knowing exactly what Christen meant. It felt like they were doing this wrong. Maybe out of order? Maybe too fast? She didn’t know what, but she knew something kept getting in their way.

“Tobin, I would be honored to be loved by you. I would be the luckiest girl in the entire universe to be loved by you. I said what I said because, in all honesty, we have been moving very fast and I couldn’t tell where that conversation was going. I wasn't trying to say that I don’t want that. I guess what I meant was that this is all so new and confusing at times and I didn’t want to rush into anything further, but I think I would really, really want that in the future.”

Tobin still wasn't speaking and Christen’s heart was two seconds from popping from all the pressure. So she kept talking.

“It’s confusing me a lot, you know. How I can feel like I know you so well but at the same time feel like I've only known you for a week and time says I shouldn't already be feeling what I feel for you. Because I don't know enough about you. Because of how little time I’ve had to learn about you. Because I've never gone this fast with anyone and I sure as hell have never felt like this with anyone but you. Tobin, this is complicated or maybe we’re making it more complicated than it should be, but if there's one thing I know I'm not confused about, it's you.

“There is not one doubt in my mind that I want to be with you. My doubts about the rest come from my own issues and worries and most of it has to do with the fact that I know I want you. Anything that puts that in danger scares the shit out of me because I don't want to lose you. Especially not this fast. Baby, I’m so sorry. I just really don’t want to fuck this up.”

“Me either.” That was all she said. Two words, but Christen felt it. She knew what it meant.

Tobin still wasn’t looking up. Christen was still a mess of nerves and guilt, even after that speech.

“I... gosh, this is driving me insane,” Christen let out breathily. That finally made Tobin look up, her eyebrows furrowed and bottom sucked between her teeth.

“I don't want to be stressful to you, Christen. This shouldn’t be that. It shouldn’t do that to you.”

“No, ugh, my words are betraying my feelings today.” She pinched the bridge of her nose for a second, closing her eyes, before looking back up confidently and continuing, “Okay. First thing’s first: I like you. A lot. That’s not changing.” She shook her head back and forth to convey her seriousness. “Second: I’m in this. I want this. Third: This is driving me insane because it’s never happened to me before; liking someone this much, I mean. I’ve never liked someone so much and been so confident in that as quickly as I have been with you. Never, Tobin. It drives me insane because I don’t know what to do with that now. I don’t know what to do without messing something up.”
“Me either,” Tobin said again.

Christen stared at her for a second, trying to read her face and understand what she was thinking. But after all, she was no mind reader.

“Talk to me. Tell me what’s going on in that pretty head of yours?” Christen tried. She was satisfied with the response: a small smile from the girl that was stealing her heart very quickly.

Tobin moved her arms from their place around her legs to rest in back of her, leaning on them backwards. Maybe Christen was reading too far into it, but she took it as a sign of Tobin’s body language saying she was about to open up a little bit more.

Tobin let out a deep sigh through her nostrils before starting.

“I agree with everything you said. We’re not there yet. I wasn’t trying to say that yet, I promise. I guess I was just wondering what you thought of the purpose of the questions and what you thought about our process with it thus far.

“I think I kinda blame myself for making you so worried about me saying those three words so fast because I’ve been the one moving fast this week. I’m the one who wouldn’t leave you alone ‘til I got a reply. I’m the one who accidentally called myself your girlfriend. I’m the one who betrayed our small four day waiting period. So I think you being worried that I was gonna say those three words so quickly is valid. I’ve given you reason to worry.”

Christen’s fingers ached to hold the other girl’s in her own. She shook her head again before speaking up.

“Tobin, don’t blame yourself. Just because I haven’t outwardly expressed everything to you like you have to me doesn’t mean I’m not right there with you. Hearing you call yourself my girlfriend turned me into mush. I want that. Maybe not right this second, but soon. I really want that. And when you told me you showed up at my job to surprise me with lunch but I wasn’t there, I wanted to turn my car around to go see you and I don’t even know where you live. I just wanted to hold you and be with you in that moment because you’re just so damn sweet and everything you do is so good-hearted. But like I said, I don’t want to do anything at all to put any of this in jeopardy by rushing it. That’s why I worried. But I feel it too. Don’t think you’re alone in that.”

Tobin was leaning on one hand now, picking grass out of the ground with the other. Christen caught onto the fact that she often needed to occupy herself when things got serious.

“Did you forget that I’m the one who kissed you first?” Christen tried to joke. It worked.

Tobin was grinning while still picking grass and chucking out of her nose.

“Also, I’m the one who started calling you affectionate names first.” Christen grinned back.

Tobin finally looked up at Christen through her eyelashes and gave her a small smile. She reached out and grabbed Christen’s hands out of the little dent between her criss-crossed legs. “I love it when you call me affectionate names. It makes me happy,” Tobin admitted with a smile as she outstretched her own legs and pulled Christen gently toward her. As soon as she was close enough, Tobin grabbed Christen’s hips and guided the girl onto her lap. It wasn’t sensual, she just wanted to be close to her (Christen wanted that too).

“Will you forgive me, please, baby?” Her voice was soft and scared and pleading, but she included the term of endearment for Tobin.
With Christen sitting sideways on her lap, one arm wrapped around Tobin’s shoulders and the other hand cupping her cheek, their foreheads connected and their eyes closed. “I was never mad. Just a little worried. I know you didn’t mean it like that.”

Tobin’s hold on her waist was more of a clasp than anything, not wanting to let her go. They relished in the embrace for a moment, not wanting to cause any more disruptions.

It wasn’t until Christen felt eyelashes flutter against her eyelids that she pulled her own eyes open and detached her forehead from Tobin’s.

“I think I would want it badly in the future too,” Tobin whispered to Christen.

Knowing exactly what the girl was talking about, Christen smiled widely and moved forward to kiss Tobin’s cheekbone, right under one of her eyes, and then shoving her face into Tobin’s neck, dropping a few more innocent kisses there too. “Glad we’re on the same page.”

Tobin chuckled into Christen’s shoulder and said, “Me too, honey, me too.”

Christen picked her head up quickly, curly baby hairs sticking out due to her previous position on Tobin’s shoulder, and had a childish smile across her lips.

“What's that look for?” Tobin laughed.

“Can our date not be finished yet? There’s another thing I wanna show you.”

“I’d be very disappointed if we had to end this now,” Tobin admitted with a chuckle. “What else is left on our adventure through this city of angels, hm?”

Christen’s smile changed from childish to charmed. She placed a quick kiss to the corner of Tobin’s mouth before pushing herself off the girl’s lap and sticking her hands out cutely to help Tobin up.

“C’mon, it’s right up those stairs over there.” She nodded her head over to a set of stairs that Tobin couldn’t see anything past. The photographer allowed Christen to pull her up, pretending to have been pulled with too much force, crashing into the girl in a tight hug and leaving a few kisses to the dark hair that had been tied into a high bun.

“Ugh! Too hard, Chris! Your muscles are too big!” She teased before bending down and grabbing her camera bag off the floor.

“Shut up.” Christen laughed back before shoving Tobin’s arm as she tried to come in for another hug.

Tobin dramatically stumbled a few steps to the side and groaned again while clutching her arm. “Damn, Chris. You lift, bro? That was strong.”

Christen snapped her head sideways and squinted her eyes at Tobin in a pointed, but playful, look but couldn't hide the threatening grin on her lips. “I’m not your bro,” she said as she began to walk off.

Tobin laughed and caught Christen from behind, wrapping strong arms around the small frame of the girl’s shoulders, tilting them to the side and pressing obnoxious kisses to Christen’s cheek before saying, “Sorry, you’re right. Definitely not my bro. You’re my baby,” and cuing Christen’s fiftieth swoon of the day.

“C’mon, dork.”
When the reached the top of the steps, Tobin was still confused as to what Christen wanted to show her. There was a Starbucks shop that was about to close, a big water fountain, and some tables and chairs, but that was it. She didn’t say anything, though. She just let the girl lead the way.

Christen led them to the water fountain that had no barriers and stopped them right at the edge. “Kay, we’re here.” Her face held a big, closed-lipped smile and her hand dropped Tobin’s from her own.

“You wanted to show me a water fountain?” Tobin laughed.

“Yup. You ready?”

“Ready for what- Christen what are you doing?!” Tobin exclaimed as Christen moved to step into the water. Before she could stop her, she realized that Christen’s foot wasn’t submerged or even close to getting soaked.

Christen kept walking slowly into the water as her feet stayed dry and little ripples danced around her feet. She looked over her shoulder and said, “You coming, Tobs?”

Tobin stared at Christen’s feet as they travelled further into the water but never any deeper. It was all an illusion to make the water seem deep. There was probably really only half an inch of liquid on the ground.

“What the-” she whispered into the air.

Tobin slowly stepped one foot into the water, wary of her shoes that she loved to wear all the time. As soon as one foot was safely, she moved the other foot in just as slowly. She heard Christen’s stifled laughter and looked up to see the girl with both lips sucked between her teeth to stop the giggles that threatened to spill out.

“What are you laughing at?” Tobin said as she scrunched her eyebrows together and put on her most adorable mad face.

Christen finally let out a real laugh. “Babe, it’s just water. It’s not gonna hurt you.”

“Oh, I’m not worried about me. I’m worried about my babies. I can’t have these beauties getting messed up!” Tobin said as if it was obvious and pointed at her shoes.

Christen shot her a look that read “are you serious?”

“Don’t give me that face! I paid a lot of money for these!”

“Tobin... You do realize that we’ve been walking the dirty streets of LA all day where drunk people puke and homeless people pee and everyone else in the city walks with their equally as dirty shoes, right? If anything, I think the water might clean them.”

Tobin’s face twisted in disgust. Christen laughed again as she took a few step forward to grab Tobin’s hands in her own.

“C’moooon. I promise, nothing bad will happen to your precious shoes,” she teased as she pulled Tobin slowly further into the middle of the fountain. She laughed at the concern on the photographer’s face and she both held onto the strap of her camera bag and took the lightest steps possible to avoid splashing. She looked like a puppy about to take an unwanted bath.

Christen let go of Tobin’s hands after a few steps and moved away from her, taking steps in her own direction as Tobin just stood in place. She turned to Tobin with a hint of mischief in her eyes and
Tobin gave her a look that was confused and nervous for whatever was about to come.

“Hey, babe! Watch your shoes!” Christen said quickly and pointed at the shoes.

“What?! Why-” Christen stomped a foot in the water, creating a splash that was rather messy but wasn’t strong enough to ever reach the Nikes.

Tobin gasped loudly as she clenched her eyes and fists. She peeked an eye open at the ground and realized her shoes were perfectly intact, no splash marks anywhere to be seen. She laughed incredulously as her jaw hung open and bottom lip curled over her teeth.

“You are such a brat,” Tobin let out as she slowly and carefully took steps toward Christen.

The girl feigned confusion and looked behind her and turned back around with a finger pointed to herself and said, “Me?”

Tobin reached for her hips and pulled her in, placing her face very close to the other girl’s.

“Yes, you. There’s no one else here, Christen.”

“Hmm, are you sure? I thought I saw a squirrel pass by-” Her sentence was cut off by Tobin’s rough lips on her own. She hummed into the kiss with a smile but Tobin cut that short too when she bit down on Christen’s bottom lip, tugging on it lightly and making the girl gasp. Christen tried to move in to kiss Tobin again but the girl’s face pulled back and the hands on her hips let go. Christen opened her eyes and saw Tobin slowly backing away from her with a knowing smirk across her lips.

“Hey, no fair! You can’t kiss me like that and then not finish what you started!”

“Don’t mess with my shoes next time and maybe I will finish what I started.” Tobin smirked and kept walking away.

“Who’s the brat now?” Christen called out.

“Still you!” Tobin shot back over her shoulder.

“Unbelievable,” Christen whispered to herself as she watched Tobin exit the water and take her camera out. She decided to stay put for a bit, not wanting to give the girl the satisfaction of chasing after her but also give her some time to take pictures. Little did she know, those pictures would be silhouettes of her kicking water around with a lit up water fountain behind her.

After she got tired of walking around in the water, she caught sight of Tobin facing city hall with her camera pulled up to her face and decided to walk over to her. As she got closer, she could hear the soft shutter of Tobin’s camera and the mechanical sounds of her lens focusing. She walked up behind her quietly and hooked her arms gently underneath Tobin’s, cupping her hands on the photographer’s shoulders.

Tobin jumped lightly at the contact before turning her face and seeing Christen’s chin resting atop her right shoulder. “You scared me.”

Christen giggled and muttered a ‘sorry.’

Tobin took a few more shots and Christen stayed put, only moving her arms down and resting her hands over Tobin’s stomach instead in order to give the girl more room to move her arms around.
When she was finished, Tobin pressed a few buttons on her camera and a stunning photo of Los Angeles City Hall popped up on the LED screen.

Christen gasped and realized she had never seen any of Tobin’s professional photos before. “Tobin, those are amazing!” she exclaimed as she tightened her arms around the photographer’s waist.

Tobin blushed slightly, never being able to accept compliments on her work very well and thanked the girl softly.

“Can I see more? I can’t believe I haven’t seen any of your pictures yet.”

“Uhh, I don’t know, Chris. They’re all still in RAW and unedited and I have to fix them up—”

“Oh, can I watch when you edit them? That seems like fun!” Christen was totally oblivious to Tobin’s inhibition and was genuinely just excited to see the pictures.

Tobin was still hesitant but her heart warmed at Christen’s interest in her work. “Uhm, I was actually gonna edit them when I got home tonight,” Tobin said sort of awkwardly as she turned to face Christen properly.

“Oh, okay. That’s okay. Maybe another time then,” Christen shot her an understanding smile.

“Do you wanna come over and watch?” Tobin spat out quickly.

“What, like, right now?” Christen was surprised.

“Uhm, yeah I guess. Is that too soon? I didn’t mean it like come over I just- never mind that’s too soon, isn’t it?”

Christen smiled softly at Tobin’s sentence and looked at her watch. It was still only 9:30 on a Friday night and she had no reason to not be out late. But was it too soon?

“How about this: we start doing everything at our own pace as long as it feels right. It might be a little soon but I know you didn’t mean it like that and honestly, I would love to come over and watch you do what you love. It feels right to me,” Christen offered.

Tobin smiled widely at the suggestion and repeated, “Okay. At our own pace.”

Christen smiled back and continued, “I think that we’ve been too concerned with time and trying to follow weird rules that don’t exist. Maybe going at our own pace will help us out a little? Even if it’s unconventionally fast sometimes. As long as it feels right.”

“That sounds perfect to me.”

They shared a sweet kiss and separated before Christen moved her lips up to Tobin’s ear and jokingly whispered, “Take me home then, baby,” and bit Tobin’s earlobe as she laughed breathily against Tobin’s ear. It was obvious she wasn’t being sexual, she was only teasing.

Tobin, however, was still affected by the tug of teeth and the hotness of Christen’s breath on her skin. She pulled back slightly as shivers ran up her neck and looked at Christen in a side-eye. “That’s not funny.”

Christen laughed and threw her head back slightly. “Oh, come on. It was kinda funny.”

Tobin shook her head and said, “No, it was bratty,” as she took put her camera away and then took Christen’s hand in her own and started walking.
Christen looked around again and pointed at herself with raised eyebrows.

“Yes, you,” Tobin repeated her earlier words.

“Oh, well it’s just payback for that kiss you left me with over in the water.”

Tobin shook her head as she mumbled, “What am I gonna do with you?”

“Hmm, well right now you’re gonna take me home-“

“Christen,” Tobin whined, thinking the girl was gonna keep teasing.

“What? You didn’t let me finish!”

Tobin rolled her eyes playfully. “Go on, then.”

“Thank you. As I was saying before I was rudely interrupted…” Christen said dramatically, “right now you’re going to take me home and I’m gonna watch you edit pictures and probably ask you a bunch of annoying questions and give you lots of kisses.”

“Lots of ‘em?” Tobin questioned cutely.

“As many as you want. And then after that, we do whatever we want. At our own pace.” She wasn’t literally speaking about that night. She meant in general, they were gonna start doing what felt right.

Tobin hummed with a grin. “At our own pace.”

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After Christen dropped Tobin off at her car at her work building and was instructed to follow the girl home, they arrived to a large apartment complex that looked relatively modern.

“Welcome to my humble abode. Sorry for the mess, I haven’t gotten around to laundry yet,” Tobin stated sheepishly as she swung her apartment door open. It was rather large for an apartment and there were small bundles of clutter in random spots, what some would constitute as ‘organized clutter.’ It fit Tobin and her easygoingness.

“Can I get you something to drink? I don’t know what alcohol I have-“

“Oh, no thank you. I’m actually sober.”


“It wasn’t like a problem or anything. Just a healthy mind, clear conscious kind of thing. But thanks?” Christen laughed.

“Still cool. So you’re welcome,” Tobin said with a smile and a wink. “Do you want something else? Water, juice, coffee, tea?”

Christen laughed at the offer of tea. “Hmm, fitting,” she replied with a wink of her own. “Also, you have juice?” she laughed as her eyebrows furrowed.

“Yeah! I have apple juice, orange juice, and Capri-Suns. Want some?” Tobin offered as she opened her refrigerator.

Christen followed her and looked into the fridge to indeed find a large bottle of apple juice, a carton
of orange juice, and about a dozen strawberry-kiwi Capri-Sun pouches. She laughed as she turned her head to face Tobin who was looking back at her with a big grin.

“Just when I thought you couldn’t get any cuter. I guess I’ll have a Capri-Sun then.”

“Ah, that’s my kinda girl!” Tobin exclaimed as she grabbed four pouches out of the fridge and handed two to Christen.

“Babe, I only need one—”

“See, that’s what you say now, but there’s never enough in one pouch to satisfy anyone and you’ll be asking me for another one before you know it. So just take it and save me the trip back over here.”

“Sounds like you have experience with Capri-Suns.”

“Duh! I just stocked up!” Tobin mentioned as she led Christen to the hallway, ready to give her a tour.

“So you just saw the kitchen and we just walked through the living room. This is the bathroom.” The kitchen was mainly white with a honey-comb style backsplash and traces of black and other colors here and there. The living room was mainly just a large sectional couch in front of a TV and some plants around the room. She flicked a light on and exposed a clean bathroom with subway tile backsplash, a white sink, a yellow curtain hiding the shower, and a large green plant in the corner. “This way is the guest room.” Another light flicked on across the hall to illuminate a bedroom with a queen-sized bed and a few toys in the corner, the same color scheme as the bathroom. “The toys are for when my nephews and niece come visit. It’s not often but I like to have stuff for them anyway,” she smiled and Christen’s heart softened at the girl’s caring nature. “And this is my bedroom! Again, sorry for the mess.”

She didn’t turn a light on in this room, only pushing the door open to reveal a bedroom dimly lit by a ton of fairy lights hanging around. In the middle of the room was her massive king-sized bed that was made, but haphazardly. On the far side of the room was a tall dresser with more fairy lights and different knick knacks, including camera equipment, on top of it and a sliding glass door that appeared to lead to a balcony. Along the wall nearest to her was a row of neatly sorted sneakers, all Nike, and another door that Tobin was pushing open after having discarded her current sneakers at the end of the row.

“Oh and this is my bathroom,” she added as she flicked that light on and Christen followed her, leaning against the door frame. The bathroom was similar to the guest bathroom, only bigger with the shower and the tub separate instead of conjoined.

“And that’s it!” Tobin finished as she shrugged and threw her arms up in an ‘I guess’ stance.

“I like it!”

“Yeah?” Tobin was excited to hear that.

“Yeah! It’s huge. How do you even afford a place like this in LA?”

“Oh, uhm, I guess I make decent money and it was in my price range when I got it.”

“Let me guess. You’re ‘comfortable?’” Christen teased.

Tobin chuckled and said, “I guess?” as she walked up to Christen in the doorway.
“It’s very you,” Christen continued, making Tobin laugh.

“Very me, huh? My family said the same thing when they came to visit.”

“Well, it’s true!” Christen smiled genuinely.

“Glad you like it, babe,” she said as she moved in to kiss Christen softly, loving having the girl in her home already.

“Do you have a trash can?” Christen questioned as she pulled away, guiltily holding up two empty Capri-Sun pouches.

Tobin laughed heartily and took the crushed pouches from her and moved to throw them away in the bin across the room. “No, Chris. I don’t have a trash can. I just throw it all out the window and hope someone will pick it up for me.”

