Risky Business

by Fruipit, Turwen

Summary

You're in a good place now. You have a good job, surrounded by good people. Somehow, you're working under a goddamn CEO. Life seems pretty much perfect...

Notes

short drabble series. elsanna endgame. multiple chapters.
There are two elevators, six hundred offices, and fifteen hundred stairs. There's a waterfall in the foyer, and you realise you've never been in such a luxurious building before.

When you signed up to the Disability Employment Services, you didn't expect anything like this. You expected maybe a temp position, if that. Instead, you've got a- well, you don't quite know what you're going to be doing. But if you get to work here everyday – on decent pay, no less! – you don't honestly care.

There's a nice guy behind the counter who gives you your visitor badge. You can see his eyes fall to your legs, to your chair-on-wheels, but you ignore the look. You tell yourself he's appreciating your new shirt (or your rack). He directs you to a floor and an office, and you wheel yourself into the elevator with the other suits.

Most of them ignore you, but there's one kid, probably no older than yourself, who sends you a smile. When everyone else gets off at floor-whatever, he stays, riding with you to the very top. He lets you out first, and he's halfway down a hallway before you realise that you have no idea how to get to where you need to be.

"Um, excuse me?"

Your voice rings out, loud and soft at the same time, and the man turns around.

"I'm um, I'm a little lost," you say, scratching the back of your head. "I mean, I know I'm supposed to be on this floor, but the offices..."

He nods in understanding. "New?" he asks, and you give a self-deprecating smile. "What room are you looking for?"

You fish around your bag for your phone, pulling up the email. "Miss... Arendelle's," you say. Somehow, it seems like his smile widens further.

"This way."
Chapter 2

He leads you down a different hall, chatting away. You find out his name is Olaf, and he’s a HR manager. He laughs when you ask (completely surprised) how old he is.

“Elsa- Miss Arendelle,” he corrects, “Rewards good people. I’m good with people, so she put me on a fast-track.”

He doesn’t actually answer the age question, but you don’t mind. He doesn’t walk behind you, so you consider that even.

You stop outside a door, with a purple name-plaque on it. The ‘E’ at the beginning of ‘Elsa’ ends in a curlicue, and you wonder what sort of woman this is.

However, you’re distracted by the letters that come after her name.

~Elsa Arendelle, CEO~

You’re working for the C. E. O.

How did you score this gig?

Olaf knocks on the door, and turns the knob, looking at you. “Just go right on in,” he says. At your look of alarm, he shrugs. “Human resources. Better attitude towards managerial staff if people feel there’s an open-door policy. So, that’s what we have. Just knock, and enter.” He sends you a smile, before taking his hand off the doorknob and waving.

“See you later!”

He’s out of sight before you realise that you didn’t even get a chance to thank him. You make a mental note to find him again and give him a box of chocolates for being so accommodating. It isn’t every day that you meet people who are this nice.

But you have things to do, like work, so you push the door open further and wheel yourself in.

The room is all windows and modern art. Light slants through the floor-to-ceiling panes of glass, giving an impressive view of the city. It smells like vanilla and cinnamon, and the whole room just feels warm.

You’re so lost in thought that you don’t hear the door open again. It isn’t until you turn around that you notice someone else has entered. They’re looking at you with an expression you’ve never seen before, but it doesn’t feel good.

“Oh, um, sorry. I should- Olaf, a guy, he um, let me in. I’ll just- sorry-”

You begin moving towards the door, but the woman is still standing there. Her eyes flicker from your defunct legs to your chair, and your heart sinks. They thought they were getting someone able-bodied. Not a… not a cripple.

The woman clears her throat and puts on a smile. It seems forced, even as she rushes to apologise. “No, no, I’m sorry, I just- Anna, right? Anna Ackerman? I’m sorry, I just expected you to arrive a little later. The email said 10, didn’t it?”

It probably did, but in your haste not to be late, you were actually early. A glance at your phone
told you it was only nine fifty-three; when you look back at the woman, her smile isn’t nearly as forced. It brings a light to her eyes, and now, she actually looks somewhat excited. She holds her hand out, and you take it tentatively.

“Elsa Arendelle,” she says. “And you must be Anna. Obviously.” You give a small nod, and she continues. “It’s absolutely wonderful to have you working with us. Please.” She indicates her desk, and you move towards it.

“I guess they didn’t tell you about the chair,” you say, laughing deprecatingly. Elsa takes a seat on the other side and frowns.

“Of course they did,” she says. “We had to make sure that all areas you would need would be accessible. I have, of course, every other area being refitted, but they won’t be complete for a few weeks.”

You don’t know what to say to that, so you just sit in silence, waiting for Elsa to speak again.

“I’m really looking forward to working with you, Anna,” she says after a few moments, smiling softly. You think about the warm welcome by Olaf, and Elsa’s own self-correction, and you think that you’re a bit excited, too.
The days aren’t easy by any stretch of the word, but you still appreciate the chance to do something. You go to work every day and take the elevator up to the top floor. You mostly just do filing, but Elsa’s said that it’s just to get you used to the sort of work that the business does.

You aren’t really sure what you’re supposed to be learning, though. Honestly, a teenager could do what you’re doing, and get paid less. You mention it, off-hand to Elsa, and she just shrugs.

That’s another thing. Elsa doesn’t expect anyone to call her ’m'am’ or ‘Miss Arendelle’. Everyone calls everyone else by their first name, and it’s kinda awesome. This is the first place you’ve ever worked where there’s that sort of camaraderie. It also means that no one is ever actually mean to you because it’s too easy to report bullying. Out of all the places to say they have a ‘no tolerance’ policy, this is the only workplace that actually seems like it’ll uphold that mantra.

Of course, it isn’t without a few problems. People grumble at you because you take up more room in the elevator, and, often, you’re a little late because you have to wait for an empty carriage. You don’t mind, but each time you say hi to Elsa a few minutes after your shift starts, she purses her lips.

Two weeks into your job, and there’s a sign put up in the elevator telling people that the elderly, pregnant, and most importantly, disabled people have the right to go first. You aren’t late again.

Olaf is an absolute sweetheart, too. He gets you a hot chocolate every morning, and always sits with you at lunch. It isn’t really that easy making friends, but you’re used to that. You have all the friends you need, anyway (though when Olaf forcefully adds you to Facebook, you admit that it can never hurt to have a few more).
The only thing that really frustrates you is how it all seems so easy. You’re getting paid more than you ever thought you would (and almost all of it is going to savings because a job this good can’t last too long), for doing minimal work.

Your boss seems to be somewhat all over the place, too – but not in any kind of business sense. There’s a feeling of want that emanates from her (but nothing so lewd, ew). She seems to want to stop and talk, seems to want to approach you. But she doesn’t. That’s okay, you can deal with that. It’s more in the way that she actually seems to take great strides to avoid you. She’ll stop and stare when you’re in the cafeteria eating lunch, and when you wave at her (wave her over), she’ll catch herself and move on.

That isn’t necessarily a problem. But it makes you wonder what you’ve done to make her do such a thing. Was she just lying when she said that she was expecting someone in a chair?

Olaf encourages you to go and talk to her, but you don’t want to rock the boat. You’re fine. Everything is fine; it’s not like people haven’t avoided you before. You were so popular in middle school, and even early high school. Then the accident happened and no one wanted to associate with you, but you got over that. You’ll get over this, too.

What little interactions you have with her somehow, for some reason, always become tense. She doesn’t seem to like it when you act cavalier, and she always seems to take back her words if she thinks they’re going to be slightly offensive. She told you that you couldn’t go to a particular seminar (paid, of course) because it was a team-building thing out in the middle of nowhere. Then she apologised for ten minutes, saying she didn’t mean to be so rude. You couldn’t help laughing because that isn’t rude! It’s just a matter of fact.