“Tobin,” Christen teased back, “you’re an environment killer?!? Turn your back on Mother Nature and she’ll turn her back on you.”


“Yes, all of it please,” Christen grinned, loving the idea of wearing Tobin’s clothes. Tobin’s comfy clothes. Tobin’s clothes that smelled like her and she was probably going to steal at some point or another.

“I can see the plot to steal my wardrobe forming in your head already.”

“Might as well just give it up now, babe.”

“Hmm, we’ll see. You’re probably cuter in it anyway.”

Tobin ended up giving her a maroon Nike Air t-shirt and a pair of light gray sweatpants before leaving her to change with a kiss and taking off to quickly change into her own hoodie and soccer shorts.

Tobin was situating herself on the couch with her laptop and SD card adapter when Christen came walking out of the hallway looking adorable as ever. The shirt was slightly baggy on her, as it was on Tobin, and her legs drowned in the sweatpants. She let her curly hair down and flipped it over onto one side. When she reached the couch, she kneeled into the cushion and pressed her lips firmly to Tobin’s.

“You look so good in my clothes,” Tobin whispered against Christen’s lips in between kisses.

The curly-haired girl hummed and said, “So you don’t mind if I take them then? They’re so comfy.”

Tobin laughed and simply said, “We’ll see.”

As Christen sat down on the couch and curled up into Tobin’s side, the photographer opened her laptop and said, “Just a warning, I don’t know what all of these turned out like or if I even did the art any justice-”

Finally catching on, Christen said, “Tobs, you don’t have to show me if you don’t want to. I probably got a little carried away pressuring you into letting me watch earlier. I’m totally okay just hanging out for a bit if it makes you uncomfortable sharing that, I promise.”
“I mean, I don’t have a problem showing you, I just don't want you to expect greatness and not get that."

“Stop that."

“Stop what?"

“Doubting yourself. I'm sure they're all great. And it’s just me, honey. I’m not going to judge you and I have no expectations. But I get it, art is an intimate thing to share so if you don't want to-”

“I want to.”

Christen stopped and looked at the girl for a moment. “You sure? I promise, I won’t even be disappointed if you don’t want to.”

“I mean, the fact that it’s you makes it a bigger deal to me than just any random person buying my prints because I actually value your opinion and want you to like it. But you’re important to me and my art is important to me and I want to share it with you.”

Christen smiled at her adoringly and said, “At your pace, love.”

With that, Tobin plugged her SD card in and imported her photos into her editing software.

The first one Christen saw was the shot that Tobin took of the escalator at The Broad. It wasn’t even edited yet and it was still stunning. She gasped and said, “Tobs, that’s so cool! I didn’t even see it like that in person! How did you do that?”

Tobin chuckled and pressed a kiss to the top of Christen’s head that was resting on her chest.

They passed through the photos before getting to editing, Tobin filtering out her favorites with a bit of input from Christen. When the dark-haired girl saw the amount of pictures of herself in the bunch, she blushed and whined at Tobin who only shushed her again.

Tobin got to work, editing the pictures slowly and getting into her zone. Christen questioned her every so often with phrases like “What’s the tone curve?” and “What's noise? Why do you want to reduce it?” Tobin explained as simply as she could and toggled with the buttons to show her.

After a while, Christen stopped asking questions and her body weight felt slightly heavier on Tobin’s body. Due to her position on Tobin’s chest, the girl couldn’t see her face clearly enough to tell whether she was sleeping or not.

“Chris?” Tobin whispered. She smiled lightly when she didn’t get a response and turned her computer brightness all the way down to check the reflection of Christen’s face on the screen. She was met with a closed-eyed, parted-mouthed, sleeping Christen whose arm was resting across her torso.

The photographer shut her laptop closed and moved it to the side. She ran light fingers along Christen’s bare arm and spoke her name a bit louder this time. “Chris, baby.”

She felt goosebumps rise under her fingertips and the girl shifted a bit. “Chris,” she tried again.

“That tickles,” Christen muttered as she pressed herself deeper into Tobin’s side.

Tobin chuckled and said, “Baby, you fell asleep on me.”

Christen lifted her head off of Tobin’s chest and looked up at her with tired eyes. Tobin’s heart

“Hi,” Christen replied in a groggy voice with a grin and laid herself back down on the girl’s chest, moving her arm from across Tobin’s midsection and sneaking her hand innocently under the hem of Tobin’s sweatshirt for warmth.

“How long was I out for?”

“Honestly, I don't know,” Tobin laughed. “I just realized you stopped asking me questions and then called you and you didn’t answer.”

Christen laughed back and began tracing patterns across Tobin’s stomach. They stayed like that for a moment before Christen felt herself growing sleepy again and sat up.

“I should go before it gets any later.”

“Babe, you're half asleep. You are not driving like that.”

“Tobs, I have to go home.”

“Just stay here for the night.”

Christen opened her mouth to object but Tobin beat her to it. “No, this is not some way of me trying to get you to spend the night with me. You can take my bed and I’ll sleep in the guest room. I just really don’t want you driving like this, especially on a Friday night in LA with crazy, drunk people probably on the road right now.”

Christen sighed knowing Tobin was right. She was in no condition to drive and she really just wanted to go to sleep. “Fine, but I’m taking the guest room.”

“No way, honey. My bed is like a cloud and I want you to have it tonight.”

“Tobin,” Christen whined, voice still groggy.

Tobin laughed and stood up, reaching her hands out to Christen similar to how the girl did to her earlier. “C’mon, angel. I have some unopened toothbrushes in my bathroom and some face wipes to take your makeup off with.”

Christen lazily stuck an arm out to Tobin. Tobin grabbed it and tried to pull her up but she was dead weight. She laughed as she tugged again and said, “Baby, c’mon. The sooner you get up, the sooner you can go to sleep in my comfy bed.”

Christen groaned and muttered, “I’m tired.”

“I know, that's why I’m trying to get you to bed.”

No response.

“Christen.”

No response.

“I know you’re awake.”

A small smile.
“Brat.” She whispered before bending down and scooping Christen up in her arms.

“Thank you for carrying me, baby.” Christen mumbled into Tobin’s shoulder.

Tobin just hummed and placed the girl on the bathroom counter. She opened the small cupboard under the sink and pulled out an unopened toothbrush, taking it out of its package and handing it to Christen with toothpaste already on the bristles.

Christen lazily brushed her teeth from her spot on the counter as Tobin brushed her own in front of her. Christen spit first, leaning sideways and almost missing the sink. Tobin followed suit, but she aimed right.

When Tobin pulled out a pack of makeup wipes, she didn’t even bother handing them to Christen. She just pulled one out and began wiping the girl’s face for her. Christen smiled goofily and said, “You’re sweet, you know that?” with her eyes closed.

Tobin smiled back even though Christen wasn’t looking at her and placed a kiss on the makeup-free forehead when she was finished.

Christen decided to give the poor girl a break and slid herself off the counter and began walking to the bed. She settled herself in as Tobin helped pull the covers back and then puckered her lips, asking for a kiss. Tobin obliged and kissed her, light and sweet.

“Thank you for today, Chris. I loved it,” Tobin said as she straightened herself up, staring down at the girl who looked super cuddly in her big bed, blankets pulled up to her chin and face buried into a soft pillow.

Christen smiled at her and hooked a few of their fingers together. “Yeah? I’m glad. Thank you for letting me stay here tonight and for being so sweet and for putting up with my bratty ass.”

“So you admit it!”

“What? Admit what?” She played around again.

Tobin just laughed whilst shaking her head and leaned down to give her one last kiss.

“Goodnight, Christen.” It was something about the way that Tobin said her full name that made her heart go wild.

“Goodnight, Tobs.”

Tobin shut the door softly and walked down the hallway to make herself comfortable in the guest room.

Ah, fuck. Kelley is probably wondering where Christen is. Tobin thought to herself.

She pulled herself out of bed to go find her phone and sent the freckled-girl a quick message.

Tobito: hey, kel. Chris is staying here with me tonight. She fell asleep and I didn’t want her driving like that. And before you say anything, no, we did not do anything nor are we going to. I’m even sleeping in the guest room on my own.

Kelley: I mean, I wasn’t going to say anything, but you being paranoid and feeling the need to over-explain is pretty funny. Thanks for taking care of her, tobs.

Tobin grinned and shut her phone off before sighing, content with the way the night ended and
excited to wake up with Christen in her home with her.

Chapter End Notes

Sleepy Christen™ is a big baby and Soft Tobin™ makes my heart skdnsflksd
Otra vez, hope you liked it and feel free to leave me comments or asks on my Tumblr @ chrvstenpress.tumblr.com !
nowhere else to be (but here with each other)

Chapter Summary

they wake up. they cuddle. they talk. they’re fluffy.

Chapter Notes

it's been a minute, kids! I'm so sorry about the wait. I'm back at school now and being a writing major taking three reading/writing classes on a quarter system kinda fucks you over on free time (and it's only week 1). But, without further ado, I give you chapter 6. It's nothing crazy (lol when u catch this in the chapter). Kind of a filler. Lots of fluff. I'm working on progressing this asap. But for now, we're getting to know the girls (together and independently).
Also, thanks so much for reading and for leaving such sweet comments and kudos on my work!!! I love reading them, especially the ones that have to do with my writing since I'm always looking to improve.
Kay, as always, enjoy and feel free to leave me comments or asks on my Tumblr @chrvstenpress.tumblr.com!
Thanks for reading!

Christen has always been an early riser. Having a job that requires her to be up early has trained her body to wake up at 6 a.m., regardless of whether or not she set an alarm.

So there she was, in Tobin’s very large and very comfortable bed at 6:30 in the morning, wide awake and no clue of what to do. Two things told her that she was the only one in the home awake.
1: The apartment was so silent you could hear the occasional motor of the refrigerator running.
2: Tobin never woke up early unless she had to.

Maybe I should just go home? She already did enough for me last night. No, I don’t want her to think I ran off. Christen thought. God, I could really use a coffee right now. Maybe I should go make us some? No, that's overstepping my place.

She laid in the bed tossing and turning for what felt like an hour before she decided to just get up and tell Tobin she was going to head out so she wasn't making an Irish exit.

She made Tobin’s bed the best she could and gathered her things before padding down the hallway to the guest room and softly opening the door. She was met with a messy-haired Tobin who was laying on her stomach with one arm hanging off the bed and one leg sticking out of the blankets.

Christen laughed to herself. For some reason, that is exactly what she would have guessed Tobin slept like.

She stood in the door way for a moment, listening to the soft puffs of air that Tobin was letting out of
her barely open mouth, just watching the girl, completely enraptured.

*If she wakes up right now, this is going to seem creepy.*

Christen walked to the edge of the bed and slightly bent down, running a few light fingers through Tobin’s bedhead.

“Tobin,” she called softly.

The sleeping girl didn’t even flinch.

“Tobs,” she tried again whilst running her knuckles gently across Tobin’s cheek.

Nothing.

She laid a hand on the girl’s back and scratched her nails lightly over the fabric of the sweatshirt as she called her name slightly louder.

Still nothing.

She finally decided to just shake the girl awake. She laid a hand on Tobin’s shoulder and somewhat firmly shook her as she said, “Tobin, wake up.”

*Now that* got the girl awake.

Tobin shot her head up and spat out, “Huh? What happened? What’s wrong?” in a voice that was raspier and deeper than her normal speaking voice.

“Nothing. Nothing’s wrong, babe. Sorry.” Tobin exhaled, relieved. “I was just gonna head out and let you sleep. I just didn’t want to leave without telling you.”

Tobin frowned, “Oh, okay. Did you have plans today?”

“No.” Christen shook her head.

“Oh. Why are you leaving then?” Tobin reached a hand out and hooked a few fingers with Christen’s.

Suddenly, Christen realized she didn’t really have an answer to that question.

“Uhm, I don’t know. I guess you already did a lot for me last night, letting me stay here and all, and I know you like to sleep in so I was just gonna go so you can sleep and don’t have to worry about me when you wake up,” she trailed off. “And Kelley is probably wondering where I am.”

“I sent her a text last night to let her know you were here and you were okay.”

“Oh?” One of Christen’s eyebrows raised slightly. “You didn’t have to do that, Tobs. Thank you.”

Tobin rolled onto her back slightly and shrugged. “It’s cool. I knew you were tired and probably forgot to let her know and I didn’t want her to worry so I sent her a text.”

“Well, still, thank you. I really appreciate it. All of it.” Christen sent her a sweet smile. “Okay. I think I’m gonna head out now and let you get back to sleep-”

Tobin reached forward and grabbed Christen’s forearm, pulling her towards the bed. “Chris, you don’t have to leave.”
“Tobin, it’s okay. It’s still really early and it’s a Saturday and there’s no reason for you to be awake right now.”

“You’re a reason to be awake right now.”

Christen pursed her lips and tilted her head to the side, giving Tobin a ‘you’re really going to sweet talk your way through this?’ look.

Tobin gave her a goofy grin knowing it was already working.

“Babe, I’m up now. I don’t want you to leave yet.”

“Tobin. I didn’t come in here to wake you up so you could hang out with me. I just came to say bye so you wouldn’t wake up not knowing where I was.”

“Well since I’m awake anyway, can I be awake so I can hang out with you?”

Christen didn’t know what to say.

“Pleeeaseee? Just lay down with me for a little while and we can cuddle and then we’ll get up in a bit and make some coffee and breakfast and then we can go from there,” Tobin kept trying.

Christen really didn’t want to be a bother and she hated that she woke Tobin up without letting her go back to sleep. But the cute, sleepy, begging face laying on the bed in front of her was doing a really good job at making her want to stay.

“Tobin, I don’t know. I didn’t mean to wake you up for this.”

“Chris, do you have to or want to leave?”

“Well, no-”

“Then, there. It’s settled. You’re gonna get your cute butt in this bed and let me cuddle you and make you coffee and breakfast because we have nowhere else to be but here with each other. And you’re gonna stop worrying. I’d much rather spend time with you than sleep. Who needs sleep anyway?” Tobin said as she pulled Christen down onto the bed with her.

“Apparently you do. It took me forever to wake you up. I must have tried everything before I actually had to shake you awake.”

“You could have just woken me up with kisses,” Tobin flirted and she wrapped an arm across Christen’s waist.

“Nuh uh. No kisses. We haven’t brushed our teeth yet.”

“Chriiiis,” Tobin whined.

“If you want kisses, we have to get up and go brush our teeth.”

“Ughhh, but this bed is so warm and I just got you to lay down with me,” she whined some more.

“Then you can wait, babe.”

“Nooo. I can’t wait. I want kisses. Let’s go. We can kiss and cuddle in my actual bed with more room that way,” Tobin said as she crawled over Christen, out of the warmth of the bed and practically dragged the girl with her to her master bathroom.
“You’re crazy,” Christen laughed as she was tugged down the hall.

“Crazy for you.”

“You’re also very flirty in the mornings.”

“Are you complaining?” Tobin raised an eyebrow.

“Nope,” Christen grinned as she popped her p. “But can we get the coffee started now? I’m struggling a little bit,” she admitted as she spread toothpaste on her new toothbrush as well as Tobin’s.

Tobin laughed, kissing the side of Christen’s head and pulling away to say, “Sure thing, lovely. I’ll go do it now.”

Christen smiled and called out her thanks as she watched Tobin stick her toothbrush in her mouth and walk out of the bathroom.

When Christen was finished brushing her teeth and redoing her hair in another not so disheveled bun atop her head, she moved to the bedroom again where she saw Tobin walking in holding a mug full of coffee in each hand and her toothbrush still in her mouth. She had a small drip of toothpaste falling out of the side of her mouth as she struggled not to spill the burning hot liquid.

Christen chuckled as she rushed to take one of the mugs from her. “Honey, why didn’t you just call me to come help you?”

“I was trying to have it ready,” Tobin tried to speak with a mouth full of toothpaste as she held her toothbrush in her now free hand, tilting her head back slightly to avoid spilling foamy toothpaste out of her mouth.

Christen laughed as she understood that the other girl was trying to say that she was trying to have the coffee ready. She took the other mug from her as soon as she had put her own down on the bedside stand, dropping a kiss to Tobin’s cheek and saying, “Go spit and rinse so I can give you a proper good morning kiss.”

Tobin saluted and said, “yef ma’am!” as she ran off to the restroom and heard Christen laughing behind her.

When she came back, she saw Christen pulling the covers over her lap and sitting up. Tobin launched herself at the girl, landing right in front of Christen and holding her neck as they fell back into the pillows and Tobin kissed her deeply. The kisses settled from heavily locked kips to aimless, soft, lazy pecks as Tobin’s weight settled more onto Christen’s body.

When they pulled away, Tobin kept her face close and gave Christen a toothy grin. “Good morning, pretty girl,” Tobin whispered as she moved in again to give Christen a feather-light kiss on her bottom lip.

Christen hummed as she pulled a hand out from between them and moved it to the girl’s cheek. “Hmm. Good morning, gorgeous.”

They shared a few more minutes kissing each other before Tobin rolled off of her and to the side. “Did you sleep well?” she questioned.

Christen sat up with her back against the headboard as she said, “Yeah, actually. You weren't kidding when you said this bed is like a cloud.”
“Seeee. And you wanted to sleep in the guest room,” Tobin teased.

“But I am the guest. I should have slept in the guest room,” Christen argued back.

“Well too late. You already slept in here and liked it. I would have beat you there anyway and you would’ve been forced to come sleep in here.”

“Nope. I would’ve won,” Tobin said confidently as she moved to sit like Christen and grab her mug off of her bedside table.

“What if I had just let you stay with me?” Christen flirted, set on winning the fake argument. Tobin snapped her head back to face the girl with her jaw slightly slacked.

“Christen. Are you telling me that you would’ve slept in the same bed as me?”

“Maybe.” She winked as she took a sip of warm coffee.

“Don’t tease me. That’s not nice. You know how much I love to cuddle you.”

Christen chuckled as she put her mug back down and reached a hand out toward Tobin, not quite reaching her due to the massive size of the king bed, resulting in her arm falling between them. Tobin held her mug in one hand, moving to hold Christen’s outstretched one in her own.

“Okay, I’m sorry. But in all seriousness, I trust you. I’ll admit ‘our pace’ may not be quite there yet but I know it wouldn’t have been anything but cuddling all night,” Christen explained.

“And kisses,” Tobin added.

Christen rolled her eyes affectionately and said, “Sure, baby. Can’t forget your kisses.”

Tobin smiled as she put her mug back down as well and moved to kiss Christen again. When she pulled away, she left a trail of smacking kisses on Christen’s cheek and said, “Hurry and finish your coffee. Now you have me thinking about holding you and kissing you and I wanna get to that ASAP.”

Christen laughed as she slightly pushed Tobin away by her ribs and said, “So impatient.”

And that they did. When they finished their coffees, Tobin laid down on her side facing Christen and holding an arm up for the girl to move under.

“We’re gonna spoon?” Christen teased.

“Duuuuh! That’s the best way to cuddle.” She pulled Christen into her front and dropped a few kisses the the baby hairs on the back of the dark-haired girl’s neck.

Christen didn’t reply. She just let herself be held by Tobin and pulled their clasped hands up the her lips to give Tobin’s thumb knuckle a kiss.

They stayed like that for a while, Tobin occasionally scratching lazy fingers into Christen’s scalp and Christen dropping random kisses along Tobin’s hand or arm.

It wasn’t until Tobin was about to fall asleep again from the level of comfort she was in that they got up because Christen’s stomach grumbled loud enough to wake Tobin completely.
“C’mon, pretty girl. Let’s go get some food in that hungry tummy.”

Christen laughed, embarrassed by how loud the growl erupted. “Sorry, I didn’t mean to interrupt our cuddle session.”

“S’okay. We have all the time in the world to cuddle,” Tobin replied nonchalantly.

It was something about the way Tobin kept pointing out the lack of urgency that the day held that made Christen’s worries settle. She had been so afraid that they were moving way too fast, even if they were going at their ‘own pace.’ But when Tobin said things like “we have nowhere else to be but here with each other” and “we have all the time in the world to cuddle,” every concern that Christen had seemed to dissipate in the moment. The words might seem silly; having all the time in the world to cuddle doesn’t seem like something that should be that comforting, but to Christen it was. It reaffirmed that they were in this and they weren’t going anywhere. They didn’t want to go anywhere. They wanted to be right there with each other. With no one else. No where else.