But when she isn’t being embarrassed and awkward, and if she stopped being so damn standoffish, you think that you might be able to have enough conversations to become friends. You hear her chatting to Olaf when you make your rounds. It’s almost always business – she doesn’t seem to share much, even though Olaf has a knack for turning everything into a personal conversation. Not necessarily deep, but he gets her to chat about things not-work-related.

Sometimes you hear her laugh, and it’s a strange, but not unwelcome, sound. Despite Olaf’s assurances that you’re welcome in at any time, there’s still a wall between you and every other person in the building. Invisible, but you still feel it.

So, you come to work and do your job and forget that it usually means ‘make friends’.
Chapter 5

So, the days and weeks and months pass. You actually manage to build a family, of sorts, here. Kristoff, your foster brother, comes in for your birthday and in the span of ten minutes develops a weird brotherly relationship with Olaf (despite their complete opposite attitudes). You aren’t one to let your personal and professional life mix, but then Kristoff asked if he wanted to come out for lunch to celebrate your birthday, and you actually feel… sort of excited. Olaf agrees in a heartbeat, just as Elsa turns the corner.

Kristoff is so wonderful he isn’t even struck dumb at her awesome appearance (hair in a French braid, pulled back with some strange kind of – expensive – snowflake ornaments, braided in). She’s wearing a tight pencil skirt and a blouse, and you’re actually at the perfect height to stare unhindered at her ass.

You don’t, of course, because that’s just weird.

Even so, you’re sort of lucky that they’re too busy talking amongst themselves to notice your lack of attention.

“… couldn’t possibly,” Elsa’s saying, and you snap to attention.

“Hmm?”

Kristoff rolls his eyes, though shoots you a smile. “Just wondering if Miss Arendelle wanted to join us,” he says, and your eyes light up.


He lets out a choke, but you send him a look to let him know you’re kidding. You have a much better job, and truthfully, it’d be nice to be able to treat him for once, instead of the other way around.

But Elsa’s shaking her head. “I don’t wanna intrude-”

“You aren’t!” you insist. And she really isn’t. You want to get to know her – you’ve barely spoken at all, despite working directly under her, on the same floor of the same building. “It’ll be fun!”

“Anna, I don’t.”

“Please-”

“No! Drop it, Anna!”

Silence falls between you, and you watch she she looks away. She says your name as a goodbye, and leaves you with your friends. You don’t even realise when Kristoff takes the handles and wheels you away. You’re too focused on your sinking heart and hurt feelings.
All things considered, lunch was actually a success. You do feel a little better, and you were right: it is nice being able to treat Kristoff. It was actually a nice place, too, with steak knives and breadsticks as part of the appetiser. Kristoff buys you a slice of chocolate cake afterwards (ignoring your claims of ‘breaking your diet’), and you hold on tight when he leans down to give you a hug. Even with Elsa’s… attitude… it’s still been one of the best birthdays you’ve had, since the accident. The first one you haven’t felt lost and alone.

Elsa isn’t there when you return to the office, and you try not to feel angry. Olaf gives you the afternoon off, anyway, so you end up making your money doing fuck-all for the rest of the day. He even gives you a lift to the train station when it begins to rain; he would have taken you home, but it’s far too out of the way. You don’t want to inconvenience anyone.

Joan is excited to see you when you go home, and if nothing else, that makes you smile. The little cat, with its dappled hair and missing tail, mewls as your feet, and you smile. She sits on your lap as your roll to the kitchen, preparing her dinner. You aren’t that hungry, still full from lunch, so you decide to just have a shower and go to bed.

One of the benefits of living alone, you think as you heat up the water, is that you don’t have to close doors. It would be far more difficult getting from your chair to the shower if you had no room to do it.

You sit beneath the water, letting it wash over you. You don’t like staying in here too long; gives you too much time to look at your useless legs and remember. Remembering is bad, and it brings you nothing but sour thoughts and pain. And today is not a good day for this.

Just before you go to sleep, washed and dry and swaddled in a blanket and your favourite pyjamas, you turn to the picture on your bedside table.

“Night, Mom,” you whisper, pressing first your fingertips to the people in there, and then your lips. “Night, Dad. I love you…”
Chapter 7

You come into work the next day puffy-eyed and absolutely exhausted. You barely got any sleep last night, and it shows. Or, it did until you go against your personal mantra and put on lip gloss and concealer and killer (well, it was supposed to be...) mascara – really, anything to attract attention away from the bags under your eyes. No one seems to notice (not that, really, you particularly want them to) until Olaf steps into the elevator.

He gives you one look, and then his mouth seems to just spew the first thought that crosses his mind. “You look like shit,” he says. Thankfully, there’s no one else in the elevator, so all you do is glare at him.

“Well, I mean, the make-up looks pretty, but... you sure you don’t need to stay home today or something?”

The last thing you need to do is stay home. You just need to get stuck into work and forget yourself for the day.

When the elevator stops on your floor, you push past Olaf, making your way to the office you’re going to be working in. He follows you, but you make sure to close your door. Sure, he could just knock and come in, but he seems to realise that you really don’t want to talk to him.

You get most of the way through the day before being interrupted again. You don’t feel quite as terrible – the monotony of filing certainly seems to have helped. It gives you the strength to actually open the door when you hear a light tapping.

Elsa’s standing outside, a fern in her hands. It’s a terribly cliché office gift, you think as she looks at you, a contrite look on her face.

“I’m sorry about my behaviour yesterday,” she begins, fixing you with a strong look. “I suppose I haven’t been doing very good, making you feel welcome. I wanted to apologise, maybe take you out to lunch to make up for it?”

You sigh, and move away, turning your back. “Look, it’s not a good day today. Sorry.”

You realise that you don’t sound that penitent. Your words are actually quite sharp and curt. But, you don’t care. Elsa stands awkwardly in the doorway, still holding the potted plant. She leaves not long after your dismissal, but when you finish work for the day, you see the plant is still sitting next to the door. There’s a little note, tied to it.

To Anna, it reads. Just thought your office could do with some colour. Feel free to decorate how you want – it’s your personal space now. From, Elsa.

The letter is written in the same curling font as her name-plaque is, but it’s obviously handwritten. You pick up the plant and put it in the corner of the room, next to the window. You only have one window – quite unlike Elsa’s office – but it gives an entirely different view of the city. Plus, you can still see out of it, being that it reaches to floor, too.

The office does look a bit sad, you think. You don’t fight back the little smile that rises to your lips. Now you have an office. It feels a lot less temporary now, this job.

Your parents would be so proud.
The picture of your parents is the first thing you bring with you. You get someone to help you rearrange the furniture so, instead of having the window behind you, it's to the side. You like being able to look out as you work.

You buy a cupcake for Olaf, and he just gives you a hug and tells you he's not upset. Tells you that sometimes people need days on their own that that's cool. He does remind you that Elsa seemed a bit despondent, though, and he asks how the plant is going.

You're a little proud when you show him your office. It's something new and yours, and he smiles, impressed.

"You know you can paint it too, right?" he asks, looking at the dull green walls. You're actually a little grateful that he doesn't seem to realise that you can't paint, literally.

Maybe you can ask Kristoff, but you feel bad calling him for such a huge favour. You're not sure how Elsa would feel about painters coming in and disrupting everyone, so you just shrug.

"I don't mind it. It's a bit dull, but green's my favourite colour anyway," you say. He gives a thoughtful nod, before glancing at his watch.

"Hey, I'm sorry, Anna, but I gotta go. Great office, by the way." With one more grin, he leaves.

You're sorting (again) when you get another visitor. This time it isn't Elsa, but someone from another part of the building. She's got a box in her hands, and asks, "Is this Annie Ackerman's office?"

"Anna," you correct, and then invite her in.