It was the things like what Tobin had just said to her that made her heart feel captured and liberated at the same time. She felt herself falling quickly for Tobin, right into the girl’s strong hold. Yet she was so damn happy, she felt more free than ever. Never had she felt so safe in someone’s care and affection and so unfettered by the pressure of falling in love.

Sure, there were moments of worry, but none of it had to do with doubts that she would eventually fall in love with Tobin. Instead, it had everything to do with the fact that she was scared something would mess that up.

The trouble wasn’t to fall in love with Tobin; it was to possibly not be allowed to.

Christen sat at the kitchen island watching Tobin, thoughts absorbed by the girl cooking for her in a hoodie and shorts with her hair in a half ponytail/bun, softly signing and dancing as she fluttered around the kitchen.

She crossed her legs on the stool, leaning an elbow on the marble of the counter in front of her and placing her chin in her hand.

Tobin had refused to let her help, no matter how hard Christen tried.

“No. You’re my guest therefore I will be the one catering to you,” Tobin had demanded as Christen attempted to even grab an egg out of the fridge.

Christen had groaned and said she was restless and just wanted to help. Tobin just shoved the girl onto a high stool at the counter and told her to stay put.

“Allright. Two eggs and some toast for my lovely lady.” Tobin set a large plate down in front of Christen, leaning in to kiss the girl’s awaiting puckered lips.

“Thank you, sweets.”


Christen laughed. “Would you think I was crazy if I asked for another cup of coffee? It was really yummy.”

Tobin chuckled back. “Not at all. In fact, I am going to have another myself.”

Once Tobin was sat at the counter with her own plate of food and mug of coffee, she rested her feet
in Christen’s lap from the seat next to her.

“So what do you want to do today?” Tobin asked through a small mouth full of toast.

“Uh, actually, I should probably get home and make sure the pups are okay. I don’t know what Kel had planned today or if she even remembered to let them out,” Christen admitted reluctantly after a sip of coffee, feeling incredibly guilty for bringing up leaving again. The way Tobin’s shoulders deflated and she roughly swallowed her toast didn’t help her guilt any more.

Tobin nodded. “Oh, okay. I get it. The pups gotta pee!” she tried to joke.

“Tobs?”

“Hm?” She didn’t look up to meet the sorry green eyes.

“Hey,” Christen called out again as she rested a hand over Tobin’s ankle.

She looked up.

“I don’t want you to think I’m trying to run out of here as soon as possible. I had a really great day with you yesterday and this morning has been perfect. I really don’t wanna leave, I just gotta make sure my babies are okay.”

“I don’t think that. I get it. I just wanted to spend a little more time with you is all,” Tobin shrugged with a sad smile.

Christen’s heart tightened. She wanted to spend a little a lot more time with Tobin too.

She returned the small smile as she squeezed Tobin’s ankle and began to massage the girl’s lower leg with one hand as she ate with the other.

When they were finished eating, Christen insisted on helping Tobin wash the dishes (which Tobin was originally going to let sit there until after Christen left) and Tobin finally obliged, wanting to get a few last moments with the girl still wearing her clothes.

Christen washed and Tobin dried and put away the dishes before Christen dried her hands on the rag Tobin was still holding and moved in to kiss her jaw lightly.

“I don’t wanna go,” Christen whispered against Tobin’s jawline as she leaned into the girl some more.

“I don’t want you to go either, but the pups...” Tobin trailed off.

“But the pups,” Christen confirmed.

They shared a few more sweet and gentle kisses in the middle of Tobin’s kitchen before Christen blurted, “Come with me?”

Tobin pulled back to study Christen’s face more clearly.

“Unless you don’t want to or that’s like too much time together or something-” Christen continued.

“No amount of time with you is ever too much. In fact, it’s never enough.”

Christen sighed dreamily as she dropped her forehead to Tobin’s shoulder and wrapped her arms around the girl’s waist, again slipping her hands under the fabric of the hoodie and resting flat palms
on Tobin’s lower back. “How are you even real?”

“What?” Tobin laughed as she wrapped her arms loosely around Christen’s back.

Christen pulled her head back and said said “Nothing,” as she shook her head gently.

“Were you serious about me coming with you?” Tobin questioned, obviously hesitant.

Christen nodded shyly. “Yeah, if you want to come.”

“Only if you’re sure, Christen. I don’t want to come off as clingy and like I have to follow you around everywhere.”

“I’m sure,” she nodded more confidently this time. “I don’t think you’re clingy. I want to spend more time with you too.”

“Okay then. You go ahead. I’m gonna shower first and then I’ll head over when I’m finished,” Tobin smiled. Christen pouted.

“Go, babe. The pups might have to pee! I promise I’ll be there as soon as I can.” She kissed Christen’s nose before she pulled away.

“Okay, Okayyy. But come comfy again. I don’t wanna do anything but stay in all day and maybe take the dogs for a walk,” Christen called as she moved to grab her purse and clothes from the living room.

“Sounds perfect. I’m assuming you’re gonna take my clothes?” Tobin smirked from her spot behind the kitchen island.

“Oh, uhm, sorry I forgot. I’ll go change real quick-”

“Baby, I’m just messing with you. Take them.”

“You sure?”

“Positive. You said you wanted them last night anyway.”

“I was just messing around.”

“So you don’t want them?” Tobin raised an eyebrow.

“Uh, maybe?”

Tobin laughed. “Just take them. I might have to steal something of yours too, though. Just so we’re even.” She winked.

“Of course. Whatever you want,” Christen smiled. “Okay, I really should go. I’ll see you in a bit.” She kissed Tobin’s cheek sweetly and turned around to leave.

Tobin caught her wrist before she could get too far and pulled her back. “One more,” she muttered before she kissed Christen fully. “I don’t think I’ll ever get tired of doing that,” she said softly as she peered at Christen through light eyelashes.

Christen giggled as she pulled away from Tobin. “Okay, sweet talker. I’ll see you in a little bit.”

“M’kay.” Tobin still had a dazed smile on her face.
“Bye, love,” Christen called as she opened the front door.

“Drive safe!”

///

When Christen arrived home, she found that Kelley, indeed, was not home but did let the dogs out. She saw empty food and water bowls in the kitchen and wondered how long it had been since they ate.

Christen let the dogs in, allowing them to snuggle her for a moment as she texted Kelley to find out if she had fed them at all. They were her dogs, but Kelley loved them almost as much as Christen did and had no problem taking care of them if Christen couldn't.

best roomie #1: Hey Kel! Thanks for letting the girls out this morning. Did they happen to eat too?

She wandered around the house, picking up a nonexistent mess. She wanted Tobin to be comfortable and the home to be in perfect condition for the girl when she arrived.

best roomie #2: No “Hey Kel! I’m sooo sorry I forgot to let you know I wasn’t coming home last night! I was at Tobin’s and I’m safe.” ??? GEEZ woman. You’re lucky your girlfriend was considerate enough to tell me before I sent out a search party for you.

best roomie #2: You know I never have an issue doing things for the fur babies. But I kinda forgot to feed them. Oops? Sorry!!!

Christen realized she had forgotten to text Kelley when she woke up even after Tobin told her that Kelley already knew where she was. She also ignored the ‘girlfriend’ reference Kelley included. She was used to it by now. Kelley hadn’t stopped referring to Tobin as Christen’s girlfriend since that morning after their second date.

“Shit,” she muttered under her breath.

best roomie #1: omg I'm so sorry, Kel. I totally fell asleep last night and Tobin wouldn’t let me drive home and convinced me to stay. I guess I was just really tired and I fell asleep right away again. I’m sorry:((( I should have texted you before I fell asleep again or even when I woke up. It won’t happen again, I promise.

best roomie #1: also, don’t worry about it! Mo and Leesi are healthy and managed just fine.

She locked her phone and sighed, taking her hair out of its bun and running her fingers through small knots as she walked to grab the dogs some food and water.

Christen knew Kelley was just teasing her but she still felt bad. She in no way wanted to be the person that got so caught up in their significant other(if she could call it that?) that they forgot about their friends. Especially their best friend/roommate.

best roomie #2: Chris, it’s fine. I was just giving you a hard time. I knew you were with tobs and she would take care of you.

best roomie #2: speaking of... sleeping over already, christen?? ;)

best roomie #1: still, you’re my best friend and I should let you know myself.

best roomie #1: We literally just slept. In different beds. In different rooms. Separately.
best roomie #2: Tobin said the same thing. That’s gross. Y’all are so vanilla.

Christen’s jaw dropped slightly at Kelley’s text.

best roomie #1: Hey!!! Excuse us for trying to slow things down because they’ve been moving so fast!!!

best roomie #2: Chris, you started calling her babe AND kissed her by the first date. At that rate, I’d have figured y’all smashed on the second date.

best roomie #1: WOW. Nice to know you think I’d give myself off that easily.

There was a knock at the door. Christen mindlessly went to open it, knowing it was Tobin, but was typing about another response to Kelley while doing so.

Tobin was smiling brightly when the door swung open, hair still wet, hands carrying small bags filled with snacks, and arms opened out for a hug. Christen paid no mind to it, not looking up from her phone. She simply said, “Hi, babe,” and turned to walk back into the house, leaving Tobin hugless to close the door behind her.

Tobin’s arms stayed up and feet stayed planted as she watched Christen walk away and the two dogs ran up to be pet. She shut the door before the dogs could get out and bent down to scratch their heads before moving into the kitchen after Christen to drop the bags on the counter.

best roomie #1: AND, ‘smashing’ sounds so careless. You know I’m not like that.

“Uh. Hi, Christen?” That got her attention (finally).

When she looked up, she saw Tobin looking confused with a raised eyebrow. She immediately realized that she ignored Tobin at the front door and was continuing to ignore her when she was the one who invited her over to spend time together.

She sighed as she walked up to Tobin, giving her a kiss and a tight hug as she rested her head on Tobin’s chest. “Sorry. Hi, honey.”

Tobin chuckled. “It’s okay. But you didn't even check to see who was at the door. It could've been anyone and you just let them in without looking up.”

“Sorry,” Christen mumbled.

“Who were you texting?” Tobin wondered.

“Kelley.”

“Ahh. She teasing again?”

Christen nodded.

“Babe, you know she’s just messing around,” Tobin comforted.

“No, I know. I just- do you think we’re too vanilla?” Christen blurted as she pulled away to look at Tobin’s face.


Christen chuckled. “The fact that you don’t even know what vanilla is tells me that we probably
are.” She kissed Tobin lightly and walked to the couch.

Tobin followed, as did the dogs, and she questioned, “Babe, what’s vanilla?”

“What do you think it is?”

“I told you. Ice cream.”

Christen laughed loudly as Tobin sat next to her, still confused as ever.

“How do you not know what vanilla is?”

“Am I supposed to? Chris, just tell me.”

“I mean, I guess you’re not supposed to. I’m just a little surprised is all. Vanilla is like, boring.”

“So Kelley thinks we’re boring because we’re staying in today?”

“No-” Christen giggled again at Tobin’s obliviousness. “Like, in an... intimate way.” She said it slowly, almost suddenly embarrassed for having brought it up.

Tobin’s eyes widened and eyebrows raised. “Oh!”

“Yeah...” Christen drew out to fill any awkward silence that might come up. It didn’t work.

Tobin just sat there, hands on her lap and eyebrows furrowed as she looked forward.

After a moment, she turned to Christen with a still-confused expression and again said, “Vanilla?”

Christen laughed as she put her forehead into her hand and said, “Oh my god, never mind. Just... Never mind. Forget it.”

“No, I wanna understand. She obviously got to you about it.”

“No, babe. I’m fine. She was just being annoying, as always. You know how she is.” Christen got up to grab the remote and a blanket off of the other couch.

Tobin still sat there, trying to understand. They hadn’t gone past making out, and they had only done that like, once. So how could they be boring intimately if they hadn’t been intimate?

“Honey, I can see the wheels turning in your head. Don’t overthink it. It’s fine,” Christen said as she sat back down on the couch, pulling Tobin to lay down with her.

Bless her sweet, sweet mind. Christen thought.

She turned on the TV, searching through the channel guide for something to put on as Tobin wrapped an arm around her waist.

Then it clicked in Tobin’s mind.

Oh. We’re vanilla, or boring or whatever, because we haven’t been intimate. Or made out much. Or... anything.

She was suddenly very aware of her tight arm around Christen’s waist. And her hand that was instinctively massaging Christen’s hip bone. And her fingers that came very close to Christen’s backside while massaging the area. And Christen’s body flush against hers so she wouldn’t fall off
She stopped her hand from moving and blurted, “I get it now.”

Christen turned her face to Tobin’s, confused for a second and then understanding what she was talking about. “Babe, I told you to stop overthinking it.”

Tobin ignored that and again blurted, “So we’re ‘vanilla’ because we haven’t been intimate enough?”

Christen sighed and turned her body completely to face Tobin. “I guess? I don’t know. She said we’re vanilla because we slept in separate beds last night and she like assumed that we had already... gone there. Because we had been moving so fast. She was probably just messing around though. It’s nothing to worry about. I mean, it’s only been a week.”

“I slept in the guest room to make you comfortable. I mean, we haven’t had that talk yet and I didn’t know where we stood. You were tired and I wasn’t about to just jump into a bed with you even if we weren’t going to do anything,” Tobin felt the need to explain, now worried that Christen perhaps didn’t think that it was that big of a deal.

Well, she didn’t protest sleeping separately. But maybe she thought I wanted to sleep separately. She did make that comment about letting me stay in bed with her. Tobin thought.

“I know, baby. And thank you for that. I appreciate that you think about those things and take care of me and just want to make sure I’m okay,” she gave her a sweet smile, “It’s nothing to worry about. I just let her get to me about the whole time thing again.”

“Well, where do we stand there then? Not because I like want to rush into that or pressure you or anything. Just because it obviously got to you for a reason.” Tobin still wasn’t dropping it as much as Christen tried to avoid it. “Also, why do we keep talking about sex like it’s some sort of bad thing or something? When we do have sex, I obviously want both of us to be comfortable and ready and not be dancing around the subject like it’s taboo.” She was getting a little worked up now. Not angrily, just overwhelmed by new thoughts.

“Hey, it’s okay, babe. Calm down a little bit?” Christen suggested gently, not demanding anything of Tobin or making her feel like she was belittling her feelings.

“Sorry, I didn’t mean to get that worked up,” she apologized softly.

“Don’t apologize. You’re allowed to feel what you feel. I just didn’t want you to get so in your head about it.”

Tobin nodded, again feeling a wave of gratefulness to God for placing Christen in her life. She knew how to perfectly work her down from her messes of emotions that she often lost control of. She was always so patient and understanding. She always validated Tobin’s feelings. She always made her feel safe.

“I know that you suggested sleeping in separate beds last night because we had just finished talking about our timing and taking things at our own pace. I even told you that it was probably a little soon to be sleeping in the same bed together. Not because we were going to do anything but that’s just a very intimate thing to me even when it’s not sexual. Something about the act of spending a night together in the same bed is just a big deal for me. I just get in my own head about us because I’m trying to make sure everything is going okay and prevent anything from possibly ruining this. But don’t worry about it. It’s okay.”
Christen almost felt guilty for bringing it up. It wasn’t even that big of a deal and she knew it was too soon to even be thinking about that level in their relationship. They weren’t even official yet. Something about Kelley pointing out their odd timing, though, brought back those unsettling feelings.

“Christen, you can’t prevent anything from ever happening to us. That’s not how life works.”

“I know. I just- I like to be in control of things and I guess I’ve felt so out of control of everything happening between us that I’m trying to grasp onto any bit of control I can for my own sanity. Not that I’m going to control you or anything. It just all came on so fast and any other time, I would have put a halt to it in fear that it was all lust and infatuation. But it’s not like that with you. I know it’s more than that with you. I think when Kelley brought up our timing it triggered that worry in me even though we just talked about it.”

“Do you need us to slow down some more? I hope you know I have no problem with that. I told you last night, Christen; this shouldn’t stress you out.”

“I... I don’t think so? I like where we are. I don’t even know what going slower would be like,” she laughed. “All we do is kiss and cuddle and go on dates.”

Tobin laughed too. “Yeah, I don’t know either. It feels so weird that this seems like we’re moving really quickly but we haven’t even done anything major yet. And I feel like we’re too connected already to stop any of that? I don’t know, maybe that’s just me-”

“No, I feel that way too,” Christen shook her head.

They both stayed silent for a minute trying to think of anything that might help them both from feeling like they were doing things wrong.

“Hm,” Tobin hummed in wonder, still not being able to come up with anything.

Christen giggled again. “I know exactly how you feel.” Tobin laughed back and groaned playfully as she threw head sideways into the cushion of the couch.

“Those 36 questions really made this so complicated, as nice as it was to learn all of that about you in one night,” Christen chuckled.

“No kidding.”

“I’m tired,” Christen groaned.

“You wanna take a nap?”

“No, like tired of thinking about this,” she laughed. “It shouldn’t be this hard.”

“Oh,” Tobin frowned. “Yeah, it’s been a long week of deep talks and lots of emotions.”

They stared at each other for a moment without saying anything.

“Oh,” Tobin started in declaration, “New plan, if you want. We stop talking about anything for the rest of the day and we literally just lay here and enjoy being with each other. A hard chill, if you will.”

Christen laughed. “You may not be a California native but you sure do talk and act like one.”

“Can’t help it,” Tobin shrugged. “I love it here.” And I love it even more now that I found you here.
“Good. Because I don’t know that I could ever live anywhere else other than California.”

Tobin’s eyebrows raised at the unspoken insinuation.

Christen blushed. “Sorry, didn’t mean to jump the gun.”

Tobin laughed as she moved in to kiss her. “No talking about anything, remember?” Kiss “But for the record,” Kiss “I agree that it’s a good thing that I love it here.”

Christen pulled her by her neck to kiss her deeper. “Hmm. No talking, remember?” Christen’s weight shifted further onto Tobin, her body now laying half on top of the other girl's. One of her legs subsequently fell between Tobin’s, body pressing in a bit harder, as the kiss got more heated. Tobin stopped kissing abruptly but Christen was moving to press kisses her jawline and didn’t even notice.

“Wait, Chris,” she placed two strong hands on Christen’s hips as the girl hummed back a “hm?” and slowed down, but didn't stop.

“I know I said no talking but this is important.” Christen pulled away and looked at her carefully. “You're not just taking this further because of what Kelley said right?” Tobin questioned worriedly.

“What? No! Sorry. That was really bad timing.” They cringed and laughed at the word ‘timing’ again.

“You’re sure? I just want to make sure because we still didn’t settle where we are with that. But I promise no more talking after this.”

Christen chuckled. “Tobs, it’s okay. You’re right. This is important,” she reaffirmed as they both sat up in criss-crossed positions and faced each other.

“Thank you for always checking in.” Christen smiled sweetly and grabbed one of her hands.

“Of course.” Tobin squeezed her hand back.

“So... where are we with that?” Christen used the same phrasing that Tobin did to tease her lightheartedly.

Tobin chuckled but mostly ignored it. “Where do you want to be with that?”

“I think we’ve established that I like kissing you. A lot...” Christen chuckled.

“Likewise,” Tobin smirked.

“I think that I also like to make out with you... And I wouldn't mind trying that more often.” She smirked.

“Okay, cheeky,” Tobin teased. “But I wouldn’t mind trying that more often, too.” She winked. “And, like, touching? I’m assuming we wanna take it a bit slower with that and stuff along those lines?” she turned shy.

Christen’s eyebrows furrowed in confused amusement at the specificities of Tobin’s questions, but then it clicked.

“Aaawww, Tobs,” she cooed. “Are you like a planner when it comes to intimacy?”

“No,” it was sheepishly defensive, “I just don’t want to cross any boundaries if you’re not
comfortable with something.”

“Baby, it’s okay to just go with the flow, you know? Trust me, you’ll know what I’m okay with and what I’m not. I’ll be sure to let you know if I need to,” she kissed her, “And I’m hoping you’ll do the same with me?”

Tobin smiled. “Of course.”

“Awesome. Now that we’re done with all the funny little technicalities and stuff, can we go back to what we were doing before?” Christen asked as she bit her lip and leaned forward slightly.

“Cuddling and watching TV? Yeah, of course!” Tobin teased and moved to lay down in her previous position.