"Hi, Anna," she says, holding out a hand. "I'm Ella, part of IT. We have a computer for you – apparently you're going to be using the new TIFS, so we need to get that all online."

"TIFS?" you ask, and she lets out a little giggle. It's cute.

"Slang for This Is Fucking Shit," she laughs, though she's obviously joking. "But don't be scared, it's actually really easy to use. I'll show you."

It doesn't take long to get the whole thing set up. You don't think you've ever had a piece of technology this new – even your phone looks like it popped straight out of the early-noughties. But Ella is kind, and patient, and makes even the most complicated thing seem easy. By the end of it, she gives you her number, telling you to call if you have any questions (after you waste half an hour of her time, chatting about some random nonsense. She's easy to talk to).

But she still has to go back to work, and with a final smile, she packs up her stuff and gives you a mock-salute. You give a cough and build up your courage, and ask, "did you wanna get a coffee with me some time?"

It's a bit sudden and abrupt, but she was nice and didn't look at the chair and seems friendly. You aren't good at going out and meeting people, and it would be nice to make a few friends who might become a little more.

But she gives you a sad sort of frown, and you feel your heart sink a little.
"I'm really sorry, but I have a boyfriend," she says, and your eyes widen. Before you can argue that no, you're not hitting on her, you just really like coffee, she's smiling sadly at you and walking out the door. Your heart sinks a little because, well. You're not a lesbian – do you look like a lesbian? – and maybe she used that as an excuse to leave because it was the less confrontational option.

Still stings a bit.

You don't do any more work for the rest of the day. You just stare out the window, watching other people, with their other lives, wander past.
Chapter 9

‘Using the computer’ is added to your remarkably short list of tasks. Instead of filing real papers, you get to file electronic ones. Olaf pops in every few days, and you realise that you haven’t made any friends aside from him. You had to ask him for help when you did something stupid on the computers. You couldn’t face asking Ella.

Elsa tries again a week later, this time bringing a picture of a sunflower. You wonder what her need to decorate your office is, but you brush it aside. She’s just being nice, and the picture is pretty.

This time, you agree to going out to lunch with her. She chooses a little café, out of the way but close enough that you don’t have to get a taxi. It’s quaint, offering sandwiches and burgers, and you order a thick-shake that is actually thick (so, not a milkshake in disguise).

“How are you, Anna?” she prefaces the meal with. You give a bit of a shrug, before catching yourself. She’s your boss, and she asked a question.

“Good,” you find yourself saying. You realise that this is the first time you’ve ever really had a chance to sit down and talk to Elsa. It’s the first time you’ve ever really had a chance to just look at her, too.

“Thank you, by the way, for the office. It’s lovely.” You manage a smile, and watch as Elsa’s face lifts.

“It was no problem,” she says. “You’re one of us – you deserve your own office. Even the janitors have their own, and they spend more time in everyone else’s. It’s important to have your own space, I think.”

You nod. The food comes out without you sharing another word, and neither of you speak again until you’re finished.

The silence isn’t awkward, as such, but there’s a lot unspoken. You don’t know Elsa, and she doesn’t know you. Having lunch with your boss is weird enough, but when your boss is the chief executive officer of a multi-million dollar corporation, it’s a little more terrifying.

“What does Arendelle Enterprises do?” you ask. The internet, when you had a look after being told of the job, was unexpectedly unhelpful, and you never bother to actually read what you’re filing. That would take too long. It’s more a case of ‘it starts with the letter A, go here’, et cetera.

Elsa sighs. “We started out as an accounting firm. My parents began the business all on their own. We’ve looked into expanding into other sectors, and I have several new programs running.”

She doesn’t seem all that interested in talking about work, though. She seems distracted, and she keeps sending you odd looks.

“You’re one of us – you deserve your own office. Even the janitors have their own, and they spend more time in everyone else’s. It’s important to have your own space, I think.”

She doesn’t seem all that interested in talking about work, though. She seems distracted, and she keeps sending you odd looks.

“Are you… sure you’re okay, Anna?” she asks softly. “If someone has said something, or you feel uncomfortable at all here, please let us know. We- I want this place to be a safe space.”

You look at her, eyes furrowed. “I’m not being, like, bullied or anything,” you say. “Can’t a girl just have an off-day without people panicking?”

Elsa gives a faint smile. “Off-days don’t suit you,” she says, but you can’t help the frown. She’s-that’s a compliment, usually, you think, but right now, it only annoys you.
But you don’t want to bring Elsa down. She’s taken you out to lunch because she wanted to make up for her behaviour.

And she has, in part. You want her to stop asking if you’re okay, but if this is… this is friends, yeah? Or at least, a friend/y relationship. Acquaintances, at the very least. Elsa… Elsa seems approachable. You don’t really want to burden her with your own problems (you have way too many to count, anyway) so you just shrug and smile.

Elsa asks, when you’re back at the office, if you wanted to get lunch again with her next week, too.
Chapter 10

When you come into work the next day, there’s a new guy at reception. He’s got absolutely luxurious hair, all soft and smooth and wavy. He smiles at you, and you feel a fluttering when he throws in a wink. You bite your lip and can’t keep the dazed grin from your face, all the way up to the top floor.

“What’s got you so happy?” Olaf asks when he sees you, and you shrug. You’re not gonna tell him that a smile made your day, and like always, he doesn’t push.

Elsa isn’t there for lunch today, and you’re equal parts happy and sad. Happy because you don’t know how you survived the first day of poor conversation, let alone another, and sad because you want another chance anyway. You find out from her personal assistant that she’s gone until the end of the week on a conference, and then is taking a few days personal leave. You thank her, and leave.

The next couple of days are so boring, you don’t even know what to do with yourself. There’s no more filing to be done because it’s being outsourced to another company – or, maybe it’s one of Elsa’s offspring businesses. Either way, you don’t have to do it anymore. You fight down the fear that builds in your chest because… if there’s nothing for you to do, why are you still here? Every email you get sits in your inbox for a good twenty minutes before you can build up the strength to open it. You knew the job couldn’t last long, but this still hurts.

But, no sacking, or outsourcing, or downsizing ever comes. You don’t want to rock the boat at all, but you’ve only been here like, three months. You use your computer to browse other jobs, and you prepare an email that you’ll send if and when they finally cut you loose.

The day before Elsa’s due to return, you finish late. There’s a few factors – like the overtime pay that will help when you inevitably find yourself unemployed again, and the fact that the lift broke down and, while it didn’t take long to fix, there is still an awful smell – but really, you just don’t wanna go home. You remember Elsa’s offer for lunch, and with a sinking heart, guess that she’s probably going to break it over lunch. A nice lunch with a glass of wine that will probably ruin every other nice lunches with wine you’ll ever have again.

It’s past six when you decide to pack up and leave. Everyone else clocks off at five, so at least there’ll be no crowds. Hopefully, the bus will be empty, too. You’re almost to the lift when you hear something. Or feel it, you aren’t sure. It’s the vibrations of a raised voice, and, curious, you turn to follow it.

Olaf is sitting at his desk, head in his hands. He must have his phone on speaker, because it’s either that or he’s talking to himself. He doesn’t notice you come in, and you sit there awkwardly as he keeps talking.

“I’ll do my best,” he says, and you recognise the voice on the other end of the line as Elsa’s.

“Thank you, Olaf,” she says, before ending the call. He huffs, but doesn’t look up until you clear your throat.

“Everything okay, Olaf?” you ask softly. He jumps at your voice, and gives a wry smile.

“Not really,” he says, shrugging. “We’ve just hit a snag. I’m sure it’ll all work out, though.”

You nod contemplatively. “Anything I can do to help?”
At that, his smile turns a little more sincere. “It’s not even that terrible,” he begins. “Elsa’s PA forgot about the change in schedule that meant Elsa would have to catch a later flight. Now she’s stuck at an airport in the middle of the night, and everywhere else seems full. She’s going to be stuck until at least tomorrow afternoon.”