Christen almost rolled her eyes but she crawled toward her instead, pretending she was going to lay down too but swung a leg over Tobin’s hips at the last moment and straddled her. Tobin’s eyes went wide and her hands flew to Christen’s sides in surprise.

“You think you’re funny, huh?” Christen muttered as she moved down to Tobin’s jaw again. She ghosted her lips over the the sharp bone line ready to kiss, breath hot against the skin, before Tobin got cocky and said, “Hilarious.” Her voice betrayed her confidence, though, the word coming out shakier then intended.

Christen pulled back with raised eyebrows. “Oh really?”

“Oh huh,” Tobin replied even though she knew where this was headed.

“Okay,” Christen said as she moved off of Tobin to lay at her side again, “tell me some jokes then.”

Tobin cursed internally at her fuck up but knew she wasn’t going to win this one. “Uuuh, what do you call bees that produce milk?”

Christen laughed, obviously confused (and completely acting like she wasn’t just on top of Tobin ready to make out) as she said, “I don’t know. What?”

“Boo-bees,” Tobin said with a grin but then realized what her joke was and what they were just talking about and doing. Her face grew red. Christen, on the other hand, was cackling and gasping for air.

“You seriously sabotaged our almost make-out session just to be a brat for a joke like that?” Christen was still cracking up.

“Ugh, forget I said anything. Can we go back to trying to make out now?” Tobin groaned.

“No,” Christen kept laughing and shook her head. “You just ruined the mood with that corny joke.”

Tobin groaned again and wrapped her arms tightly around Christen’s waist, pulling her in closer. “Please?”

Christen laughed and pushed against her shoulders as she shook her head and said, “Nuh uh.”

Tobin started placing light kisses to her neck, working her way up to Christen’s ear where she whispered, “How about now?”

When she pulled back to see Christen’s face, the girl had stopped laughing and looked like she was pondering. But then Christen saw Tobin’s smirk come back and, having almost decided to give in,
decided against it in the end. She gave Tobin a short kiss and then said, “Maybe later,” as she turned so she could face the TV and resumed flipping through channels.

Tobin muttered a “no fair,” as she moved around to get comfortable. Christen smirked and said, “Maybe don’t try to be so funny next time.”

The rest of the day went the same way, save for the deep talks and add a little making out (Christen gave in). They cuddled on the couch, only getting up for snacks, meals, and the restroom. Christen even almost forgot all about her conversation with Kelley and figured she would just finish it when they saw each other. Morena and Khaleesi joined them on the couch at some point and were all over Tobin. Christen didn’t know whether to be jealous of Tobin or of the dogs for getting each other’s attention. She whined something along the lines of “What about me?” but was secretly celebrating the fact that the pups took such a liking to Tobin so quickly. Dogs were always good judges of character.

When Tobin had to go home, Christen pulled her to her bedroom by the wrist. “Uh, Chris? I was going home?” Tobin laughed.

Christen stopped them at her closet. “Pick your poison,” she told her.

Tobin chuckled and said, “Wait, really? I was just joking.”

“I wasn’t.” was Christen’s reply. “Plus, I’m still wearing your clothes and don’t plan on giving them back right now so, go on.” She nudged her with a waving hand.

Tobin ended up picking a matching set. It was a pink hoodie and a pink pair of sweatpants that cut at the bottoms with long black drawstrings (one of Christen’s favorites to wear). Christen almost said, “no not those,” but remembered she promised Tobin anything she wanted.

“Oh, Chris, I really should go. It’s getting late and I have to be up early for church in the morning. If I’m late, not only will God be mad at me, but Amy will and, just between us two, I think the latter mentioned may be worse to deal with right now.” They laughed.

Christen learned about Amy, and Lauren, when she and Tobin were on the phone one night and Tobin’s phone kept buzzing against her countertop while she was cooking.

“Have another girl in your messages, Heath?”

“No! Well, uh, kinda? But not like that!”

“Well then what is it like?” Christen knew that it was probably nothing serious, but her nerves still picked up slightly.

“It’s just my best friend. Or, one of my best friends I guess. My straight best friend with two children and a husband.”

“Oh,” Christen giggled. “Sorry, I didn’t to come off as like possessive or anything.”

Tobin chuckled on her end of the line. “Nothing’s wrong with a little possessiveness if I am, indeed, yours, babe.”

Christen’s stomach did somersaults. Tobin sure knew how to charm. She ignored it. “Tell me about her. Or, them, I guess.”

“Her name is Amy and she has two little boys, Ryan and Luke, who are the funniest, cutest little
boys, after my nephews, of course. And her husband’s name is Adam. And then there’s Lauren. We
call her Cheney or Chens because of her maiden name, though. Her husband’s name is Jrue and
their baby girl’s name is Jrue Tyler. Oh my gosh, Chris, wait til you see pics of that kid. Smile to end
world hunger and curls that bounce like springs every time she runs. It’s the cutest thing in the
world.”

Christen smiled adoringly to herself. The sound of Tobin’s voice when she was talking about her
best friends and their families carried so much love, it was like she was talking about her sisters and
nephews and niece all over again.

“But yeah, I met Ames and Chens playing pick up soccer here in LA actually,” she chuckled. “As
soon as I moved out here, I realized I didn’t really know anyone so I resorted to sports, surprise
surprise. They had known each other for a couple of years having met the same way and when I
came along, I kinda just was added into their friendship, I guess. Ever since, they’ve stuck with me
through it all and been my family away from family. So they’re pretty important to me, being my first
friends I met out here and all.”

“That’s really sweet, Tobs,”

“Eh, it's sweet until they get on my ass for not yet having met someone to marry and have kids with
so that all of our kids could have playdates or something like that.”

Christen laughed, “That’s family and friends for you.”

“Yeah, I guess so,” Tobin trailed off in a chuckle.

“This may be waaaayyy too early to be asking this but is that something you’d want in the future? Not
like, with me specifically or anything, just in general.”

“What? Marriage and kids?”

“Yeah,” Christen confirmed softly.

“Oh, yeah. I’ve always wanted to settle down. I mean, I almost proposed to my last girlfriend. I
guess it was just a sign that the right one wasn’t her and was still out there. The cheating,
surprisingly didn’t ruin that dream for me. I mean, it’s been a while since that but it’s still something
I want. Is that, like, okay?”

“Of course it is, Tobin. Why wouldn’t it be okay for you to want to get married and have kids
eventually?”

“I meant with us. Is that okay for us?”

Christen’s heart melted. “Yeah. Yeah, that’s more than okay, Tobs.”

After Tobin kissed Christen goodnight (and Christen tugged her back in a few times for extra kisses),
Christen decided to finally check her phone again.

best roomie #2: Chris, you know that’s not how I meant it. That’s just the way I talk. I’m sorry.
best roomie #2: What’s got you so worked up? You never freak out like this on me.
best roomie #2: You ok?
best roomie #2: ah, I get it. You’re with Tobin. We’ll talk later. Have fuuuun.
What seemed like only 15 or 20 minutes later, Kelley walked through the front door, keys jingling and soccer bag dropping to the ground.

“Honey, I’m hooooome.” The dogs jumped off the couch and ran straight to the voice. “Hey, puppies!”

“Hey, Kel,” Christen called from the couch. “How was practice? And whatever else you did,” she took in the appearance of her best friend who was not dressed in practice gear, or even sweats like usual. She had on skinny jeans and a tank top with a pair of sneakers to take the place of her usual Adidas slides.

“Practice was practice. I did send Lex some beautiful balls though, if I do say so myself,” Kelley tossed an imaginary piece of hair behind her shoulder and Christen laughed. “Some of the girls and I just went mini golfing and then hung out for a bit afterwards. Nothing crazy. How was Tobin?” Kelley smirked.

“She was fine, thank you very much.” Christen rolled her eyes with a smirk.

“Uh huh, do tell,” Kelley encouraged.

“We just went to a few museums downtown last night and then she came over and hung out today. Nothing crazy,” she repeated her friend’s words.

“I see. And the conversation we had earlier?”

“Mhmm, what about it?”

“You wanna pick that up where we left off?” Kelley’s eyebrow raised.

Christen sighed, “Yeah, I guess.”

“Well?”

“I’m sorry.”

Kelley laughed. “Why are you sorry?”

“I don’t know. I know it’s only been a week but I in no way meant to just act like you haven’t been there for me as a best friend all these years once a girl came around. And for getting defensive earlier over the whole vanilla thing. I guess I’ve just been kinda freaking out about my timing with Tobin and making sure we’re doing everything as right as we can. All of this is so unlike me and then reading the text about you thinking we’d have already had sex by now set me off for some reason. I think because I know I’ve never been that type of girl and I know you know I’ve never been that type of girl so to hear you say that just worried me that I seemed like I was changing and all too fast. I know you were just messing around though, so I’m sorry.”

“It was a silly slip up that wasn’t really that big of a deal. I wasn’t really hurt over it. Worried a little? Yeah, sure. But I knew you’d have a valid reason. You’re a big girl. You know what you’re doing. Thanks for the apology, though. I appreciate your awareness,” she shoots Christen a grin, “That alone tells me that you’re not forgetting about me for boring old Tobito.”

Christen rolled her eyes again at Kelley’s affectionate jeering.

“Chris, I’m gonna ask you a question and I don’t want you to think about it, just answer, kay?”
Christen’s eyebrows knitted but she nodded.

“Are you really, seriously, a hundred percent in this with Tobin?”

Her eyebrows furrowed even further, “Of course. I would have never, one - kissed her on the first date and two - slept over at her house on the third date if I wasn’t.”

Kelley snickered for a moment, earning a glare from a pair of green eyes, but then said, “Why are you so worried then?”

“What do you mean? Because I really like her and I really want this to last.”

“Exactly. You like her. She likes you. You of all people are the first to say that life works itself out the way it should. Miss “No One or No Thing Can Mess Up My Zen” is over here stressing over something so small. All you guys need is the fact that you like each other and are in this. The rest will work itself out like it should. You guys just need to trust that it will. Don’t get so caught up over it.” Kelley said it like it was simple. Maybe it was simple.

“Huh,” Christen marveled, “I knew you were smart because we went to Stanford together but I didn't know you had that wisdom in you, O’Hara.”

“Wise as an owl, Pressy,” Kelley winked. “And don’t you forget it, either.”

Christen giggled and moved to give Kelley a hug. “Thank you. I love you,” she said with her chin on Kelley’s shoulder, eyes closed and arms tight around her friend.

Kelley knew the thanks were for more than just their talk.

“Always, Chris. I got you forever.”
you make everything better

Chapter Summary

Tobin goes to brunch with her best friends. Christen invites herself over to Tobin's place, but she has a reason.

Chapter Notes

wOAH it's been a while, folks. first and foremost, I'm sorry for not updating this sooner. If you've read the notes on some of my newer works or follow me on tumblr, you'll know just how much I talk about school being overwhelming right now. I'm taking a lot of reading/writing heavy classes right now so finding the time to write on here is kinda hard but I'm trying.
second, I'm gonna be honest here and admit that I was avoiding this story for a bit because I had no idea where I was going with it or what to write without overdoing what I had already published. I think this chapter was a good place for me to get back into it a little bit, despite the lack of really major plot points, and I'm gonna start getting back on track with this.
third, I really appreciate you all leaving me kudos, comments, and asks on Tumblr. I've gotten quite a few asking for updates on this and it makes me happy knowing how much y'all are enjoying this story and want more. I don't want to half-ass it or rush it, so if updates are kind of slow, I apologize.
Lastly, as always, enjoy and feel free to leave me comments or asks on my Tumblr @ chrvstenpress.tumblr.com !
Thanks for reading!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“So... how’s life? I feel like I barely heard from you this week.”

Tobin knows that tone. That’s Amy’s “I’m gonna act calm but speak up or I’ll make you” tone.

“Dramatic much?” Tobin pushes Ryan by the shoulder and he stumbles a few steps whilst giggling and tries to shove her back. “I was just busy.”

“Busy…” Amy trails off as she nods. “So like, lots of shoots, or?”

“Ames, just say it.”

“Why don’t you?”

“I don’t know what it is you want me to say. Which is why I’m saying that I need you to say what you want me to say.”

“Okay, the fact that you’re overexplaining and using too many words tells me something’s going on.”
Tobin laughs as she dodges one of Ryan’s barrels and he smacks into his mom’s side instead.

“Ryan John! Calm down!” Tobin has to hold in her snicker and she sticks her tongue out at the boy in secret when he turns to face her.

“Nothing is up, Amy.”

“Bull-”

“Amy!” Tobin chides with playful raised eyebrows and wide eyes. “In front of your child and right outside of church?”

“You’re insufferable.” Amy rolls her eyes as she shoves Ryan away from moving to Tobin again by the forehead. “And you’re trying to change the subject. Fess up, Tobin.”

“There’s nothing to fess, Amy! I already confessed my sins to God just a little while ago.”

“Tobin.”

“What?” Tobin asks through a chuckle like she’s trying to prove there’s nothing to tell.

“How long have we known each other now?” Amy asks.

“Too long, probably.”

“Right. So funny,” Amy rolls her eyes again. “So that means I know you very well, Tobin.”

“That is true, Amy.”

“Okay. So that also means I know you’re lying to me right now and you’re gonna have to confess to both me and God at some point.”

“Oh my…” Tobin laughs and pinches the bridge of her nose. “Can it, like, wait?”

“What do you mean ‘can it, like, wait?’ Does it seem like it can wait?” Amy straps Ryan into his carseat and hands him an apple sauce pouch.

“We’re gonna go eat right now. Can it wait til then?” Tobin scratches the back of her neck and her nerves are suddenly very obvious now that she doesn’t have Ryan to distract her from them.

Amy gives her a pointed look and examines her for a moment before she says, “This better be worth the wait, Heath.”

“I’ll see you there.”

“Yeah, uh huh.”

Tobin is walking away from Amy’s car and digging in her pockets for her own keys before she turns back around and says, “Hey, Ames? Can you, uh, maybe call Cheney and see if she wants to join us for brunch today?”

Amy smirks from her frozen position with one leg out of the car and a hand on the door. “Oh, this is gonna be great.”

Tobin shakes her head as she watches Amy close her door and turn her car on. The moment she’s in her car, the bluetooth speakers are radiating the sound of ringing.
“Hello?” She’s instantly calmed by the sound of Christen’s voice filling her car.

“Hi.” Her voice sounds shy and she sort of winces at her obviousness, but Christen doesn’t take note of it.

“Hi, love! You out of church?”

“Yeah, I just got in my car.”

“Cool! I’m assuming you’re heading to brunch now?”

Tobin confirms and Christen asks how church was.

“It was good. Really good. But, uhm, can I ask you something?”

“Of course, babe. Is everything okay?”

“Yeah! Yeah, no, everything’s good. Just, uhm, you see Amy is like freakishly good at seeing right through me,”

“Uh huh,” Christen urges her on.

“And she could automatically tell something’s different with me and she, uh, won’t really let it go.”

“Okay...”

“And I have no idea how she does it but-”

“Tobin, you’re rambling,” Christen giggles.

“Sorry.” Tobin’s sure a blush appears on her cheeks and she’s thankful one is around to see it. She’s nervous enough as it is. “Anyway, we’re going to brunch and she’s expecting some sort of explanation out of me. So is it, like, okay if I tell her about us?”

“Tobs,” Christen coos, “Of course it’s okay. If you’re comfortable and ready to do that then go ahead, babe.”

“Yeah, I’m ready. I just wanted to make sure you were okay with it first, I guess.”

“I appreciate that more than you know, Tobin.”

She sighs and a small smile makes its way onto her lips. “Okay, cool.”

“Cool,” Christen repeats and Tobin just knows she’s smirking at her Californian lingo.

“Oh, and uh, Cheney too. She’s going to brunch with us too, I think.”

“Honey, it’s okay,” Christen laughs. “I’m not gonna tell you that you can tell Amy but not Lauren.”

Tobin chuckles and says, “Okay.”

“I miss you.”

They just saw each other last night.

“Miss you more, pretty girl.”
“I want a kiss. Or ten. Or maybe more. I don’t know, I haven’t decided.”

Tobin laughs, “Well when you decide how many, let me know and I will happily give you as many as you want.”

Christen doesn’t say anything but Tobin can tell she’s smiling. She always goes quiet when she’s smiling.

“Oh, uhm, one more thing.”

“What’s that, baby?” Christen asks sweetly.

“What am I, like, supposed to say?”

“Uh, Tobin, I don’t think I should really be telling you what to say to them,” Christen chuckles.

“No, no,” she laughs back, “Sorry. Just, like, I know we aren’t official yet-”

“Tobin Heath, this better not be your way of asking me-”

“No! I wouldn’t do that over the phone.”

“You better not,” Christen teases.

“Never.”

Christen says, “Good,” before she’s asking her to continue what she was saying.

“I guess, just, what am I supposed to say about us? I don’t really know how to explain our timeline.”

On the other end of the phone, Christen can tell that Tobin is sorta kinda freaking out. “Just say you met someone, maybe? And then take it from there?” She offers.


Christen lets Tobin take a moment to herself before she’s gently asking, “You okay?”

“Yeah. Yeah, I’m good. Just a little nervous, maybe.”

“Nervous? Why are you nervous?”

“Because this is kind of a big deal for me. I haven’t been with very many people and not all of them met my closest friends and family. And Lauren and Amy are really important to me and you’re really important to me so I guess sharing you with them is a big thing for me.”

Christen is quiet for a few seconds. “Tobin, if you aren’t ready and it’s too soon or you aren’t sure, you don’t have to. No one is forcing you. Our pace, remember?”

“No, I’m ready to tell them. That’s the thing. I had to stop myself from telling Amy on the phone the other day because I’m so excited about you. I just didn’t want to say anything without asking you first.”

Christen is smiling softly against her phone as she listens to Tobin. “You don’t have to keep me a secret, babe. I appreciate your consideration, though.”

It gets Tobin smiling back. They didn’t have to be a secret. No secrets. They were in this.
“Okay. Thank you.”

“Don’t thank me, Tobs. Thank you for thinking of me first, though.”

“Yeah.” Tobin says gently because ‘you’re welcome’ doesn’t sound right to her. “I’m pulling up to the restaurant now so I gotta go but I’ll call you later, okay?”

“Mkay. Have a good brunch, babe. Good luck.”

“Thanks, baby. Talk you to you later.”

“Bye.”

Tobin pulls into an empty parking space right next to Amy’s car and assumes they’re already inside. (She might’ve purposely taken a few wrong turns for extra time to talk to Christen.) She prepares herself with a heavy sigh and makes her way in.

“Toby!”

“Ugh,” Tobin pretends to groan as Ryan jumps on to her and she lifts him up. “Who are you? Who’s kid is this?” She looks around playfully and points a finger at him.

He giggles and “It’s Ry!”

“Who? Do I know you?”

“Tobyyyy,” He groans and leans into her.

She laughs, saying, “I’m just kidding, dude. How could I forget you?” and kisses his cheek before setting him back on the ground.

“Hey, Tobs,” Lauren says as Ryan runs back over to Amy.

“Baby J!” Tobin all but squeals as she crouches down to the toddler and pulls her into a bear hug. Jrue Tyler is giggling and squirming as Tobin smacks a long kiss to her cheek.

“Loves my child more than she loves me. I see how it is,” Lauren jokes as Tobin stands back up.

“You told me you loved Ryan more than you loved me when he was born,” Amy quips.

“It’s true. Luke too. Ain’t that right, Ry?”

“Yup!” He has no idea what he’s agreeing to, but it’s his Chens so he has to agree.

“Speaking of Luke, where is he? I miss my child.”

“He is my child and he wasn’t feeling well so Adam stayed home with him.”

Lauren winces and says, “Oh, poor baby.”

Tobin laughs at their antics and moves in to give Lauren a hug. “Hey, Chen.”

Lauren gives her a warm smile and a warm hug and it reminds Tobin all over again how much her friends feel like home. “Hey, T. Missed you.”

“Me too,” Tobin smiles when she pulls back.
The hostess asks if everyone in their party has arrived and they’re immediately taken to their table.

“Okay, we’re here now. Spill,” Amy demands as soon as the hostess leaves.

“*Amy*,” Lauren warns and gives her a pointed look.

“What? She said she had something to say and I’ve been waiting.”

“Actually, *you* said I had something to say,” Tobin corrects.

“And I was right, so spill.” Lauren chuckles at both Amy’s impatience and Tobin’s red cheeks as she hands JT a few crayons after she takes them out of the box so the kids can draw together.