“I don’t know, but there’s nothing we can do about it now. The best we could do is try to find her a place to stay for the night.”

You frown at that thought. Elsa’s been away from home for a week already, and it’s not fair that she has to stay that way because of a mistake someone else made.

“You said there were no flights for here, right?” you ask, and he nods. “Well, what if we don’t bring her here?” Olaf looks at you blankly, and you sigh. “What airport does she normally use? Corona? What if we found her a flight to- well, Weselton is only a couple of hours drive away. What if she could catch a flight there, and someone picks her up? Or even South Isles isn’t too much further. It may take a little longer, but it’s better than being stuck somewhere else all night.”

Olaf looks at you, eyes wide and face blank. Without shifting his gaze, he picks up the phone and presses a button.

“Yes?” Elsa picks up on the second ring, and Olaf still hasn’t looked away.

“Hey, Els,” he says. “We may have an idea…”
When you come into work the next day, you actually feel pretty good. Olaf had texted you in the wee hours of the morning, telling her that they’d been successful – and Elsa was immensely grateful. Maybe you do have a future here.

Olaf actually told you to have a sleep in, so you don’t get to work until about morning-tea time. You smile at the guy behind the counter, and his answering grin is enough to send those tremors fluttering in your chest again. You look away bashfully, biting your lip. Apparently- well, you’ve read books on dating and flirting, so. Maybe it’ll work?

You push it from your mind as you ride the elevator up, and the thought actually completely vanishes because you can’t see anyone. As in, there’s no sound or movement, or anything that would indicate that the floor was habited at all.

There’s a post-it note on your door, asking you to come down to conference room B at 12:30. You frown at it, curious, but for the first time, you’re not actually worried. You send a brief text to Olaf, but that’s just so you can find out where everyone’s gone. He doesn’t get back to you by the time you have to go to the conference room, and you pick up the post-it, looking for a clue.

It isn’t his handwriting. He’s too scratchy when he writes, all harsh lines and jagged edges. This handwriting reminds you of Elsa’s, which of course only makes you more confused. Gripping it tight, you make your way to the room.

It, unlike the floor your office is on, most definitely isn’t empty. When you knock, Elsa looks up from a spread of documents and flashes a smile. Olaf is sitting off to the side., deep in conversation. He stops when you enter, the same sort of smile on his face.

Elsa stands up, but doesn’t approach you. She’s dressed in an outfit that would look out of place if anyone else were wearing it, but she’s just so good at making the mundane exciting (and you only stop to ponder what that means to you for a second). Instead of a blouse and pencil skirt, like last time, she’s wearing a pale blue shirt with spaghetti strap sleeves that just seems to float over her body, and long, tight jeans. They’re not skinny jeans – they’re like, appropriate-for-work jeans. She just wears them really well.

All this assessment has only taken the span of time for Olaf to get to his feet and cross the room, which you’re oddly pleased about because it means that you don’t miss out on anything he says when he arrives.

“Anna,” he says, grinning like a school kid. “How are you?”

“Uh, I’m good,” you say, confused. “How uh, how was everything?”

At the question, Olaf positively beams. “Fantastic, thanks to you.”

You fight back a blush at the praise. “I was just doing my job,” you say modestly, bringing a hand up to rub the back of your neck. Olaf nods his head emphatically at the words.

“Exactly!” There’s an almost manic look in his eyes (though it might be your imagination) as he beckons you over to where Elsa is still standing. She’s crossed between ‘stock-still’ and ‘completely rigid’, and her hands are clasped in front of her. She’s had a manicure, you note idly.

There are deep bruises below her eyes, and her blinks are incredibly slow. Even her smile, when
she forces it to her face, looks exhausted.

“Anna,” she says by way of greeting before sitting down. There’s a chair to her right, where Olaf was sitting, and an empty spot to her left. She makes a little motion, and you park yourself there, wondering what’s happening.

But no one speaks. Olaf is looking at Elsa, and she’s looking back to him, eyes wide. They’re talking with their eyes, and you can’t say you don’t feel uncomfortable. Just when you’re about to speak up, it seems like Elsa loses because she turns to you.

“Anna,” she begins, in a tone of voice that has your heart clenching, and not in a good way. “There is some… bad news.” You don’t say anything at her words, but it’s becoming more and more difficult for you to look at her. A ringing starts in your ears, which only becomes worse the longer she speaks.

“…Being outsourced, so your job doesn’t-”

Your chest tightens at the words, so much so that you almost miss the next ones:

“…Pack your things…”

You have to blink heavily to fight back the growing tears. Your whole body is taut and tight, and if possible the pressure over your heat increases. The only way you get yourself to look at Elsa is because she’s stopped talking. It doesn’t matter. You can barely see her from the tears, but you’re determined not to show her that.

She finishes speaking, and you nod your head. There’s a smile that’s probably supposed to be comforting on her face, but it doesn’t really help.

You clear your throat, and you know that it’s pretty obvious you’re tearing up, but you still refuse to admit it. “Th-thank you for the opportunity to work here,” you say softly. You force out a smile, and Elsa returns it. You’re not sure how to leave the table with any semblance of dignity, so you don’t even try. “I’ll just, uh, get my stuff,” you hear yourself saying.

You’re grateful the elevator is empty as you ride it up to the top floor. You don’t cry as you pack away your things. There aren’t that many, anyway. A few pens and desk decorations. You leave the plant and the picture, because really, they’re Elsa’s, and the last thing you pack is the photograph.

No one looks at you as you leave. Not even the guy who smiles at you. When you get home, you put your stuff by the door and just sit there, body numb. Joan mews at your feet, and snuggles into your lap when you pick her up. You smile at her for a moment, before the tears slowly begin to dribble over your cheeks, picking up speed and intensity until your face is red and your eyes sting, and you don’t even care anymore.

You were right: you said it wouldn’t last, and it hasn’t. You told yourself not to get too hopeful or excited. You knew this would happen.

It doesn’t help, that thought, and you don’t try to stop crying.

There’s just no point.
Chapter 12

You don’t have the willpower to contact the Disability Services. You have money saved away, so right now, all you want to do is absolutely nothing, snuggled with Joan.

Kristoff comes calling twice, and that’s only because you haven’t been picking up the phone. You manage to send him away the first time, but the second, he refuses to leave. He even sits outside your door for half an hour until you decide to let him in.

He doesn’t even say anything, which is what you thought he’d do. He comes in and makes a sandwich for both of you, and then cleans up the whole kitchen. You have been neglecting the cleaning, and you know you should feel a little bad about the state of the apartment, but you don’t. Kristoff doesn’t judge you. You move to the couch and you don’t talk as he puts on every Marvel film you own. You ask if he has work, but he doesn’t really answer. He says, “You’re more important,” and it just makes you feel worse, because you know you’re really not.

With no one but Kristoff to talk to, your phone is forgotten beneath magazines and books, strewn across your coffee table. You only really used it for work, and now that’s finished, you don’t have a need for it.

You try not to dwell on that thought, because it just makes you sad.

As if that isn’t bad enough, three days into your new-found unemployment, you get your period. You thought you’d been dealing with everything, but the surge of hormones makes it even harder. You’re achy and tired, and it’s times like these that you just want a hug. Kristoff is good, but he’s got his own life. You can’t call him up every time you feel a little down because it doesn’t work like that.

It’s a Thursday when you get a strange visitor. Thursday afternoon, more accurately. You’ve done nothing but lie around and watch Netflix all day, and it shows. You have your comfy track-pants on because they’re comfy and you don’t wanna get blood on any of your nicer clothes. The weather is cooling down, so you have a thin sweater on. You aren’t wearing a bra, and you haven’t bothered to do your hair. You regret that decision as soon as you open the door.