“Tobs, you don’t have to tell us whatever it is if you don’t want to. Amy’s just being overbearing per usual.”

Amy scowls and mutters, “Oh yes she does,” and Tobin folds her napkin onto her lap and sets her silverware aside before fiddling with the corner of her vinyl covered menu to keep busy.

“It’s cool. I- uh- I’ve been meaning to tell you guys this anyway. Just promise to let me finish and then you can ask me whatever you want?”

Lauren nods her head and Amy sets her chin in her palm.

“Okay, uh-”

“You met someone,” Amy blurts and Lauren chastises her again.

“Amy!”

“What?!?”

“Let her talk!”

Amy sucks her lips between her teeth and leans back into her chair.

“Go ‘head, T. Ignore her.”

“Uhm, okay. Uh, yeah. I met someone.” Amy has to contain her squeal as best she can and Lauren gives her the kindest smile she’s yet to see on her.

“It’s really new. A mutual friend of ours set us up on a blind date and I guess we just really hit it off. So we went on another date a couple days later and have seen each other a few times and been in contact since. She’s so dope, you guys.” Amy snorts. Lauren chuckles. “I was pretty closed off since I ended it with you know who and wasn’t even really sure I wanted to go on that blind date but my friend was nagging and you guys are always urging and something just told me to go for it, so I did.

“And the moment I saw her I was gone. Like, stuttering mess, froze while shaking her hand and staring at her green eyes gone. Her eyes, man. They, like, glow or something, I don’t know. She’s got this beautiful curly hair and she’s so insanely pretty. She’s a journalist and she’s so passionate about what she does. I think I could listen to her talk about her writing all day because she just loves it that much and it’s different. Not everyone is that passionate about their job, you know? I don’t know, it’s all happening really fast and it scares the living heck out of me but I think she’s it, guys. It feels different this time. It feels good.”

When she stops talking, she looks up and sees Amy with her eyebrow raised, blinking slowly, and
Lauren staring at her affectionately.

“Uh, questions?” Tobin asks because the silence from her best friends is scaring her (especially from Amy).

“Holy shit,” Amy mumbles and makes Lauren breathe an “Oh my god,” as she puts her head in one of her hands.

“Are you sure you’re not in love, dude? You talk about her like you’ve known her for years.”

Tobin chokes on the water that had been placed in front of her at some point during her mini speech. She’s a coughing mess and Amy looks at her skeptically.

“Uh. No. It’s only been like a week.”

“A WEEK?” Lauren exclaims and it shocks even the kids. It causes JT to jump slightly and drop a few of her crayons. When Lauren picks them up for her, she presses a kiss to her forehead and says, “Sorry, baby girl. Too loud.”

“Yeah,” Tobin responds timidly.

“Okay, uh, what’s her name?” Lauren can’t really think of anything else to ask because she’s still trying to wrap her mind around the fact that Tobin talks about the girl like that and she’s only known her for a week.

“Christen.”

“Pretty name,” Amy comments because she’s suddenly feeling guilty for prodding so much and now even Lauren is in shock so Tobin must be overwhelmed.

“Yeah. It fits her.”

“Do you have any pictures?” Amy asks. That gets Tobin excited. Pictures always get Tobin excited.

“Yeah!” Tobin pulls her phone out from her back pocket and swipes through the edited pictures of Christen she took on their LA date. She hands Amy the phone and both she and Lauren lean toward each other over the table to share the phone.

“Oh, T, she’s beautiful,” Lauren coos and it makes Tobin’s ears go red.

“Yeah. She’s even more gorgeous in person. Pictures don’t do her justice.”

Amy hands Tobin her phone back as Lauren says, “Was that at The Broad? Haven’t you been wanting to go there forever?”

“Yeah,” she grins, “She took charge of date three and surprised me with that and a few other museums around there. She actually didn’t even know I had been wanting to go.”

And then suddenly Amy’s soft. “She sounds like she knows you well already, Tobs.”

“Yeah,” Tobin looks down to her lap shyly and sees her phone lit up with a message from Christen. She wants to open it so badly but she’ll be in hot shit if she disregards her friends for a text.

“So... you really like her,” Amy says and Tobin nods. “Don’t take this the wrong way, T, but how much time exactly have you two spent together? Because you talk about her like it’s something deeper than one week in.” Lauren’s gazing at her intently and she knows they both desperately want
the answer to that question, but the waiter comes all too soon and the answer is postponed.

As soon as their orders are in, they’re both staring at her again. Tobin chuckles lightly. “I guess I should start with date one because otherwise it might not make sense. So our friend Kelley, the one who plays for LAFC, set us up and we actually met at my studio, I just cleared some stuff out of the way to make room for whatever Kelley was setting up there. They’re actually roommates so they’re really close. Anyway, she had us do this thing from YouTube called Tea for Two. It’s basically two strangers set up on a blind date and they’re given a tea set and a stack of question cards published by the New York Times. There’s 36 of them and I guess the purpose of them is to make you fall in love or something. But the thing is, these questions are really personal. Like, maybe some stuff that took me a while to share with you guys. But it just felt so easy with her and like I could trust her. I was learning about her and her about me and I think that’s how we connected the way we did. I don’t think we would be where we are now if it weren’t for those questions.

“So, um, we really liked each other before the first date was probably even halfway over and I just knew I needed to see her again and fast. So I asked her on a beach date two days later and we didn’t do anything but chill the whole day. And you guys know me and chilling at the beach - Heaven on Earth. All of a sudden, I’m doing my favorite thing in the world and there’s this beautiful girl with me and it felt so good. She fit right into my life.”

“T, you’ve got it bad,” Amy teases but it’s so affectionate, Tobin can’t help but laugh and nod. “Yeah, real bad,” she admits.

“We didn’t see each other again til Friday, actually. That was date three at the museums. It was literally a dream day. We went to The Broad, the Walt Disney Concert Hall across the street, a contemporary art museum across the other street, took this weird trolley thing down a hill and then ate some really good vegan ramen-”

“Vegan ramen?” Lauren asks out of genuine curiosity.


Tobin laughs. “Yeah, I know. I surprised myself by trying it but it was so good. Anyway, we’re still trying to figure out our timing and stuff but we both know we want this. We’re both all in.” She leaves out the parts about accidentally showing up at Christen’s job, getting in a mix up over those three words, and having Christen sleep over. She doesn’t want to put any more teasing upon herself, but in true Amy fashion, she somehow gets the information out of her anyway.

“So you’ve only seen each other three times?” Lauren questions.

Tobin nods but then tilts her head. “Technically 4 I guess? I spent the day with her yesterday too.”

“What’s the ‘technically’ for?” That’s just four times, T.”

Tobin’s cheeks go red and she bites her lip.

“Oh my god, they stayed the night together,” Amy spouts to Lauren.

“We didn’t do anything,” Tobin defends quickly and both of her friends snap their eyes at her fast.

“Didn’t do anything…” Amy drawls.

“I swear! It was late-”

“Okay, T, we don’t need details. Especially not around the kids,” Cheney cuts her off.
“No! Chen, I swear. I even slept in a different bed. It was late and I didn’t want her to drive home because she was tired so I gave her my room and I slept in the guest.”

Amy smirks. “Isn’t that charming.”

“I just wanted her to be comfortable,” Tobin shrugs and her eyebrows are slightly furrowed as her eyes fix onto her phone again “I didn’t want her thinking I was trying something on her. It’s not like that. I’m not like that.”

“Good girl,” Lauren approves with a head nod and a wink.

“So you guys are serious then?” Amy questions.

“Yes. Really serious. We can both tell how special this is.”

“Is she your girlfriend?”

Tobin drops the fork she’s twisting in her fingers. “Uh, no. It’s only been a week, Amy.”

“And? You talk about her like she’s the best thing to walk this Earth.”

“And it’s only been a week,” Tobin repeats.

“Mommy, I’m hungry,” Ryan whines and leans into his mother’s side.

“I know, Ry. Food’s almost here, bud.”

“I think I see both sides here,” Lauren states as she starts to clear the space in front of JT for when the food arrives. “I mean, yes, it’s only been a week and that’s fast, but Tobin, Amy’s is right. I’ve never seen you like this.”

“Lauren,” she pauses, “are you telling me to make it official?”

“I’m not not telling you to make it official.”

Amy snorts into her water glass as the waiter puts down a plate in front of her and one in front of Ryan.

“Dude, what does that even mean?”

Lauren laughs as she cuts JT’s pancakes. “It just means think about it, T. I mean, don’t stress about it, but you’re obviously obsessed with her and if you’re both all in, what’s the wait?”

“Uhm, yeah, I’ll think about it.”

“And answer her before I have to watch you glance at your phone one more time,” Lauren teasingly demands and makes Tobin blush.

chris: I’m going out with Kel today so if I don’t answer later on, that’s why. Hope everything is going well! Miss you.

tobs: Better than I could have asked for. Have a good time with the psycho. Miss you more.

“So when do we get to meet her?”

“Amy.”
“Sorry for Amy, T. She can be a little much sometimes, huh?” Lauren jokes as she moves to take JT from Tobin’s arms. Tobin pouts and hold onto the girl tighter as she leans away.

“Give me my baby, Tobin,” she laughs. Tobin reluctantly hands the toddler over after pressing a few kisses to the little girl's cheek and saying, “Momma’s a meanie. Bye, baby J.”

“It’s all good, though. I know she means well. And you guys kinda balance each other out with your energies or whatever.”

“Our energies?” Lauren laughs as she put JT in the car.

Tobin blushes and realizes that she’s picking up some of Christen’s lingo. The girl was a hippie and all about that kind of stuff. “Yeah, you know. You’re always like calm and comforting and Amy’s, well… Amy.”

“Okay, weirdo. I’m glad I can be the calm and comforting energy in this friendship.”

“Whatever,” she rolls her eyes, “You know what I mean.”

Lauren chuckles and wraps her up in a hug. “It was good seeing you, Tobs. Missed ya.”

“Yeah, me too. I promise to hang out more. I’ve just been busy.”

“Busy?” Lauren pulls back from the hug but keeps Tobin at half an arm's length while holding her upper arms. “Or busy?”

Tobin scoffs with an annoyed smirk and gives her friend a light shove. “Oh c’mon, Chen. You’re supposed to be the calm and comforting friend remember?“

Lauren laughs and says, “Sorry, sorry. I had to.”

“Uh huh.”

“Seriously, T. I’m really happy for you. And I know Amy is too. We’ve never seen you like this. It’s nice. I like this side of you.”

“I like this side of me, too,” Tobin smiles.

“Good. Now, when do we get to meet her?”

Tobin groans, “It's only been a week.”

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They don’t see each other until Thursday. It’s 5 long, hard days without each other and they don’t stop talking throughout it to help ease the longing.

To top it all off, Tobin’s catching the flu because the weather is starting to change in Los Angeles, albeit not by much. Nonetheless, it’s still flu season and Tobin hates flu season.
Tobin, being Tobin, doesn’t say anything about it. She lets Christen go on and on for days about her advances in this article she’s writing about why LA’s Skid Row is now a perpetuation of Los Angeles culture and society. Tobin listens, humming her ‘mhmms’ and ‘uh huhs’ as Christen talks about how Angelinos, old and new, avidly ignore the issue of homelessness in their city and do nothing to stop overpopulation from incoming inhabitants, which only worsens the issue.

She does her best to not talk very much, not wanting to expose her scratchy voice, and mutes her end of the call when she senses an oncoming coughing fit.

It isn’t until Thursday evening that Tobin accidentally sniffles hard while listening to Christen and Christen stops her story immediately.

“Babe, are you okay?”

“Yeah, why?”

“You just sniffled really loud…” Christen trails off.

“I did? Huh. Didn’t realize,” she lies as she realizes her mistake. “Go on, Chris. I’m listening.”

She is listening, but barely. Her body aches and her head hurts and she’s sweating but she feels so insanely cold. She’s half asleep but she genuinely does her best to listen to every word the girl says.

“Tobin you sound congested, honey. Are you sick?”

“No! No, I’m fine. It’s just a little chilly in my apartment and that’s probably why I sniffled.”

“No, No, I’m fine. It’s just a little chilly in my apartment and that’s probably why I sniffled.”

“Okay, if you’re sure,” Christen doesn’t believe her. She doesn’t believe her one bit but she doesn’t want to smother her if she’s really not sick.

“I’m su-” A random coughing fit hits Tobin hard before she can contain it and she rushes to mute her end of the call before Christen can hear it. It’s too late though because Christen is worriedly saying, “Tobin, oh my gosh, you sound horrible, sweetie. Wait, where did you go? You still there?”

Tobin has to allow her coughs to subside before she unmutes her phone and breathes heavily into it. “Still here. Sorry.” She sniffles again to stop her disgusting snot from dripping and it gets Christen going again.

“Tobin Heath, are you sick? And don’t you dare lie to me.”

Tobin groans into her pillow, hurting both her throat and her head in the process, before she goes back to her phone and says, “Maybe. But it’s fine. I’m not that sick and I’ll be better by morning.”

“Honey, you sound like you have a clothespin pinching your nose.”

“Chris, I’m fine. I promise.”

“Promises shouldn’t be lies, love,” Christen says gently. It’s not accusatory at all. It’s almost like she knows just how badly Tobin doesn’t want to admit she’s sick.

Tobin sighs heavily and finally admits, “Okay, fine. I think I picked up the flu from my assistant photographer, Lindsey. Or maybe Ryan or Amy passed it on somehow. ARod said Luke wasn’t feeling well on Sunday and that’s why he stayed home.” She has to pause to cough a few times and blow her nose. “It’s just been going around and it got me.”

“Baby,” Christen coos sympathetically and Tobin can practically hear the pout through the word.
She moans out a painful groan that causes her to cough again and says, “Babe, I feel like shit.”

“You sound like shit.”

“Gee, thanks.”

Christen chuckles and asks, “Did you just get sick today, honey?”

“No, it’s been a couple days, maybe. It just hit me a little harder today.”

“Days?! Tobin! Why didn’t you say anything?”

Tobin’s eyes shut at Christen’s exclamation and she hisses lightly at the way the loud volume made her head pound, “Because you were so excited about your story and I just wanted to listen. And I hate being sick and I hate being taken care of when I’m sick,” sniffle, “I just wanna be weak by myself.”

“Tobs, babe, that’s no way to get better. You should’ve said something. I’m sorry for talking so much. I can’t believe I didn’t catch on.”

“It works every other time,” Tobin huffs. “And you’re fine, Chris. I love listening to you talk about work. Or just talk in general. Don’t apologize.”

“Yeah, it works and you probably get better only after forever because you won’t let anyone take care of you.” She ignores the part about her Tobin loving listening to her talk because she’s blushing and thinks somehow Tobin knows even though she can’t see her.

“I don’t want anyone to see my like this,” Tobin admits and she sounds like a pouting child who has their arms crossed and head down.

“Tobin,”

“No, don’t ‘Tobin’ me. Any other time, I like being babied, but not when I’m sick.”

Christen is silent for a moment before she says, “If I promise not to baby you, will you let me come over and take-”

“No.”

“Tobin-”

“No.”

“Baby, please?”

“Look, you’re already calling me baby. No.”

Christen huffs and says, “I am coming over whether you like it or not because you are sick and, if for nothing else than my own piece of mind, I will take care of you.”

“Christen, no,” Tobin tries to protest but it’s weak. She really misses Christen and nothing sounds nicer than being held in the girl’s arms but she’s sick and she does not want to be seen with red cheeks and a snotty nose, heaving breaths out of her parted lips because her nose is too clogged to grant passageway to any air.

“No. I’m coming over whether you like it or not. There’s no way I’m leaving you by yourself like
“Christen, I’ll get you sick.”

“I have my flu shot.”

“Christen,” she whines.

“Tobin,” Christen mocks.

Tobin is coughing again before she can answer.

“Oh, my poor baby.”

“Ugh, Chris,” she groans.

“What? You may not like to be babied when you’re sick but you’re my baby and you’re sick and you will learn to love and accept me taking care of you.”

“I can’t believe you,” she chuckles but the mucus in her throat comes up with her laughs and she coughs twice before clearing her throat. “You’re so stubborn, do you know that?”


“Oh my god, that is the brattiest thing you’ve said thus far.”

“Glad to hear you’re sickness hasn’t impeded on your proper grammar or your ability to call me a brat.”

“Course not.”

“I’ll be over in twenty. Don’t you dare move a bone until I get there.”

“Can you bring the puppies?”

“Baby, I don’t want them to be all over you while your sick.”

“But I want cuddles,” Tobin says cutely.

“I can give you cuddles,” Christen tries to sweet talk.

“But I want puppy cuddles.”

“Wow. I see I’ve already been replaced.”

“Never, babe.” She sneezes. “Ugh, gross. I just got snot all over me.”

Christen laughs. “That’s gross.”

“See? I’m gross. Don’t come over.”

“Oh, don’t even try it, Heath.”

“But I’m gross. You don’t want to deal with gross.”

“Can’t wait. See you soon. Bye.” Christen hangs up before Tobin can fit one more protest in.
Tobin sighs and looks at her phone before softly shaking her head and dropping the device to her side. Somehow, she falls asleep in the short amount of time it takes Christen to arrive. She wakes up to the sound of her phone vibrating against the mattress and groggily opens her eyes to her dimly lit bedroom and her illuminated phone screen projecting the most precious face in the world.

“‘Lo?”

“Were you sleeping?”

“Yeah, sorry. You here?”

“Yeah, I’ve been knocking for a few minutes and figured you knocked out when you didn’t answer the door the first three times I tried.”

Tobin’s already opening the door when she says, “Sorry. I didn’t mean to fall asleep.”

Christen’s eyes soften at the sight of Tobin in a pair of baggy grey sweatpants and a black hoodie, hair in her signature half-bun, half-ponytail (but it’s loose and strands have fallen out and gone wild from her sleep), and cheeks rosy as can be. “It’s okay. You need rest.”

Tobin nods and then registers Morena and Khalessi pawing at her legs as Christen walks in with them, a large tote bag slung over her shoulder.

“Girls, no. Down.”

“Hi, puppies,” Tobin rasps as she sits down on the floor with them, right in front of her now closed door, and pets them as they lay on their backs requesting belly rubs.

“Girls, you’re supposed to be comforting Tobin, not asking for attention,” Christen laughs as she puts her bag down on the kitchen island.

“S’okay. Missed them.” Tobin lays down on the floor completely and nuzzles her face into Khalessi’s fur.

“What about me? You didn’t miss me? Where’s my hugs?”

“Nuh uh, gon’ get you sick.”

“If you think I came over here and I’m not gonna hug you, you’re out of your mind. Plus, I have my flu shot, remember?”

“Chriiis,” Tobin whines as she pulls Morena into her side and scratches her neck.

“Chriiis.” She mocks, making a weird voice that sounds nothing at all like Tobin. Before Tobin knows it, Christen is on the floor with her and the dogs, opposite side of Morena and gently pushing Khalessi slightly away from Tobin’s face, kissing her cheek. “Oh my goodness. You’re burning up, Tobin.”

“I feel cold,” says through a pout.

“Ugh, poor thing.” She moves an arm over Tobin’s waist, rubbing her sweetly where her hand lands on her hip bone. She moves in to give Tobin a kiss and Tobin twists her head away fast, again wincing at the pain she incites. “No. No kisses. I’m yucky.”

“Too bad. Come here, yucky.” Christen rests a hand on her cheek and turns her head back around slowly before giving her a tender peck on her lips. “I missed you.”
“Me more.”

“No way.”

“Yeah huh.”

Christen scrunches up her nose and says, “Ew, we’re that couple?”

It makes Tobin’s heart rate intensify and it all feels too much against her aching bones. She still hadn’t asked Christen to be official yet, but she had given Lauren’s words much thought since Sunday. She wants to question Christen’s word choice, but she knows that will start a whole conversation and she is in no condition to ask her at the moment.

“C’mon. Let’s get you to take a shower while I make you some chicken soup. I even brought you some more of my sweats to wear.” Christen winks.

“You didn’t,” Tobin’s eyes widen slightly in excitement.

“Oh, but I did.” She kisses her lightly once more before standing up and helping her too. “Girls, stay. No, Mo. Off the couch.” She starts to walk to grab the dog but Tobin stops her.

“It’s okay. I wouldn’t have asked you to bring ‘em if I wasn’t okay with them being wherever they want to be in here.”