Elsa.
Chapter 13

Elsa is standing on the threshold, looking at her hand. There’s a scrap of paper there, with a number you recognise as your apartment’s. As soon as she hears the door open, she jerks her head up, then down again when she realises you’re not exactly her height.

“Anna!” she says, voice lilting as though she’s surprised to see you. “Uh, may I come in?”

Your heart lurches at the sound of her voice, and wordlessly, you nod, backing up so she can slide inside.

When you close the door, you realise just how dark the apartment is; you regret opening the blinds, however, when it becomes apparent just how filthy the place is, too. You never get guests, so you hadn’t been bothered to clean up. You feel… embarrassed. You don’t like it.

No wonder Elsa fired you. You can’t even keep your personal life together, let alone a professional one.

“So…” you begin weakly. “Coffee?”

You don’t even wait for her response before you’re heading towards the kitchen. You hear her follow you, and send Kristoff a silent ‘thank you’ that he cleaned the kitchen.

Elsa stands awkwardly off to the side. Once again, she’s in everyday clothes, and once again, they look awesome. She’s wearing a loose-fitting tee with a print of a llama on it, and her hair is up in a ponytail. She’s got purple eyeshadow on, and soft pink lipstick. You glance down at your own dingy tracky-dacks, and manage to catch sight of a new stain on your shirt. Great.

She takes her coffee black, with one sugar (of course she does), and you make your way to the lounge room when you’ve finished adding several spoonfuls of sugar. Elsa sits precariously on the edge of the single chair, and you move to the sofa, back straight. You like to think that it gives you an air of comfortable confidence, but Elsa doesn’t even look at you as you move.

“What’s, uh, what’s up?” you ask, taking a sip of your coffee. It burns the roof of your mouth, but at least it gives you a distraction. Elsa takes her own sip, and doesn’t look at you.

“Did… something happen?” she asks softly. When she looks at you, her eyes are wide and imploring, like she’s begging for something. You aren’t sure what. You glance away, eyes falling to Joan, who’s decided to sneak under the coffee table. She doesn’t like guests; you can see the stub of her tail flicking as she watches Elsa.

You’re silent so long, Elsa begins speaking before you’ve answered. “If anyone’s said anything…” she hedges, and you frown.

“What?” you say. Your voice is louder than you expected, and Elsa’s eyes widen. “Why is it always, ‘has anyone done something’, with you?” you demand. Your bottom lip is quivering, and there’s a tightness in your throat you aren’t used to. It feels like your heart is trying to thunder its way from your chest. All the while, Elsa just sits there, gaping.

“You always wanna know if I’m being- being bullied or harassed,” you continue, “but you- you let me get happy, and then nothing. You gave me an office and you made me feel like I was safe there…” Your gaze has fallen to the floor, because even if you can’t see Elsa through the tears, you still don’t want to look at her. You feel pathetic. She’s reduced you to tears in your own home, and
you hate it. Sniffling, you wipe at your face and steel yourself. No more weakness, you think as you take a sip of your drink and force yourself to calm down.

“I get it. Life isn’t fair. But I’m so fucking sick of being on the receiving end of it. So you can take your ‘I’m only looking out for you’ complex and leave me the fuck alone. I don’t need it.”

In the ensuing silence, you regret having moved from your chair. You can’t get away easily, and you’re not about to struggle in front of Elsa again. It would probably set her off, and her pity is the last thing you need. You sit stoically in the silence, waiting for her to move.

When she finally does do something, it’s just to whisper out a question. “…You… left for your independence?”

You whip your head up. “Left? What-? You didn’t give me any choice,” you snarl. Joan decides to jump onto your lap, and you scratch her rump as a way of ignoring Elsa. You feel so small under her gaze.

Suddenly, the couch dips, and you find your personal space being taken up. You can’t even remember the last time someone was this close to you – and Kristoff doesn’t count.

“Anna,” she says seriously, peering at you from behind long lashes. “You thought I fired you?”

Dumbly, you nod. Elsa lets out a breath. Her hand comes up. “Why would I fire you? You haven’t done anything wrong – in fact, your work ethic has been one of the best I’ve ever seen. We- we promoted you. You were happy!”

It’s your turn to gape. “Happy? I was crying.”

Elsa looks away, shame in her eyes. “I thought it was happiness…” she admits softly. “Why would you think I’d fire you?”

“Because- because…” Because that’s what always happens…

You can’t bring yourself to actually say those words, though. Elsa’s looking at you with the worst expression; it’s all soft and pitying. You rub at Joan’s fur, staring at the little cat, and you’re not prepared to feel Elsa’s fingers wrap around your hand.
It would almost feel like a walk of shame, coming into work the following day. Elsa’s next to you, having come over to give you a lift to make up for her horrendous reading of the situation. You argue that you don’t need her help, the trains and buses work fine, but she just wants to make it up to you, so you let her.

The first thing Olaf does when he sees you, is bend down and scoop you into a hug. His arms around you feel amazing, but nowhere near as good as the knowledge that he… missed you.

Everyone else seems to ignore the little scene playing out in the middle of the foyer, but that’s okay. Over his shoulder, you see Elsa biting her lip. Beyond that, the guy who works behind the counter makes eye contact.

He looks away immediately, face reddening, and you feel a giddy flutter settle in your stomach. This is the best you’ve felt in a week, and it’s amazing.

Olaf leads you over to the front counter, Elsa following behind by several paces. “Hi there!” he says to the guy behind the counter. “Would we be able to get Anna a new tag?” he asks the guy you were smiling at. He looks at you and gives a wonky grin that you can’t help returning.

“Definitely. Follow me, please.”

Silently, you wheel behind the counter to a small room. There’s a seat off to the side, with a counter and a computer at the other end. It’s only very small, and a little hard to navigate, but you do it. It sort of reminds you of the time you went with Kristoff to the transport department so he could renew his license. The guy – and wow you really have to find out his name. Maybe handsome- no. Stop it. You just got your job back – stands back a respectful distance, but he still asks, softly, if you need any help.

It’s… nice. He didn’t presume, and he doesn’t hover. It’s refreshing. You smile at him and shake your head, and you move to the seat.

“We just need a picture for your pass,” he explains, moving behind the counter to a computer. “You’re definitely allowed to smile. Especially when you have such a pretty one.”

The smile that you end up using is probably a little too dreamy, but he doesn’t say anything, and it’s not a bad camera. You’re not that photogenic, but this is good. Gets the details without showing the pimple on your jaw, or putting too much emphasis on your freckles.

Elsa and Olaf are still waiting for you, talking in hushed tones. They straighten up when you appear, and you turn around a little in your chair.

“Thank you, uh…” you begin, and he smiles.

“Hans. And you’re welcome, Anna.”
They don’t take you back to your office. Olaf is practically humming with excitement when he leads you down the other end of the hallway. With a wave of his arms, he indicates a room you’ve only been in once before. It’s right next to Elsa’s office, and you just sit there and gape for a moment.

Your name is actually written on the door, and you have letters after it.

Anna Ackerman, Personal Assistant.

Okay, so, you’re a PA. And, probably, most people wouldn’t be happy about it because ‘I work under people’ is essentially the job title.

But you know this office. It’s the office of the girl – or it was the office of the girl – who used to be Elsa’s PA.

You turn to the blonde woman and gape. “Wha-?”

Elsa gives you a smile and an airy shrug. “We reward good people,” she says. The words are familiar, and you feel yourself tearing up. They reward good people. They rewarded you.

“Come on, Anna,” Olaf says, before you can get too caught up in the moment. You’re a little grateful. “Let’s get you settled in. Close your eyes!”

You do as he bids, and you hear the door open. Your chair moves subtly, and a warm breath washes over your ear. “You don’t mind, do you?”

Elsa’s voice is so soft, it’s ridiculous. Swallowing, you nod your head.