“You sure?”

Tobin nods and grabs her hand. “Thank you for coming.”

Christen smiles back sweetly. “Of course, love. C’mon. Go shower so you aren’t sitting in your sweat and germs and I’ll start your soup and then we can cuddle with the pups and watch whatever you wanna watch. Or you can take another nap or something. You probably need rest, babe.”

Tobin heart warms at Christen’s nurturing side already coming out. “You promise to hug me and hold me when I get out?”

“I thought you didn’t wanna get me sick, huh?”

“Yeah, but you made the choice of coming here and you already kissed me twice. Plus, you have your flu shot, remember?” Tobin’s nasally voice in person is so much worse that it was over the phone and it makes Christen melt, as weird as it sounds. She may be sick and weak, but she’s just so cute with her blush tinted cheeks, her extra baggy sweats, her overdramatic pout, and her scratchy voice.

“Yes, Tobin. I’ll hug you and hold you once you’re out of the shower and you’ve eaten. I’ll even set some clothes out for you on your bed. Now, go.”

Tobin grins weakly and begins to turn away but she stops midway. She stands still for a few seconds before she turns back around and Christen is asking, “You need something, Tobs?”

Tobin turns sheepish as she turns around again. “I was gonna ask for another kiss but I really don’t want to get you sick. It sucks.”

Christen giggles and walks the few steps to meet Tobin, taking her warm face in her hands. “I didn’t think you could get any cuter but you might be the cutest when you’re sick.” She gives her a real kiss this time, granted it’s still soft and not at all anything but innocent. This time, though, she does barely
lock their lips instead of just pressing them together and Tobin hums at the contact. When she pulls back after a few seconds, she rubs softly at the corner of Tobin’s left eye with the pad of her thumb, ridding her of some eye crust that had built up there.

“Did you just wipe my eye gunk? I can’t believe you still like me even when I’m all yucky like this.”

“I like you always,” Christen kisses her jaw lightly, “Now, seriously, go take a shower and stop stalling.”

“Okay,” she gives a half smile and turns around. When she’s halfway down the hall, she stops again. “Hey, Chris?” she calls as strongly as she can.

“Yes, Tobin?”

“Thank you.” She can hear Christen letting out a breathy laugh somehow and it makes her grin too.

“Go take a shower, yucky.”

When Tobin is out of the shower, she already feels slightly better. It was a bit of a struggle to move her body so much to wash off because she felt so heavy, but being clean certainly felt better. When she opens the door to her bedroom, she sees Christen laying out a purple nike hoodie and a pair of thin polyester sweatpants.

Christen turns around at the sound of the door opening to see Tobin in only a towel and her eyes may as well pop out of their sockets. “Oh, sorry! I was just putting some clothes out. I’m gonna, uh, go check on the soup.” She’s out of the room before Tobin can even say anything.

Once she’s dressed, she returns to the kitchen to see Christen at the stove. She walks up behind her presses her body into Christen’s from behind, laying her head sideways on Christen’s shoulder and putting her hands on Christen’s hips softly. The girl turns her head and presses a gentle kiss to Tobin’s forehead as she rests her hand that isn’t holding a ladle over one of Tobin’s.

“Why did you get all nervous in my room right now?” Tobin teases.

“Shut up.” She turns to look back at the stove and mixes for a moment before Tobin is burying her face into Christen’s neck completely. She leans the side of her head against Tobin’s and says, “You smell so good.” She gives Tobin another kiss on her forehead.

“I would hope I smell good after a shower,” Tobin teases and the words muffle against Christen’s skin.

“I see you are also still a smartass when you’re sick.”

Tobin laughs into Christen’s neck and then pulls away abruptly to cough. Christen puts the ladle down and turns around to be at Tobin’s side, rubbing a hand up and down her back. She gives Tobin a gentle kiss on the corner of her shoulder and keeps her lips there as she keeps the rhythm of her hand steady on her back.

“Sorry,” Tobin rasps out when she’s finished coughing.

“S’okay. You need to get it all out.” She drops another kiss to her shoulder. “The soup will be ready soon. Wanna go lay down on the couch?”

Tobin nods her head and schlumps her shoulders a little. “I hate being sick.”
Christen pouts, “I know, love. I hate seeing you sick. C’mon, let’s go lie down until the soup is ready.”

“I thought you said I’m cute when I’m sick?” Tobin mutters with a pout as Christen walks her over to the couch with a hand on her back.

“You’re always cute. I just don’t like to see you hurting like this, babe.”

“Ugh, hurting,” she repeats. “My whole body hurts, Chris.”

“I know, baby. Come here.” Christen lays down first and opens her arms for Tobin to lay on top of her. Tobin immediately finds her spot on her stomach, half on top of Christen, one leg between hers, face buried in her neck again. The dogs decide they want in too as soon as they register both the women laying down. Khaleesi picks to lay on Christen’s empty half, directly on top of her stomach and head on Christen’s chest against Tobin’s shoulder. Morena chooses to nudge Christen’s legs apart slightly more and curls in between them, head rested atop Tobin’s calf.

Christen chuckles at the sight in front of her. “What, am I bed or something? Or do you guys just love me that much?”

Tobin’s heart nearly stops at her words. She’s sure that’s not what Christen meant. It’s just one of those slip ups that happens without thinking. But that’s the second time Christen has said something like that tonight.

Just love her that much.

Yeah, Tobin thinks, I think I can really love her that much at some point.

Tobin moves her hand over Khaleesi’s body and scratches lazily against her coat as she breathes heavily into Christen’s neck.

“Puppies make everything better,” Tobing whispers.

“They do, don’t they?” Christen scratches light fingertips along Tobin’s arm.

“Yeah,” she says a little louder, “You make everything better too.”

God, does Christen want to kick the dogs off of her just so she can hold Tobin a little tighter, a little closer. Just so she can kiss her until they both can’t breathe right. Instead, she rests her hand completely on Tobin’s bicep and kisses the crown of her head tenderly. She smiles against the skin as she realizes just how much Tobin is loving being babied in the moment. Christen almost wants to tease her for the contradiction, but she decides she’ll wait until Tobin is healthy again to lay it all on her.

They stay there until Christen needs to get up to check if the soup is ready.

“Chris, no,” she whines. “I’m so comfy and the puppies are sleeping.”

“I’m sorry, Tobs. I gotta make sure your apartment isn’t going to burn down. I promise we can go right back to this as soon as we finish eating.”

They both reluctantly let go of each other and the dogs huff and grunt in response to being woken up and moved. Christen slides out from under all three of them, detangling her limbs from their bodies as she gets up. The dogs immediately nestle themselves into Tobin’s sides and Christen smiles at the sight in front of her.
“All three of my girls all cuddled up,” she leans down to kiss the bridge of Tobin’s nose, then moves to kiss each of the dogs on the head the same, “my heart can’t take it.”

By the time Christen comes back, Tobin’s eyes are closed and the dogs are asleep again. She squats down next to Tobin’s face and runs a few fingers into her hair. “Baby, come eat.”

Tobin opens her eyes slowly and grins as soon as she sees Christen’s face and feels her fingers in her hair. “I don’t wanna move the doggies again,” she whispers.

Christen chuckles and says, “They’re fine. They sleep too much anyway,” as she stands up and grabs Tobin’s hands to pull her up.

“But the puppies,” Tobin pouts as her body is lifted and the dogs wake up.

“Look, they’re fine. They’ll probably go right back to sleep anyway. You need to eat.”

Tobin lets Christen pull her up and walk her over to the island where two bowls of steaming soup are already placed. The dogs don’t go back to sleep. They follow Tobin to her seat and lay at her feet.

“I like to think that dogs know when you need them. That’s probably why they’re following you around.” Christen offers her a shy smile from her seat next to her as if her words held more meaning than what she said.

Tobin smiles as she looks down to the ground and sees both dogs looking up at her. “Yeah. I’ve always thought that, too.” She looks back up to Christen’s eyes and there’s something in the air that neither of them can pinpoint, but they know it feels good. “Thanks for coming and for bringing them, Chris. I’m sorry for being stubborn. I get kinda whiny when I’m sick and it’s just not fun to deal with.”

“No fun? What do you mean? I’m having tons of fun,” Christen jokes with a wink. She and Tobin laugh for a second before Christen says, “You don’t have to thank me, Tobin. I want to be here.” They share a smile before both turning to their food.

“I would say this smells delicious but I can’t really smell right now,” she laughs and coughs. “What if it didn’t? What if it was so nasty? You’d just lie to me like that?” Christen knows she shouldn’t be teasing but it’s just too easy.

Tobin shoots her a semi-annoyed look as she blows on a spoonful of soup and then eats it. “Oh my god, Christen, what the heck?”

“What?! Is it really not good?” Christen’s head snaps left and eyes widen.

“Babe, no. Why didn’t you tell me you can cook? This is bomb.”

Christen’s face relaxes and she laughs softly. “I don’t know, it just never came up.”

Tobin puts a hand onto her thigh and squeezes it gently as she says, “You know, I think a girl who can cook is sexy.”

Christen has to suck her lips between her teeth to stop a laugh from escaping them.

“What?” Tobin’s eyebrows furrow and she pouts.

“You just- I know you were trying to flirt and all but, babe, you just sound so sick. I don’t think it came out like you meant it to.” Christen’s giggling and Tobin’s hand leaves her thigh as she frowns.
hard.

“You’re so mean. It’s not my fault.”

Christen is still laughing as she leans over to Tobin and cups one of her cheeks in her hand. “Aw, honey, I know,” she says in an overdramatic sympathetic tone. “Blame poor little Luke who got you sick.” She kisses her cheek softly and sits back into her seat.


Christen smiles and says, “I can’t wait to meet him.”

Tobin is slurping another spoonful of soup when Christen says it. She swallows it roughly, though it’s liquid and should slip right down. She clears her throat and wipes her mouth with a napkin. “Uhm, they actually kinda wanna meet you too. Amy and Lauren kept bugging me about it at brunch and have texted me a couple times since too. But, don’t worry, I told them it had only been a week,” she rambles the last part out quickly.

Christen has to take a moment before she says something to make sure she chooses her words carefully. “Do you, uh, do you want me to meet them?”

“What? Chris, of course I do. I told you, you’re important to me and they are too. I was so happy to be able to tell them about you.”

“Well I’m ready to meet them whenever you’re ready to have us meet.” Christen puts a spoonful of soup into her mouth so she has an excuse to not say anything else and not look at Tobin.

“Oh, uhm,” Tobin pauses and sniffs, “really?”

Christen nods and finally looks up to meet her eyes. “Yeah. I mean, it doesn’t have to be like tomorrow or this week or even next or anything. Just want you to know I’m really serious about us and I’m ready for that whenever you are, I guess.”

Tobin stand off her chair and hugs Christen as tight as her tired, aching bones allow. “You make me so happy, Christen Press,” she says against her hair. “Thank you for telling me that.” She pulls back to look at her. “And I know I said it already, but thank you for coming and doing all this. I already feel a little better having you here with me.”

Christen smiles at her fondly and pulls her in for a sweet kiss by her chin.

“Chris, you gotta stop kissing me. I have so many germs, you’re bound to catch something.”

“I don’t care,” she kisses Tobin again, a little firmer this time. “Get me sick. I don’t care.”

“You’re something else.” Tobin shakes her head, holding onto Christen’s shoulders and Christen’s arms tighten around her waist. She kisses her one last time and then says, “Okay, eat. I want you to get better and the soup will help.”

When they finish, they find their way back to the couch. The dogs curl up with them the same as earlier and Tobin is so utterly grateful for Christen. She tells her as much in the middle of Finding Nemo. Christen just smiles at her and gives her a sweet kiss on her forehead.

Around 11 pm, Tobin realizes it’s Thursday and tomorrow is a work day.

“Babe, I’m not trying to kick you out at all, but it’s getting late and you have work in the morning.
You don’t have to stay here for me. I’ll be okay.”

Christen looks down at her face and her ears go the slightest bit red. “Oh, um, I actually kind of brought my stuff with me to stay the night.” She pauses to see Tobin’s reaction but she doesn’t get much of one. “It’s fine, though. I can go home. I’m sorry I should have asked first. It’s not my place to just invite myself over like that-”

“Oh, um, I actually kind of brought my stuff with me to stay the night.” She pauses to see Tobin’s reaction but she doesn’t get much of one. “It’s fine, though. I can go home. I’m sorry I should have asked first. It’s not my place to just invite myself over like that-”

“Christen,” Tobin interrupts her. “You are such an angel, you know that?”

Christen’s face barely softens but there are still two creases between her eyebrows that Tobin wants gone.

“You don’t even know how much I appreciate you. I would want nothing more than for you to stay the night but you’ve done more than enough already.”

“I don’t mind.” Her ears and her cheeks go red this time. Tobin can barely tell with the lights off but the illumination of the TV screen against the girl’s face helps.

“Are you sure? You really don’t have to do so much for me, Chris.”

Christen shakes her head in response. “I told you I want to be here. I don’t just do all this for anyone, Tobin.”

“Okay,” Tobin smiles and sniffs, earning a soft grin from Christen. “What about the dogs? Will they be okay here for the night? You can leave them here when you go to work in the morning, I’m not going in tomorrow and I don’t mind. Oh, but I don’t have dog food.” Christen laughs at Tobin’s distress over the dogs.

“I may or may not have brought them food, just in case.” She’s shy all over again and Tobin smiles the widest she has all night.

“Sounds like you really planned on staying here tonight.”

“I did no such thing. I just like to be prepared.” She tries so hard to defend herself but the hint of a smile on her lips gives her away immediately.

“I should have asked first,” Tobin mocks with a smirk.

“I do not sound like that.”

“No, because you’re not nasally like me.”

“Exactly.”

“Thank you for staying. And for bringing me your puppies and your clothes. And for making me soup. And kissing me even when I’m like this. And holding me because I don’t feel well.”

“That was a whole lot of ‘and’s, Tobs.”

She shrugs. “You did a lot for me today. So thank you.”

Christen smiles and gives her a kiss. “I love doing things for you. Stop thanking me.”

“No, never. I want you to know how grateful I am for you and I’ll tell you as many times as I can.”

That gets Christen’s biggest smile of the day.
“Wanna go to bed? I have to be up early.”

“No, lay with me for a little bit longer. I wanna cuddle still.” Tobin pouts and buries her head into Christen’s chest, right under her chin.

“We can cuddle in bed, baby.”

“Uh, Chris, how are we supposed to cuddle in different beds?”

“I suppose that would be difficult, huh?” She feels Tobin nod under her chin and rubs small parentheses shapes on Tobin’s lower back with her thumb. “You think maybe being in the same bed would fix that?”

Tobin lifts her head up and confusion is written all over her face. “Chris?”

“Can I sleep with you in your bed tonight?”

“Are you sure?”

“Yeah,” she nods and brings a hand up to brush some of Tobin’s hair behind her ear. “I wanna hold you tonight. Make you feel better.”

“You are full of surprises tonight, Christen.” Maybe Tobin’s biggest smile wasn’t earlier. Maybe it was now.

“Do you like surprises?”

“I like these surprises.”

“Bed?”

“Bed.”

Christen is true to her word and holds Tobin through the entire night, through her coughing fits at 2 am, and through her nose blows at 4 am. When she wakes in the morning, she gives Tobin a gentle kiss on the back of her neck, climbs out of bed, makes a pot of coffee and some eggs, gets ready in Tobin’s bathroom, and leaves the girl with her dogs, a kiss on the forehead, and a “Bye, baby. I’ll be back later. Feel better.”

(And if Christen gets sick the next day, she doesn’t tell Tobin she wasn’t exactly up to date on her flu shots.)

Chapter End Notes

welp, there it is. I hope y’all liked it, especially after the wait. I always appreciate comments and kudos, so thanks!
big words, big feelings

Chapter Summary

a series of phone calls, some heavy emotions, and something special.

Chapter Notes

why hello. it's been a minute (more like many).

number one: I'd like to apologize for such long waits on updates but
number two: I'd like to thank everyone who's told me to focus on school and has been
so understanding

number three: I don't really have much else to say other than, here are 9470 words to
hopefully make up for the long wait and-

as always, enjoy and feel free to leave me comments or asks on my Tumblr @
chrvstenpress.tumblr.com !
Thanks for reading!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Why hello, my wonderful sister! Long time no talk!”

Christen smirks and rolls her eyes at Tyler’s words. “It hasn’t been that long, Ty. Calm down.”

“It’s been longer than normal! You hardly ever call me anymore.”

“I don’t call you on a schedule, Tyler,” Christen laughs.

“Sure you do,” her sister points out, “Usually you call me on Fridays on your way home from work
because ‘LA traffic on Fridays can kiss your-”

“Oh, I get it,” Christen interjects.

“And you call Chan on Mondays because you need some extra zen those days. She told me so. And
I’m just gonna assume you call Mom or Dad some other days of the week just because you have to
stay consistent with a schedule.”

Christen shakes her head, smiling to herself as she sits in Friday evening, bumper to bumper LA
traffic, just like Tyler had said. She would have called Tobin like she had been lately, but the woman
was out of town shooting some big project in New York she had been looking forward to for a while
and Christen knew she couldn’t talk (and she had to catch up with her older sister).

“And lately, you have not been keeping consistent with said schedule. So what’s going on, Miss
‘Can’t Live Right Unless I’m Living By My Planner’?”
“Really?” Christen laughs at her older sister’s teasing.

Tyler chuckles back. “Is it Channing? Are you calling her instead of me now? Do I have to fight her for my Friday spot back?”

Christen laughs at her sister’s antics for a moment, enjoying the laughs she missed the past few weeks on long phone calls on her way home.

“It’s not Channing, Tyler. You can calm down.”

“Is it Dad? I’ll fight him too if I hav-”

“Tyler,” Christen chastises her while laughing, though she knows her sister is joking.

“Kidding, kidding. So what’s up then, hm? What’s got you so busy you can’t call me?”

“Oh my god, I don’t call you every single Friday,” Christen mutters to herself as she tries to fight a smile no one can see. “Just busy, Tyler.”

“Mhmm. Just busy on your way home from work?”

“Yup.”

“Doing?”

“Driving,” Christen deadpans.

“Ah. Okay. I see.”

“And talking.”

“Ahh. Ooh-kaaay. I see,” Tyler drawls as if the words gave her a whole new folder of information. Christen giggles to herself as she knows what is about to come.

“Talking to whom?” Tyler adds when Christen doesn’t continue.

“Just whoever is in the stopped car next to me, you know.”

“Christen,” Tyler laughs in a whine.

“My gir- my friend,” she winces at how downplayed that statement is.

“Your gir- your friend,” Tyler repeats bluntly.

“Mhmm. Yup,” she squeaks, not wanting to call Tobin her ‘friend’ again.

“Would this gir- friend happen to be missing an L in that weird break you did there?”

“Nope.”

“Christen,”

“There’s no L missing there!”

“Don’t lie to me!”
“I’m not!”

“Why didn’t you tell me?!”

“Because she’s not my girlfriend,” Christen says a little dejectedly, breaking their near screaming match. Tyler can practically just see the way she slumps into her seat.

“I see. Does this gir- friend have a name?”

“Tobin,” Christen mutters.

“And why do you sound like you’re pouting when you say her name?”

“M’not,” Christen whines.

“Yeah, because you didn’t just sound like a very pouty 10 year old you trying to defend that you weren’t going to cry when Mom took your books before bed so you would actually sleep.”

“I was gaining knowledge! I don’t know what the issue was!”

“Yeah, okay, princess. So this gir- friend. Tobin, you said?”

“Stop calling her that,” Christen groans. She hears Tyler mumble something that sounds like ‘you said it, not me’ before she continues. “It’s new.”

“I need more, Chris.”

“Uhm. It’s like, just over a month new? But we’re already really, really close and kind of grossly obsessed with each other and trying to figure out our timing. And also not official.”

“What do you mean your timing? Is she like fresh out of a relationship or something?”

“No! No- we just- okay, do you have time?”

“However long you need me.”

Christen smiles softly at her sisters words before beginning to tell her the story of their first date and the type of details they learned about each other that night. She stops only for her sister’s small aw’s and other comments before she proceeds to recount their dates since then and their minor issues with trying to time things right.

“And here we are a little over a month later acting like we’ve been official since we met and still not having a label on us.”

“Do you think she’s like seeing someone else or something?”