“I mean, uh, no,” you almost whisper. You feel yourself being pushed forward, only a few feet.

“Ta-da!” Olaf cries. “Open your eyes!”

Slowly, smile playing on your lips, you do. The expression vanishes as you take in the room around you, and your heart seems to rise to your throat and get stuck. Blinking, you look from Olaf to the walls and floors, infinitely away that Elsa hasn’t let go of the handles of your chair, or the fact that you’re tearing up.

Olaf looks from you to Elsa, and then back to you, and through the film over your eyes, you see him make a jerky movement. She walks around and, noticing your state, almost drops to the floor. Her hand reaches out for yours, and though you notice her hesitating a moment, she eventually takes it.

“Anna?” she asks. “These- this is happy, right?”

Sucking back a sniffle, you jerk your head in an emphatic nod. “It’s w-wonderful,” you whisper. And it is.

The window is even bigger than your old office, and it goes well with the increase in floor-space. You have a view of a park with a playground and a sports field, and they’d moved the desk so you can see out during the day.

The walls are a freshly-painted green, but it isn’t the dark, dull green of your previous office. It’s a
light, foresty kind of colour. The feature wall is a deep purple, and it’s honestly the nicest room you’ve ever called your own. Elsa – or someone – has moved the plants, and a few other decorations have been added; there’s a vase with a flower on the desk, and a bright rug on the beigy-grey carpet. Even your desk is pretty – one of those modern ones, with the thing legs and light frame, but it doesn’t look cheap.

“How- when did you find time to do this?” you ask, once you’ve gained some control. Olaf shrugs his shoulders.

“When you had those few days off, we got some people in. You said green was your favourite colour.”

You nod, but your eyebrows are furrowed. “Days off?”

Here, Elsa bites her lip, catching your attention when she turns her head away – almost guiltily. “It’s uh, it’s why it took so long for us to… rectify the mistake,” she said. “We- I didn’t realise anything was wrong until you didn’t show… By then, we’d gotten worried, so Olaf brought up your file, and I… dropped in for a visit.”

You don’t know what to say. It’s almost amazing how a small miscommunication could result in something so, well, big, but on the other hand…

They were worried. Elsa was worried. And as you cast your eyes between her and Olaf and your new office, smiling, you feel your heart stutter with something you’re not really sure how to describe.

You settle on happiness. That’s close enough. Sheer, unadulterated joy.
Chapter 16

The first day is easy. The ones that come after it…not so much. But that’s not a bad thing!

You still have to file, that’s a given, but it’s different. More personal stuff, like memos and emails sent directly to Elsa. There’s electronic filing, but then some of them need to be printed out and signed by other people.

With the new job also comes new hours. You start forty-five minutes earlier, which means you have to be up earlier to catch the bus-train-bus. It means you arrive a good half-hour before you actually start, so you always have time to grab a hot chocolate from the café across the road.

It briefly passes your mind that you should probably get Elsa something, but you aren’t sure what. You go for a vanilla latte, because everyone likes vanilla lattes. Maybe.

Elsa also expects you to sit in some of her meetings and take notes. You reply to her emails and field phone calls from the press, or other business associates. Elsa never answers the phone, and you’ve never even transferred the line to her directly. Instead, they’re logged, and you add ‘call back such-and-such’ to her schedule.

But…it’s good. It keeps you busy. And you like it when Elsa smiles at you, and says you’re doing a good job. There’s a little twinge in the back of your head sometimes, makes you question just how this all came about, but you ignore it with ease.

You deserve this. You’re awesome, and Elsa and Olaf recognise that.

Even if you don’t actually talk to Elsa much.

Olaf pops in every few days, usually around the time you’ve paused for lunch. The café does deliveries, so you treat yourself to a sandwich and a chocolate milkshake everyday, just because. Elsa either locks herself in her office, or goes out for a half-lunch, half-business meeting. That’s okay. You usually get some more work done, anyway.

Three weeks into your new position, and it’s already the best job you’ve ever had. Elsa and Olaf are out of town on a business trip, giving you a chance to bludge. Not that you do, it’s just…you can. If you want.

Even with the work taking up your time, it does get a little lonely. You haven’t really made many friends yet, so with Olaf and Elsa gone, you don’t have anyone to hang out with.

Kristoff is good, and he answers the phone when you ring, but he has his own job. You’re just interrupting him.

“You should come around for dinner sometime,” he says, just before he’s going to hang up. “I’ll cook stroganoff and we can catch up.”

You grin. “Sounds like fun,” you say. “Friday night?”

Plans made, you hang up and get back to work. Or, you try to, because you’re interrupted by a knock at the door before you can start. You have no idea who it might be, so you bid them enter.

Hans pokes his head around the door, and you find yourself breaking out in a smile at his appearance.
“Hans!” you cry, then, internally wincing, tone it down a bit. “How- how are you today?”

He gives a sheepish grin and fully enters. There’s a plastic bag in his hands. “I was wondering- that is, if you were amenable- and it is, after all, an appropriate time of day-” he pauses for a second, face red. You give a little giggle, and watch as he tries again.

“I uh, was just going to have a couple of sandwiches for lunch, but they got my order wrong, so they gave me a few more to make up for it. And I know that Elsa is out of town, so I thought… you might wanna have lunch with me?”

His face slowly returns to its normal colour, and his smile softens a bit just as you feel your own threatening to burst.

“I would… really like that…” you say, biting your lip.

“Wonderful,” he replies. “Great, uh, great office, by the way.”

That’s it. There’s no way you’re not smiling for the rest of the week.
Chapter 17

Chapter Notes

long-ish chapter that lbr isn't even about anna. still one of my favourites to date tho

Kristoff is… oddly subdued when you arrive at his place that Friday. He doesn’t seem down at all. Just quiet. He lets you talk, which of course means that you will, because a lot has happened. That doesn’t mean you don’t notice how he’s not talking.

But he doesn’t seem to want to fill the silence, so you take over that duty. You tell him about your promotion, about your return to work and how Olaf did up your office.

“There’s this guy, too,” you say. “His name is Hans and he works at the reception. We had lunch on Tuesday…”

You trail off, not from lack of anything to say, but because you’re actually…a little embarrassed. Or, not embarrassed. Worried, perhaps, at Kristoff’s reaction. You’ve never really shared this kind of stuff before.

Mostly because you’ve never been able to before.

He’s stirring the stroganoff, so he’s not really looking at you when he asks, “do you like him?” His voice is kind of flat, and it’s hard to gauge what he’s thinking.

So, you shrug, biting your lip. “He’s…really nice. And handsome. And, Kris, he approached me. Little ol’ me. It’s nice talking to someone who isn’t you, y’know?”

At that, Kristoff whips around, expression aghast. “Anna! Oh, I’m hurt. I thought you loved me!”

You stick your tongue out at him, grinning. “Yeah, but I can’t complain about you to you, can I?”

Kristoff turns back to the dinner, shaking his head. “What about your boss? Isn’t she good to talk to?”

This time, when you shrug, it’s sort of weak. Half-hearted, maybe. “We don’t have personal conversations,” you say softly, and then leave it at that. You don’t want to talk about Elsa.

The only thing that fills the kitchen after that is the smell of dinner. You frown at the back of Kristoff’s head and resolve to get him to talk to you. You set the table and open the bottle of red you brought. Something has to be wrong when Kristoff doesn’t joke whether or not you’re old enough to be drinking.

“So what’s up in your life?” you ask as dinner is served. Sitting at his seat, Kristoff raises his glass; you tap yours to his, as is customary, but don’t bother with a sip yet. He doesn’t take long to answer, but you aren’t satisfied.

“Oh, y’know, the usual. Work.”

You nod, looking at him blankly. “Mhmm, mhmm,” you say. He gives you a look, and you just
stare right back. He breaks first, twirling fettuccine around his fork.