“No!! God, no. She wouldn’t, trust me on that one.” She would tell Tyler about Tobin’s history, but 1. she still barely knows about it and 2. she feels like it’s not really her place.

“Okay, so what’s the issue? I’m not really following.”

“Nothing, I guess. Things are really good between us,” she pauses for a moment to gather her thoughts, “I’m not usually one to care for labels so much, but in situations just like this, I want nothing more than to call her my girlfriend when I tell someone about her, Ty. I mean, there’s no doubt that she’s my person, I just feel kind of funny talking about her when I can’t really call her my girlfriend and I-”
“Are the type of person who likes to be asked, not do the asking,” Tyler finishes for her. “And yes, I know it is not you abiding by societal roles of the female being the askee and not the asker because you are, in fact, dating another female.”

“Yeah…” Christen trails softly, not having much to say because Tyler said it all for her.

Tyler is silent for a moment before Christen hears muted chuckles in her car speakers.

“Tyler! Why are you laughing at me?!”

“I’m sorry!” Tyler breaks her silence. “It’s just- you’re like a little lovesick puppy waiting for their crush to ask them out.”

“Hey!”

“Okay, okay, I’m sorry…” Tyler calms herself. “Chris, why don’t you just forget your whole ‘I want to be asked’ shit for once if you really want her to be your girlfriend so bad?”

Christen grumbles on her end of the call at the proposition.

“Just saying,” Tyler sing-songs.

“Whatever,” Christen groans once more as she pulls into her driveway. “I’m just getting home and the office sent me home with leftovers from the lunch they gave us today-”

“And you don’t have hands to hold the phone. Whatever.”

“You read my mind.”

“Uh huh. Give the girls hugs and kisses from me and tell your gir- friend your favorite sister wants to meet her soon.”

“Hanging up now.”

“Bye, Christen! Oh, also tell Tobin I’m gonna kick her ass for taking my Friday calls with you!”

“Goodbye!”

As much as Christen wants to, she can’t quite push her sister’s suggestion out of her mind for the rest of the night. It isn’t until she’s laying on her couch, cuddled with the dogs and a blanket now that it’s colder in Los Angeles, on the phone with Tobin of all people that she’s able to partially forget it for a few moments.

“So how was your Friday drive home without me sweet talking you the whole way?” Tobin asks smugly after they share a few laughs about Tobin eating shit during her last pickup game.

“Ass,” Christen mutters. “We have actual valuable conversations during those calls.”

“I know, babe. I was just kidding,” Tobin laughs at Christen’s defensiveness.

“Uh huh. It was fine, thank you very much. I called my sister, actually.”

“Oh really? Which one?”

“Tyler.”
“That’s the older one, right?”

“Correct,” Christen affirms though she knows Tobin didn’t need to ask to know. She talked about her siblings enough for her to have caught on by now. “Actually… a certain someone may or may not have come up in conversation.”

“Who? Kelley?”

“You’re a dork,” Christen giggles at Tobin’s pretense.

“Did you tell her I’m the most amazing and I treat you very, very well?” Tobin hums as she keeps up her playful act.

“Something like that,” Christen admits quietly with a dreamy grin on her lips even though Tobin was being cheeky.

Tobin grinned back at the sound of Christen’s voice. “So we’re onto telling family members, huh?”

“Guess so,” Christen bites her lip.

“You know, that’s quite the step in my book,” Tobin says softly.

“Yeah? Is that a step you’re okay to take right now?”

“Of course. Why wouldn’t it be?”

*Because we aren’t officially together.* “Just making sure.”

“Yeah, I mean, Amy and Cheney know and they’re basically my family here since my family is on the other side of the country.”

“I know, but that’s kind of different,” Christen points out. “Not to say that they aren’t your family,” she follows quickly, “I know how much they mean to you. Sorry, I didn’t mean it like that–”

She stops when she hears Tobin’s breathy chuckles on the other line of the call. “Babe, you’re fine. I know what you meant.”

Christen lets out a small breath at the consolation.

“You’re right, though. It is different. As much as Lauren and Amy mean to me, it’s not the same as telling Perry or Katy or even Jeff,” she chuckles, “It sounds kind of silly but it feels more significant telling blood relatives.”

“Not silly,” Christen inputs. “It does. Kelley is like my Amy or Lauren, and I know she’s the one who set us up so I didn’t really have to tell her anything, but it still feels different now that Tyler knows as opposed to how it felt when only Kelley knew.”

Neither of the women feel like they’re doing their feelings justice with words in the moment, but somehow, they both understand each other completely. It feels like a step. A small but significant step. Family to both of them is everything, and now that a family member knows, it in some way makes them feel closer and all that much more committed, though there were no doubts before.

“Yeah. I know what you mean,” Tobin speaks gently, processing it for herself at the same time.

“Yeah? You can read my mind or what?” Christen teases.
“Duh.”

“Oh really?” she laughs at Tobin’s declaration, “What am I thinking right now then?”

Tobin scoffs playfully. “Ps. Easy.” Christen can just imagine the way Tobin’s chin moves outward as her neck extends slightly as if to exaggerate her drawl.

“Okay then, wisecracker. Go ahead,” she challenges.

Christen hears Tobin laugh loudly before she’s saying, “Wisecracker? Who are you?” She sounds genuinely amused by Christen’s word choice as she mutters, “I’m dating a nerd.”

“Hey!” Christen exclaims. “I’m a proud nerd!”

It makes Tobin laugh just a little bit more at how cute that statement was. “I know, baby. I’m proud of you and you’re nerdiness too. I love that about you.”

Two things make Christen’s heart jump in that statement:

1. Tobin is proud of her.
2. Tobin loves something about her.

She almost comments on it, but settles for a soft, “You’re proud of me?” instead.

“Of course I am, Christen. You’re so good at what you do and all your colleagues seem to absolutely love you. Aside from that, you’re just an amazing human and you care so much about everything and it’s really admirable, babe. You’re so compassionate and it’s so easy to lose care for others nowadays but you don’t. You’re a good person and that’s something to be so proud of.”

Christen swears her heart melts at how sweet Tobin is saying those words. It’s nothing she hasn’t said before but her throat still tightens and she feels like she can’t breathe right, but it’s all for good reason. “You’re gonna make me cry,” she says through a watery chuckle.

“Chris, don’t cry!” Tobin laughs along.

“Don’t make me then!” She exclaims in defense. “You never answered what was I was thinking in the moment, by the way.”

“Ahh, right. Hmm. I say you were thinking that you miss me a lot and you wanna give me lots of hugs and kisses right now because puppy kisses don’t compare.”

Christen lets out a loud laugh and another “Hey!” at Tobin’s guess. “Puppy kisses are the best!”

“Better than mine?”

Christen contemplates saying yes, but she figures they’ve done enough teasing for the night. “No, not better than yours,” she concedes, earning a satisfied hum from Tobin. “But they come pretty damn close.”

“I’ll take that. So I was right then?”

“Yeah,” Christen whispers, “I really miss you. And your hugs and kisses.”

“Soon, baby. I’ll be home tomorrow and you can have all that then.” Tobin smiles into the phone.

“I’ll be waiting at the airport for you and ready for it,” Christen replies.
Tobin laughs before she says she should go and they’re saying their goodbyes.

“Hey!” Tobin calls just before Christen pulls the phone from her ear. “I miss you more.”

///

“Hi, Toby!” Tobin hears a small voice trying to beat the loud volume of a driving vehicle.

“Baby J! What’s up, sweet girl!”

“Mommy said say hi to you,” the little girl responds eliciting a chuckle from both Tobin and Lauren.

“Hi, T. What’s up?” Lauren finally speaks.

“I’m just waiting to board my flight. It got delayed and I’m stuck here for a little while.”

“And you called me instead of your girlfriend?”

“Uhm,” Tobin pauses, “You see, that may or may not be why I’m calling.”

“Tobin.” Tobin knows Lauren knows exactly what this call is about.

“I know, I know! Don’t yell at me!” Tobin says quickly at Lauren’s tone.

“I’m not yelling,” Lauren laughs. “What’s going on? What happened?”

“I can’t do it, Cheney. I’ve probably tried to ask her at least five times now and I just sike myself out every single time. It feels overdue at this point but I get so nervous and I just can’t say anything. And then I just shut myself up so that I won’t fu- mess up even more,”

“Good save,” Lauren interjects.

“Thanks,” Tobin lets out a breath, “I don’t know. I want to do it. So bad, Lauren, you don’t even know.”

“Oh, I know,” Lauren chuckles.

“Yeah, yeah. I’m being serious. I don’t know what’s wrong with me.”

“Okay, don’t go there. No self-destructing. Nothing is wrong with you, babe. You’re just nervous because you care and you want it to go well.”

“I don’t ever have issues talking to her, though! I feel like I can literally tell her anything and be fine afterwards. I don’t know why I can’t just ask her to be my girlfriend and have it be as simple as anything else.”

“Maybe because it’s not that simple?”

Tobin goes quiet for a few seconds at Lauren’s words before she’s asking, “What do you mean?”

“You tell me.”

“I can’t believe I’m having this conversation in an airport right now,” Tobin sighs.
“You called me, remember?”

“Yeah, I did.” Tobin smiles to herself. “Thanks for picking up.”

“Always, Tobs. So tell me; what’s so not simple about it, hm?”

“I don’t know. I guess it just feels like so much more than asking her to be my girlfriend for some reason. Like it’s literally just putting a label on it because she basically already is my girlfriend, but I don’t know. It means more than that to me. It’s more than just the label.”

“Why do you think it means more than just the label?”

“Because we took our time,” she answers without hesitation.

It clicks.

Lauren is silent while she waits for Tobin to continue, as if she knows what just connected in Tobin’s head.

“Because we took our time, even if things felt like they were moving fast at the beginning, we didn’t rush into anything more than just telling each other how we felt. I could’ve asked her out of impulse a couple weeks in, but I didn’t. I rushed with my last relationship, and I’m not going to rush anything in this one.”

“Sounds to me like you’ve got it figured out, babe.”

“You’re like a magical therapist or something, Cheney. Seriously, what the heck?” Tobin laughs as she feels a weight lift off her chest.

“It’s a superpower. Hear that, baby? Toby says I have magic,” Lauren says to JT.

Both adults laugh as the little girl tries to ask her mom to show her.

“Thank you, Cheney. Seriously.”

“I’ll say you’re welcome when you call me to tell me you have a girlfriend.”

Tobin laughs and says goodbye to both Lauren and JT before hanging up and gathering her stuff to board her flight. In line, she opens her messages and sends one to Christen before she boards.

tobs: boarding now, baby. I’m finally coming home. I’ll see you soon, pretty girl<3

chris: Finally! I can’t wait to see you, gorgeous! Have a safe flight and come home to me<3

Tobin sees the message just before she reaches the front of the line, smiling to herself and reacting to it with a heart before locking her phone and handing her ticket over.

“Have a good flight and safe travels,” the lady says to her as she hands her ticket back.

“Thanks, you too,” Tobin smiles back before walking off.

She doesn’t realize she’s wished the worker a safe flight until she’s sat in her seat just before takeoff and she laughs at herself, shaking her head. It earns an odd glance from her seat neighbor, but she can’t bring herself to care when she’s feeling this happy.
Tobin has never felt as elated to travel back to LA as she has in this moment. As much as the city has become a home for her, New Jersey was always where her heart was. Leaving to go back to the West Coast always felt like leaving a piece of her on the other side of the country when she would go home, and coming back from business trips didn’t feel much different.

Now though, she feels like she’s finally coming back to a piece of her heart.

As soon as she sees Christen in one of her hoodies and a pair of leggings holding a sign that says “My Gorgeous”, her heart beats as fast as when she’s just finished a pick-up game, but for an entirely different reason.

The moment Christen sees her, her eyes brighten and she holds the sign up a little higher with a wide smile as she starts taking steps to meet Tobin.

“I’m here to pick up my gorgeous girl. Have you seen her?”

“I’m sorry, I’m not sure I have. Do you know her name?” Tobin plays along as they get closer.

Christen doesn’t respond. She’s close enough to Tobin now to wrap her arms around her and bury her face into her neck. They hug tightly for a few moments, relishing in each other’s embrace before Christen pulls her face from Tobin’s neck and kisses her lips chastely because they’re still in the airport.

“Nevermind. I found her.”

Tobin giggles against Christen’s lips before pecking them once and giving her another hug.

“I’m so happy to see you,” Tobin says into the fabric of her own hoodie. “When did you take this?” She laughs, tugging at the hem of the sweatshirt.

Christen shrugs, wrapping one arm tighter around Tobin’s neck and bringing her lips to the woman’s ear. “I don’t know but I really want to kiss you hard right now so can we get a move on?”

Tobin wordlessly drags Christen by the hand in the direction of the parking lot, earning a giggle and a lip bite from her.

“I missed you so much,” Christen mutters between kisses in a dark car in an LAX parking garage. “I’m not letting you go on another work trip that long again.”

Tobin laughs against her lips, pulling back and holding Christen’s face in one of her hands. “Babe, it wasn’t even a week. We hardly even see each other during the week when I’m home.”

“I know, but knowing you’re even farther away from me makes it worse!”

Tobin kisses her gently to make up for their time apart. “I know. I felt the same.”

“But you’re home now and we have a lot of making up to do,” Christen whispers with a smile before leaning in to kiss her again.

“You mean making out to do?” Tobin asks quickly before lips are on hers again.

Christen pays no mind to Tobin’s 12-year-old boy joke, too caught up in tasting the lips she missed
“Chris, you’re gonna have to pay up the ass for parking if we don’t get out of here soon,” Tobin points out as she reluctantly pulls away from Christen’s eager lips.

“I don’t care. If kisses come with a price, I’ll pay it.” She chases after Tobin again but fails.

“Okay, Romeo. No need to woo me now,” Tobin teases. “What I do need is food and more hugs so drive, baby. We can kiss more later, I promise.” Tobin gives her one last deep kiss before sitting back in her seat and grinning.

Christen ends up making it out of the garage just before she has to pay the next amount up for time parked, earning a softly sung “you’re welcome” from Tobin.

“How was your trip? Did your pictures come out like you wanted them to?” Christen asks once they’ve made it out of the messy maze of LAX roads.

“Better than I hoped for,” Tobin says with a content sigh. “I was kinda worried at first because this is one of the biggest projects I’ve ever done and I didn’t want to screw it up but it all went really well after a few small bumps in the road.”

“Tell me,” Christen urges, eager to hear all the details.

“Well with a company as big as this one, I had to make sure my team and I were all super professional but they never let me down so that wasn’t hard. It rained on us the first day in the morning out of nowhere so we had to cover up the equipment and move it out of the way until it passed over but after that, it was smooth sailing. The models were great. The stylists were great. My team was amazing. I hadn’t had that much fun on a shoot in a while so it was refreshing in a way.”

“I’m glad, babe,” Christen squeezes the hand she’d been holding and offers a quick smile. “Can I see the pictures later?”

“Nope,” Tobin shakes her head. “No way. This isn’t freelance or a simple shoot. Pictures aren’t for sharing until the company decides so.”

Christen’s jaw drops slightly. “Oh, come on! I’m your-” she stops, clearing her throat awkwardly. “It’s just me. What am I gonna do? Run and tell the world that Tobin Heath is the best photographer ever? What a crime!”

As hard as Christen tries to cover her slip up, Tobin still catches on. It makes her nervous all over again, but she thinks about Lauren’s words from earlier to calm her down.

“Sorry, babe. No can do. If I could show them, you’d be the first person I’d go to.”

Christen pouts and slumps her shoulders for dramatic effect, but she understands Tobin’s work commitments completely and she eventually smiles at the fact that she’s Tobin’s go to person.

They decide on picking up Chinese on the way back to Tobin’s because the girl is desperate for clean clothes, a shower, Christen, and her couch.

“Oh, you never told me if you got to meet up with any of your family while you were in New York,” Christen says before taking a large bite of lo mein from her paper container.

“No,” Tobin mutters through a stuffed mouth. “They were all pretty busy with work and so was I and our schedules never aligned well enough to meet up. Especially with the commute and all.”
Christen’s heart clenches at the minor detectable sadness in Tobin’s voice. She rests a comforting hand and Tobin’s ankle, squeezing softly and smiling sympathetically.

“It’s okay, though. I’m sure I’ll get to see them when the holidays come around. It’s not too far away.”

“Yes,” Christen offers a close-lipped smile, trying to not think about the fact that Tobin would likely be gone for not only the holidays, but her birthday.

“Are you gonna stay the night?” Tobin asks hopefully, more than eager to spend more time with Christen. She had only stayed over maybe twice since Tobin got sick, not wanting to make a habit of staying over all the time, especially so early on.

“I don’t think I can today,” Christen responds apologetically, “Kel said something about going out with some of her teammates tonight and not coming back so the dogs are alone and I need to go back to them.”

Tobin almost proposes going to stay at Christen’s for the night instead, but she doesn’t want to seem needy. “Okay,” she smiles, “Another time. And as long as I still get to see you tomorrow. I still need my Christen fix.”

“Of course, love,” Christen moves in to kiss her sweetly, “Maybe I can come back here tomorrow night after our date and just go to work from here Monday morning?”

“I’d love that. Can you stay for a movie right now too, or do you need to head home?”

Christen shakes her head no, kissing Tobin one more time before settling into her arms on the couch. “I have some time.”

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Tobin Heath doesn’t get nervous. She’s always, as she puts it, chill. Or at least she tries to be.

But Christen Press is a woman of wonder.

She makes Tobin forget her own name. She makes her heart race for reasons Tobin would usually never be affected by. Makes her forget how to speak, and sometimes, makes her too overwhelmed to even if she remembers how.

“Are you okay, honey?”

It’s that. It’s that right there. She has no idea why, but when Christen reaches for her hand over the dinner table, squeezes it as soon as she gets hold of it, presses her thumb into the very center of her palm and the knuckle of her index finger into the webbing between her pointer finger and thumb because she knows it helps with nerves, gives her those soft eyes - that’s it.

It leaves her nearly inert. Tobin can’t really lie well either, and Christen knows the answers to most questions before she even asks them.

“Yeah,” she forces out, “Why do you ask?”

She shouldn’t ask that. She knows Christen will give her the precise, ‘You’re especially quiet, your
hands are a little bit clammy than usual, you aren’t whistling quietly like you always do, you’re biting your lip instead.’

It’s a marvel how Christen has picked up on Tobin’s habits so quickly and isn’t afraid to point out when Tobin seems unable to fit her normal disposition. But she doesn’t say any of that this time.

Instead she says, “Just making sure,” just like she did when she asked if Tobin was okay with telling family members about each other a few days prior.

“All good, babe. What are you thinking of getting?”

Christen lets go of her hand to hold the menu properly. “I’m not sure. I was thinking either the short ribs or the truffle mac and cheese.” She looks up over her menu at Tobin with a little pout. “I can’t decide.”

Tobin chuckles, instantly feeling less anxious because she isn’t left in silence to think to herself. “Chris, those are two very different plates.”

“I know, that’s why I can’t decide!”

“Well, what are you in the mood for?”

“I thought I wanted some kind of meat today, but then I saw the picture of the truffle mac and cheese and it made me really want it, but I keep going back and forth and I can’t make up my mind.”

Tobin grins, opening her own menu to look through quickly again. “You wanna get both and we can share?”

“No, it’s okay. Get whatever you want, love.”

“I didn’t know what I wanted anyway,” she hadn’t really paid much mind when initially reading the menu, “And you’re right. Both of those sound good.”

Christen gives her a wide, close-lipped grin with a wrinkled nose before she winks and says, “You’re so good to me, baby.”

Tobin smiles back coyly just before their waiter comes and takes their orders, leaving them in silence once again.

“How are Lauren and Amy and their families?” Christen had spoken to both of them on the phone very briefly once when Tobin had her on bluetooth speaker after a pickup game with both of the other women in her car. They made Christen promise to come around soon, claiming that Tobin was hiding her from them.

“They’re good. Amy said something about Ryan getting student of the month or something like that at school so she invited me to the ceremony the school has for them if I can make it.”

“Aw, that’s so cute!” Christen gushes. She had only so much as seen a couple of pictures of Lauren and Amy’s kids that Tobin had in her photo library on her computer, but she adored how close Tobin seemed to be to them.

“Yeah,” Tobin laughed, “I talked to him just after she told me and he was like, ‘Toby! I hafta wear my bowtie you got me! I’m the best student of the whole month!’ I think they just rotate the kids around so they all get a chance but it was cute.”
“You got him a bowtie?” Christen drawls in an awing sound.