There’s silence for several seconds, and Kristoff probably only breaks it when he realises that you won’t. “So how’s that, uh, new bakery on second street?” he asks. You just raise an eyebrow, and he sighs. His fork clatters lightly against his plate, and he looks away.

“Come on, Kris,” you say softly. “What’s up?”

He actually looks a little sick, and he doesn’t answer. It can’t be from the food, because you take a bite and it’s actually really good. If your mouth is full of food, you can’t say anything stupid, too.

But then he keeps not-answering, and even you can take a hint. He doesn’t wanna talk about it right now, and that’s cool. He knows you’re here for him when he’s ready.

So, you change the subject. “So, did you see that new space film?”

You settle in to watch *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* on Kristoff’s couch. It’s much more comfortable than yours, and halfway through the movie, you find yourself dozing off to sleep against his chest. You have a little chuckle when Indy meets the hot chick of the film, mostly because she shares her name with your boss. Doctor Elsa Schneider.

The only thing that stops you from actually falling asleep is how tense Kris is. He doesn’t seem to be paying attention to the movie at all, and you can feel the stress in each breath he takes.

“You uh, you remember Esmeralda, right?” he asks softly, out of the blue just as Indy’s room is ransacked. He purposely keeps his eyes on the TV, which is what makes you turn your head and think hard.

Of course you remember Esme. Kristoff had only been dating her for the last three-or-so years. You’d only met her a few times, but she seemed pleasant enough. She loved dancing, and was really outspoken, and always good to talk to. The only reason you hadn’t seen her was because she spent quite a bit of time in France – something with school, and her church. You aren’t really sure.

“Is she coming home?” you ask. Kristoff gives a dry laugh, but doesn’t look at you.

“Not…not exactly. She uh… we decided to take a break.”

“Oh.”

You’re not sure what he’s angling for; Kristoff’s never been the kind of guy to fish for sympathy (even if it’s warranted). You pluck the remote and pause the movie, because this isn’t really the sort of conversation you have with distractions.

“Yeah, it uh, it wasn’t working out…”

You nod, moving your arm to wrap around his bulking shoulders. “I’m sorry, Kris,” you say softly. “I know how much she meant to you. How…how are you feeling?”

“Louisy,” he says immediately, sucking in a breath. “But not… not because of this.”

You sit up a little straighter and look at him. It’s pretty obvious he’s hedging, unwilling to talk but wanting to. Grasping his hand, you squeeze it and make sure he’s looking at you. “You can tell me anything, Kristoff,” you repeat. You see him swallow several times before he opens his mouth.

“I found someone else,” he says quietly, using only a single breath to push the words out. You give
a sad sort of frown.

“…What’s she like?” The question sounds really stupid, but you feel like he needs to know you don’t judge him. Love happens. It’s not as if you’ve never liked more than one person at once.

He doesn’t answer at first, and when he does, it’s so soft you don’t catch it. When you ask him to repeat himself, he swallows again and squeezes his eyes shut.

“…He…”

The breath seems to leave your body for a single moment. Kristoff’s eyes are still shut, and he’s facing his lap, ignoring your searching gaze. He’s biting the inside of his cheek, and the hand that isn’t in yours is clenched against his thigh, knuckles white.

You squeeze his hand, and say, “hey,” if only to get him to look at you. When he opens his eyes, they’re red and a little watery. You rest your head on his shoulder and use both hands to play with his.

“What’s he like?”

Kristoff lets out a watery chuckle that sounds partly forced, but partly relieved. His other hand relaxes, and he lets out a deep breath that seems to release all the stress and fear he’d been holding in.

“He’s amazing…”
Chapter 18

You’re only a little distracted at work on Monday. Well, Elsa has to keep repeating herself, but she doesn’t ask if you’re okay. She asks if you’ve got something on your mind, which is basically the same thing, but it doesn’t feel like it. That’s nice.

It’s not even that you’re thinking about a lot. You had all weekend to mull over Kristoff’s news, so while that is on your mind, it isn’t exactly taking up every inch of space. He didn’t say much more about it, really. No names or places or dates. You asked how long he’d felt like this, and he didn’t answer, except for saying, “…it was a long distance relationship.”

You’d just nodded, and moved onto less sensitive topics. He’d talk to you when he was ready.

But that didn’t really help with sorting out your own thoughts, his silence, and multiple times, you find your concentration slipping. You’re not even sure what you’re thinking about, really, just that… something… is on your mind.

So when Elsa asks you to lunch, saying she has some news, you can’t help the apprehensive feeling in your chest, even though you know it’s stupid. You swallow and smile, and say you’d be delighted as Elsa grins and heads for the door.

She stops just before reaching the threshold and turns around.

“Anna?” she says, forcing you to look from your computer, where you’d been staring blankly as you fought down the rising panic. Her expression is relaxed, and it helps somewhat. Her next words, even more so.

“It’s good news,” she says. “Nothing to worry about at all.” And then she gives a soft smile and you actually believe her words. She’s… never actually given you a reason not to.

You take a cab to a different restaurant, closer to the center of the city. It’s a nice place, full of bright lights and leather booths. Elsa walks right up to the hostess and says, “Reservation for Arendelle”, like she knew you’d agree to lunch in the first place. You see her pull out a shiny credit card and hand it to the girl, but when you move to reach for your own wallet, she shoots you a glare.

“This is on me,” she says. You make to argue, but the hostess beckons you both forward, leading you to a secluded table. It’s next to a waterfall (and that’s the second one you associate with Elsa now What’s with that?), with an expensive-looking ‘reserved’ sign. Elsa slides into her seat and smiles at you. “Now, I think I’d like a glass of wine. What about you, Anna?”

You stutter a little over your answer – it’s barely afternoon! On a Monday! – but end up nodding anyway. You don’t drink often (don’t get to drink often), so you just go for something light.

Food is ordered before Elsa speaks. And even then, it takes a while. She just sort of sits there, watching you. You grow uncomfortable under her gaze, but you’re not entirely sure why. It isn’t harsh, or intimidating. She’s just… watching you.

The drinks arrive, and one sip in you know you’re not going to finish the whole thing. It’s far too strong. Nice, but strong. Elsa takes a sip, then puts the glass down and starts looking at you again. Her eyes shift every so often, like she’s memorising each feature of your face before moving on, and by the time you’re gnawing at your bottom lip, her expression has softened somewhat.
With anyone else, you’d break the silence. With Elsa, you’re not sure how.

You almost bark the sigh of relief when Elsa begins to speak. And, because of that, you actually miss what she says, and have to ask her to repeat it.

“I just wanted to apologise,” she says, “I asked you months ago for another lunch, and yet haven’t had the chance to follow through.” She laughs, a self-deprecating sound that doesn’t sit well with you. She’s the boss. She’s too busy to bother with you. Even going on one lunch is wonderful enough.

You rush to assure her that it’s fine, you’re not offended. “You’re a busy woman, Elsa,” you say, shrugging. “If you did things purely for my sake, I daresay we’d be in trouble.” You smile, and though it’s only tiny, Elsa smiles back. She picks up her glass and takes another swig before continuing.

“There was another reason I asked you here today, especially at such short notice.” She waits for your nod to continue. When you give it, she leans forward and fixes you with a stare. “I want you to come to Norway with me.”

You gape. You feel yourself blinking way too often, and you’re vaguely aware of the waitress arriving with your food, but your mind is still stuck processing Elsa’s words.

“Wait- wait what?” you say. Elsa’s lips quirk, and she tries again.

“I am going to a conference in Norway in a few weeks, and, as my PA, I want you to come with me. I only received the news yesterday, so, naturally, nothing has been booked yet. But this would be a fantastic opportunity for you. Of course, you’re free to refuse…” She looks away from you – she’s actually staring at her food when the next, mumbled words come. “…I hope you don’t, though…”

“…I can’t.”