“Yeah,” Tobin grins, still chuckling at Ryan’s obsession with it. “It’s literally just a blue bowtie with those really small white polka dots but he’s hooked on it. I gave it to him to wear to church one weekend and he wears it every Sunday now.” Christen rests her chin on her hand, smiling fondly while listening to the story. “ARod actually kinda hates it. She tried to get him a striped one but he won’t wear it.”

Christen giggles and her heart warms thinking about Tobin with kids. From everything she’s heard so far, kids love her and she seems to be so good with them.

“Oh, I told her Luke got me sick and she went all mama bear on me saying I didn’t even see him so there was no way and I just need to learn to take better care of myself,” Tobin mentions as she starts cracking up, earning an eye roll and a smirk from Christen.

“You do,” Christen agrees with a small nod and raised eyebrows.

“Says the one who lied and said she had her flu shot just so she could get kisses.”

Christen’s jaw drops and eyes widen as she laughs in a scoff. “Excuse me, who took care of your ass when you were sick? You may have said you didn’t like to be coddled when you’re sick but, I don’t know, Tobin, you sure seemed to like me babying you.”

“Hey, you offered,” Tobin points out. “Actually, you kinda demanded.”

Christen rolls her eyes once more, muttering a “whatever,” and leaning back into her chair.

“Lauren is good, too. I talked to her and Baby J on the phone just before I boarded my flight yesterday actually.”

“Oh really?”

Tobin hums in affirmation.

“Didn’t she think you were in the air flying or something?” Christen chuckles in question.

“Oh, I told her my flight got delayed.”

Christen nods in understanding, but on the inside, she’s feeling slightly guilty for not calling or texting Tobin to keep her company while she waited for her plane.

They fall into another silence, only quietly saying their thanks when the waiter comes to replace their bread and water.

It’s unusual. They’ve never been in the position where they feel they need to be careful with their words or one of them might slip up or spill. Christen’s eyes dart around the room as Tobin’s stare at her.

She thinks now might be the right time to ask the question she’s been dying to, but then Christen is turning her head back to face her with those bright green eyes of hers, saying, “Can I ask you something?”


“Why don’t you really talk about your last relationship all that much? With me, at least.”
“I- I uhm, I don’t want to put that on you or bring up the irrelevant past. It’s done and old news and I’m over it. It doesn’t matter anymore and it’s not really something you bring up regularly to a new significant other,” Tobin responds rather dryly.

“I’m not saying regularly. I just mean at all, babe. You were pretty open about telling me on the first date and then after that I kinda never really heard anything.” Christen is so gentle about it. She doesn’t want to come off as intimidating, knowing that cheating is a very sensitive topic to many people.

“I don’t mean to like hide it from you or anything. I just-” she pauses, taking a deep sigh and looking around the restaurant quickly, “I don’t really know that this is a conversation for now, Chris.”

“If you’re not ready to talk about it, Tobin, that’s fine. I didn’t mean to seem accusing of you not wanting to discuss it, with me or anyone for that matter. I was just curious. It’s okay.”

Tobin is silent as the waiter comes to put their plates down in front of them.

As soon as he leaves with a polite smile and wishes of a good dinner, Tobin looks back up to Christen’s expectant eyes.

“You’re right. I don’t like to talk about it. It’s not exactly the most pleasant story to retell or think about. But I promised to be open with you, and there’s no reason to not talk about it.”

“Tobin, you don’t hav-”

“No, not now. Later,” Tobin cuts her off, wanting to assure her that she was willing to share. “I promise, I’m okay to talk about it. Can we just… I just really missed you this week and I want to have a good dinner with you tonight. Please?”

Christen’s eyes soften and she reaches for Tobin’s hand once more. She gives it a brief squeeze before she grabs one of the spare plates the server left, putting a few short ribs on it and passing it to Tobin. “I hope you’re planning on sharing, Tobs. You know how I love truffle.”

Tobin cracks a smile and moves to serve Christen half of the mac and cheese on her plate, thankful that their entire dinner wasn’t tainted by heavy emotions that weren’t as pleasant as she hoped for.

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“Okay, I can’t walk anymore in these heels and with a full stomach. And it’s dark and kinda sketchy now so we probably shouldn’t go any further.”

Tobin laughs at Christen’s dramatics. They were in a park down the street from the restaurant they’d gone to and there was absolutely no one in sight except for a few kids playing kickball on the dimly lit grass.

“You think those kids are sketchy? They’re just playing a game and it’s not even that dark.”

“No,” Christen concedes with a giggle, “I just don’t want to walk anymore.” She pulls Tobin onto a few large rocks near the playground to sit on until she regains her energy to walk back to the car.
Christen sits down first, pulling Tobin down to the side of her and wrapping an arm around her waist, pulling her closer.

“I’m so happy you’re back,” she rests her cheek on the top of Tobin’s head that’s laid on her shoulder, “I don’t want to be clingy but a week felt like a long time without you.”

“I was thinking the same,” Tobin hums. “Babe, you could be barefoot and I wouldn’t care. You don’t have to put on heels when we go out,” Tobin says as she sees Christen wiggling her feet around in attempts to stretch them out.

“What if I just like being taller than you, hm?”

“Rude,” Tobin mutters, withdrawing her hand from its place where it had been laying on Christen thigh.

Christen giggles, “Oh wait, I’m always taller than you.”

When Tobin groans, “By an inch!” and tries to pull out of Christen’s hold, the woman doesn’t let her. Christen tugs her back in quickly, not letting more than a few inches separate them before they’re touching again.

Tobin gives up right away, going straight back to her position on Christen’s shoulder and leaning in a little heavier. Christen puts her cheek back on Tobin’s head, turning slightly to press a kiss there and quietly say, “I say it’s probably two inches but I’ll let you say one cause you’re cute.”

Tobin shoves her legs with her own before they settle down finally. “You wanna talk now or later?”

Christen wraps her arm around Tobin a little tighter and moves her mouth closer to her ear. “Honey, you don’t have to. I’m sorry I prodded. It’s not my place. You should tell me when you’re ready, if you’re ready.”

Tobin sits up fully to see Christen’s face, shaking her head softly. “It is kind of your business, though. If you have concerns—”

“I don’t.”

Tobin gives her a gentle smile before she continues. “If you have any questions, they shouldn’t go unanswered.”

Christen contemplates it for a moment. She would like to know that side of Tobin because, from what it seems, it affected her greatly. But at the same time, she should have come on a little easier when bringing it up.

“I’m gonna let you decide. Just know, I only want you to talk about it if you want to. I know you said it wasn’t easy for you.”

“Thank you,” Tobin whispers, “I appreciate it.”

It takes her a few long, heavy moments before she speaks up.

“Her name was Henley. I met her back home. She, uh, she was actually a client. I was doing some freelance at the time, trying to figure out what direction I wanted my work to head in and all that and she booked me for her grad school pictures. I guess we kind of just hit it off right away and next thing I knew I was asking her to go grab lunch with me after. I for some reason couldn’t get my mind off of her after that lunch and since I had her number from the shoot, I reached out and asked her if
she wanted to meet up again a few weeks later. She said she’d been wanting to reach out too, but she
didn’t want to be creepy and text her graduation shoot photographer.

“Anyway, we ended up going out and got together a couple weeks later. It was all really fast.
Looking back at it now, I think it was all infatuation. And I don’t just say that because I want to
make it seem like I didn’t actually care for her so that I won’t be as hurt. I did end up actually loving
her at one point, which was why I was ready to propose, but I don’t think it started out that way.”

“What do you mean?” Christen asks gently, resting her chin on Tobin’s shoulder and rubbing her
upper arm soothingly.

“I just think at the beginning it was just nice to like have someone there, you know? She was a pretty
girl and she pretended that my dumb jokes were funny and she was just there. I don’t think I really
went into it really, really liking her. I just thought she was cool and then we just slipped into
everything so fast, I didn’t really get to know her until we were further into our relationship. But
when I did get to know her, it all seemed to go even faster. At that point, it was starting to feel real. I
was happy and we were just going for it.

“My family brought it up to me a few times as it was happening. They basically said I needed to
slow down and get to really, actually know her before I went around saying I was in love with her. It
kinda sucked. You think you’re happy and then your family, the people who you care most about,
tell you to reconsider some things. And it wasn’t even that they didn’t like her. They did, they just
didn’t want me to be so casual about something so serious. So I took their advice, for the most part. I
was sure that I liked her, loved her even, but then at some point it seemed to kind of be a standstill.
We knew we loved each other, we were living together eventually, but nothing was really
progressing. I didn’t realize it until after the fact, actually. I thought that because I loved her, I was in
love with her. It was comfortable and nice and she was still just there.”

Tobin stops and takes a deep breath.

“Tobin you don’t have to—”

“Christen, I promise you, it’s okay. I wouldn’t be telling you if I really didn’t feel comfortable.”

Christen nods softly, squeezing her forearm.

“I think when I bought the ring, I went back to that place that my family told kinda warned me about.
I loved her, and I’m not quite sure at what point I fell out of love with her, but I loved her and I
thought that was enough to ask her to marry me.” She bites her lip, knowing she’s getting to the hard
part. “And then she started getting distant, and something told me to just hold off. She always had
excuses of why she wasn’t home or why she was too busy to go on dates anymore or even just hang
out with me. And then one night she didn’t come home at all and I called her out on it. She said she
fell asleep at her friend’s place after a night out. I left it alone because I was stupid about it but then it
kept happening and eventually it just came out. She was in our room and I walked in to give her
breakfast because she was actually home that morning and I wanted to do something nice for us. I
had the plates in my hands and I could tell she was on the phone so I stopped in the hallway. And
then she said something about doing her best to get away later on that day and she called whoever it
was ‘baby’ and said she loved them too before she hung up.”

Christen’s heart breaks at the way Tobin’s voice goes rough and then suddenly stops all over again
and she won’t pick her head up or stop twiddling her fingers.

“I felt stupid but at the same time it just all made sense. I told her we were done as soon as I stepped
into the doorway and she tried to follow me to the kitchen and out the door. She tried to tell me she
loved me and I was the only one she wanted. I wasn’t sure if it hurt more that she cheated or that she thought I was stupid enough to believe that. But I guess I was stupid enough to let it go on and not acknowledge it for what it was—”

“Hey, no. Tobin, that’s not your fault. Don’t blame yourself for what she did,” Christen cuts in.

“I know it wasn’t my fault but it makes you feel shitty, you know? Everything just clicks and you can’t wrap your mind around the fact that you knew but you didn’t all at the same time. And when you finally do know for sure, it makes you actually feel stupid. That may be the most fucked up part of it all. You’re not the one who’s unfaithful but it feels like you’ve done something wrong. You question if you tried enough. You question what you did to drive them away; drive them to someone else. You question why they stayed and pretended if they cared about you, and then you question if they even did care about you.

“I guess I never really talked about it because we were moving so fast at the beginning too, it scared the shit out of me. But the difference was that this time I felt like I actually knew you, or at least a part of you. I wasn’t just going after you because you were pretty and charming and there. You were so much more than just there, Christen, it’s crazy. I don’t even think that makes sense but I feel like a lot of this never does; it’s just right.”

Christen places a gentle kiss to Tobin’s shoulder, whispering, “I know what you mean,” against the clothing.

“I saw her a few months after that, just before I moved out here. We kind of just ran into each other while out running errands and she convinced me to talk to her. She apologized and said she felt bad for what she did, but she wasn’t trying to get me back. She gave me almost all the right words that you’d think you’d want to hear after something like that, but it turns out nothing really ever is the right thing to say. She let me ask her whatever I wanted to, and at first I thought it was better to know less than more, but I’m glad I did ask her what I did. Turned out, she’d been cheating for more than a few months with someone she’d reconnected with from school. Said she couldn’t really tell me why she stayed, but she admitted it wasn’t right. I asked her what I could’ve done to have made her happier. She gave me something along the lines of ‘it wasn’t you, it was me’ but I think I knew I had given her all of me and that was enough to not question it any further.”

“Did it help you get closure?” Christen questions quietly.

“At first it didn’t. I kinda just went home and sulked some more after that, but then I moved out here and started seeing a therapist and was able to get past it. It was kind of weird. I wasn’t sure if moving across the country and away from my family was the smartest idea while being in such a vulnerable time but it all worked out better than I could ever imagine,” Tobin says as she turns her head to look at Christen with a small smile, only partially talking about her healing process.

“I’m glad you went to see someone. That’s a healthy choice.”

“Yeah, me too,” she admits, “It helped with more than just putting me back together. I was able to look at love and relationships differently and expect different things out of them than I did before, from both myself and a partner.”

“And what do you expect of them now?” Christen asks relatively timidly.

Tobin smiles gently at Christen’s slight reservation, leaning up to kiss her on the forehead. “Everything you’ve already been giving me,” she whispers.

“Tobin, I’m being serious.” Christen’s voice is steadier and firmer than it was before.
“I know you are,” she connects her forehead to Christen’s, “I am too,” She whispers and places a kiss to the corner of Christen’s mouth before pulling back.

“You’ve given me everything I could ask for. I want respect and loyalty and appreciation and to feel cared for but still allowed to be an individual. Babe, you’ve given me all of that and more. Unless you have something to tell me about the loyalty thing, but please don’t put me through that again.”

She tries to make a joke out of it, but Christen can hear the away her voice strains in her throat and notices the way her eyes flutter closed and her chest caves in like she can’t bear the thought of having to go through it all over again.

“You’re the only one I want, baby. You’re so much more than I ever thought I wanted. I promise, you are my only one.” She punctuates her statement with a lingering kiss to Tobin’s cheek.

“God, I’m so thankful for this right here.”

The way her eyes are clenched closed and her eyebrows are furrowed and she speaks it in an almost-whisper makes Christen think that she was actually speaking to God Himself.

She moves her mouth closer to Tobin’s ear, resting her lips on the shell of it. “Be mine.”

The two words make Tobin’s eyes open and head turn to face her. “Chris, I am yours-”

“Be mine. Be my girlfriend.”

The creases between Tobin’s eyebrows disappear once the words are spoken and she’s quite for a few seconds before a grin crosses her mouth and she’s chuckling breathily.

“What- Why are you laughing?” Christen stutters in question.

Tobin looks away as she shakes her head, biting her lip to stop her laughs before she turns back to Christen’s worried face.

“I’ve been trying to ask you that same question for a few weeks now, Chris. You beat me to it.”

Christen blinks harshly in confusion until her face softens in realization. “You have?”

“Yeah,” Tobin laughs. “Every time I wanted to ask you I either got too nervous for my own good or something came up before I could even speak. But, babe, I’ve been wanting to.”

“So does that mean yes?” Christen asks with a smile beginning to spread across her lips.

“What do you think?” Tobin laughs as turns her body entirely to grab the back of Christen’s neck and pull her in for a deep kiss.

“You make me feel respected and cared for and appreciated, too,” Christen speaks between kisses.

“Good,” Tobin says firmly before kissing her again quickly, “I want nothing more than to make you feel all of those things.”

“You do.” The words get muffled by Tobin’s lips on hers, but she can’t be bothered by it.

“Why are we still talking?” Tobin whispers into Christen’s mouth before kissing her feverishly again.

“Because you’re my girlfriend.”
She kisses across Christen’s jawline, down her neck, and to her shoulder while cradling the side of her face in one hand.

“I’m so enraptured by you,” Tobin says against her lips once she’s found them again.

“That’s a big word, babe,” Christen giggles.

“Big word to match my feelings for you,” she cheeses.

“Who’s Romeo now?” Christen references the night before.

“As long as we both make it out alive, I’ll be whoever.”

They both giggle with their foreheads connected before Tobin is standing up and pulling Christen with her. “C’mon. I’m taking my girlfriend home.”

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They all but stumble into Tobin’s apartment, lips connected, hands holding necks and waists.

“Put my bag down,” Christen breathes out.

“Yes, dear.”

Tobin drops Christen’s overnight bag on the ground and attaches her now free hand to the small of Christen’s back, holding her steady as she guides them to the couch.

She lays her down slowly, not breaking their kiss for more than a second as she settles herself on top of her.

Frenzied kisses turn unhurried at some point as hands stop roaming and heartbeats stabilize.

“You make me so happy,” Tobin whispers as she pushes a strand of hair behind Christen’s ear.

“I’m so lucky to have found you,” Christen replies quietly.

“Kelley found me for you,” Tobin smirks.

“Shut up,” Christen laughs and pushes Tobin by the ribs into the side of the couch, chasing her lips again as she does. “Way to ruin the moment.”

“The moment doesn’t seem ruined to me,” Tobin manages to get out as Christen kisses her hungrily, moving to straddle her.

“If you don’t stop talking it will be.”

“Noted,” Tobin finishes, wanting to get a last word in just to mess with Christen.

Tobin’s hands on Christen’s hips feel hotter than they did earlier for some reason and Christen can’t stop the small moan of pleasure that escapes her lips when Tobin squeezes them, kneading her thumbs into the flesh just under Christen’s knitted sweater.

When she hooks a few fingers into Christen’s belt loops and effectively tugs her closer, Christen
loses it. Her hips involuntarily grind against Tobin’s and she makes a whining sound into Tobin’s neck that makes the woman’s eyes go dark.

“You okay?” Tobin breathes into her hair.

It makes Christen chuckle because, yeah, ‘okay’ is one way to put it.

“Fine, baby,” she laughs, nodding with her head tucked into Tobin’s neck still.

Christen feels Tobin shiver when she starts leaving kisses on her neck and suddenly she’s asking, “You wanna- uh, you wanna slow down?”

Christen leaves one last soft kiss to the skin before retracting her head and sitting up. “Yeah, if that’s what you want.” She almost wants to laugh a little bit because it’s not like they’ve really done anything, but she’d never make Tobin feel ashamed or sorry for wanting to stop, and it’s probably better that they do.

Tobin sits up, leaning back on one hand and tangling her other in Christen’s hair, kissing her with so much intent. “Just wanna take my time with you,” she whispers, looking into Christen’s eyes and moving her hand to brush along Christen’s cheek.

She knows by the way that Tobin said it that it wasn’t meant to be suggestive in any way. She truly meant that she wanted to take her time, in all aspects of their relationship.

“Okay,” Christen nods, looking at her with soft, careful eyes. “You okay?” She rubs her thumbs back and forth on the sides of Tobin’s neck gently.

Tobin nods right away and sits up completely to circle her arms around Christen’s waist and bury her face in her shoulder. “Never better.”

They sit like that for a few moments, breathing each other in and running light fingers through each other’s hair or on each other’s skin.

“I’m sorry,” Tobin says in a small voice at some point.

It makes Christen sit back from the way they were hugging and look at her with concerned eyes. “For what? Tobin, you have nothing to be sorry for.”

Tobin shrugs. “Just, if you were, like, expecting something to happen tonight. Or wanted something to happen tonight.”

“Oh, baby, no,” Christen rushes to console her, giving her another tight hug. “I wasn’t,” she says when she pulls away. “I promise, okay?”

Tobin is quiet for a second before she nods. “I just- we kinda had a heavy conversation earlier and I feel weird doing that right after. I kinda rushed into that part of my relationship with her, and I don’t want to compare you two in any way because, God, Chris, you’re nothing like her and I’m not trying to base our relationship off of my past relationships. But like I said, I want to take my time with you. I want it to be right.”

“Gosh, you’re perfect,” Christen breathes out, connecting their lips for another passionate kiss. “Even if I did want something to happen tonight, I wouldn’t want it unless you did too. Our pace, remember? That means me and you.”

Tobin nods as she kisses her once more. “Can I take you to bed?” She asks. “But not like, take you
to bed, ” she rushes to explain, “I meant can we go lay down?”

They both laugh at her habit to say words that would otherwise be suggestive, but never are with her.

“Take me to bed, girlfriend,” Christen says sweetly with a wink.

Tobin smiles widely, eyes crinkling at the corners as she stands up with Christen still in her arms, holding her by the thighs. “Of course, girlfriend.”

They make it to Tobin’s bedroom, too caught up in one another, before they realize that Christen’s bag is still on the floor somewhere in the entryway but Tobin, being the wonderful girlfriend that she is, runs down the hallway, slipping in her socks, to grab it for her.

Chapter End Notes

Imk how you liked it, what your favorite parts were, and what you'd like to see!

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