Elsa whips her head up, hurt on her features before she schools it into mild surprise. And then you realise what you said and rush to clarify.

“I mean, I can’t refuse. How could I refuse? I would love to go. I mean, I know it’s for work, but I’ve never travelled before, and while Norway wasn’t at the top of my list – I may have to Google its like, location and, um, stuff – but a trip is a trip. I’ve never even been to the airport, so yes, I would really love to come.”

You’re a little breathless, and more than a little embarrassed at your outburst, but the sight of Elsa’s pink ears and smile is enough to cut through the anxious beating of your heart.

You spend the rest of the lunch discussing all the various places Elsa’s been, and, really, it’s the best outcome you could have hoped for.

Not the looming trip, but conversation. This is the first time you’ve truly spoken to Elsa, and it makes you wonder why it’s taken as long as it has.
Chapter 19

Chapter Notes

warning that upcoming chapters (not this one) will feature somewhat graphic descriptions of bodily functions, so yeah.

There’s a ridiculous number of things you have to organise. Of course, you do have a few weeks (almost a month) before you leave, but you’ve never had to organise anything like this before.

Kristoff agrees to look after Joan, but only if you bring him back a present. He’s going to let you borrow his camera so you’re not stuck with those shitty phone-pics. You don’t even have the newest phone around, so you accept the offer gladly. You appreciate it because he’s not a cat person. Or an animal person, really.

After organising that, you need to figure out what to take with you. Clothes, obviously. You debate, briefly, about taking your brace, but it’s been so long since you used it for any length of time. You should probably start practicing with it. Maybe surprise Elsa.

The thought has you smiling, and you don’t pack them away. You probably won’t bring them with you, but there’s always other events.

Apparently, you’re staying at a place called ‘Fredrikstad’. According to Google, it isn’t the capital city – which surprised you a bit, when you’d read that. You’d asked Elsa about it, and she’d just shrugged.

“We’ll be staying in Oslo for some time,” she said, “but the more important business is in Fredrikstad. If we have a chance, I’ll see if we can go for a day trip to Sweden.”

It had been said in such a casual manner, it was hard to absorb. Talking about crossing countries as though it were a simple hour-drive (and it was, you learnt, after fiddling around with Google Maps).

You try not to let your excitement get the better of you. There was still so much time between now and leaving, that something could go wrong. Sure, you’d been healthy for a while – no cold or infections in months. But then, you would get them just before going on an international trip.

But then, Elsa keeps asking you questions, distracting you from worrying. Do you have any dietary considerations? Any other equipment to take through customs? Any preference in room positioning?

It’s actually only a few days after she gave you the news that you find yourself in her office, talking plans. She’s actually sitting behind her desk, pen held in her manicured hands, writing down notes. You feel a little uncomfortable, but it’s not her fault. It’s just… kinda embarrassing, telling her that you need handrails to go to the bathroom. That there needs to be a shower, with a chair (not a bath), and that the actual head has to be removable.

That you can’t get into a bed shorter than about 17 inches, and if it’s any taller than 23, you may as well just stay in your chair. Elsa nods and writes it down, and then looks at you.
“Is that from the floor to the frame, or to the top of the mattress?” she asks, and you have to blink back your surprise. One, because it seems fairly straightforward – to the top of the mattress. Two, because no one had ever bothered double-checking anyway.

“Will, uh, will flying be a problem?” you ask, once she’s finished writing down the answers to her questions. Elsa tilts her head, puzzled for a moment, and you elaborate. “Well, it’s a long flight. You know. Bathrooms and deep-vein thyroid-stuff?”

An amused grin plays on Elsa’s lips, but she’s shaking her head too soon for you too take offence. “Thrombosis? It shouldn’t be an issue. We’ll be flying business class, which will definitely have enough room to stretch our legs-”

She cuts herself off, and you can almost see the cogs working in her head. You wait for the apology to come – the one she feels she has to give – but it doesn’t. Instead, she bites her lip and clears her throat.

“I’m…not sure of any specific exercises to combat DVT,” she says. “We’ll purchase some compression stockings, but it’s always something to ask your doctor.” She blinks at you for a moment, eyes never looking away. “There is an aisle chair for use on the plane, to get people from their seats and to the bathroom. Will there be any…problems?”

You know what she’s referring to, and you feel your heat beat just a little quicker. It’s not like you’ve never had to talk about these things before, but you didn’t think you’d have to tell your boss about it.

“I won’t need you, or anyone else, to help,” you say, “if that’s what you’re worried about.”

Elsa’s eyebrows lift, hiding under her fringe as she looks at you. “I’m not worried about anything. I just want this to be as comfortable as possible for you, Anna.”

You nod your head but don’t say anything for a moment. “I’ll, uh, I’ll talk to my doctor and see what he suggests. I’ve never had to think about it before.”

Elsa gives a smile. “We have some time, so don’t feel pressured to find out,” she says.

Of course, as soon as you have a chance, you ring up to make an appointment. You’re actually late to lunch because you get stuck trying to figure out a good time. You have to take three buses and two trains to see the specialist, which is half the reason you don’t see him very often. The other half is the stupid price, but thankfully, you hadn’t had to pay for most of your life. The government, or something, had paid for all your expenses when you’d first become…confined.

Your mind is still thinking about it when you meet Hans for lunch. He’s waiting in the foyer for you, biting his lip and holding a flower. It’s actually a little wilted because he’s holding it so tight, and he stumbles through an explanation when he gives it to you. Your face heats up like a sun-lamp, and by the end of it, you’re both blushing. It’s sweet.

He takes you to a Chinese place a few blocks away. You make idle conversation about how you’d never eaten out every other day until you started working at Arendelle Enterprises. It made you good at cooking, having to do it, but not so good at choosing nice places to eat. Hans gives a little chuckle at that as you round the corner.

“I think I might have eaten a total of three home-cooked meals in my entire childhood,” he says. “I had twelve brothers – all older than me – so my mother never even tried. Too many of us, with such different tastes.”
You put on a frown, and make a little noise under your breath. “That’s a shame,” you say. “There’s honestly nothing as good as home-cooked. I make a mean tuna casserole if…” you trail off, unsure how to continue. Hans pauses as you reach the restaurant, and looks at you.

“Hmm?”

You swallow and look up at him. “If you…wanted to come around some time and try it?”
Hans just looks at you, open-mouthed and stunned. You feel the redness seep into your cheeks, but you can’t even move past him into the restaurant because he’s blocking the way.

You shouldn’t have opened your stupid mouth. There’s a difference between being friendly, and someone actually liking you.

So you give a little cough, and rub the back of your neck. “It just doesn’t- I’d bring in some, but it doesn’t taste as good the next day, see…”

But then, amazingly, he smiles. Shakes his head in a way that you think isn’t meant for you, and rubs his chin. He doesn’t say anything, though, and you’re curious as to what’s going through his mind.

“What- what is it?” you ask. Hans grins at you when he answers.

“I thought that the guy was supposed to ask for the first date.” He bites his lip and gives a wink, and you can’t fight the blush that crawls up your cheeks. He wanted to ask you on a date.

He wanted to ask you.

“Y’know, you still can,” you respond, trying to be cheeky. You have no idea if it works, but then Hans chuckles.

“How about… this?” he asks, and before you have a chance to think, he’s got the top of your hand pressed to his lips, a smile playing there. “Would you acquiesce to going on a date with me, say, now?”

You give a shy nod, and bite your lip. And maybe it’s because it’s not your first lunch with him, but the whole thing goes really well. Hans teaches you how to use chopsticks (or tries) and you snort really loudly when a noodle falls from his own and leaves a slimy trail down his shirt. The best part is, he just laughs with you.

It’s by far the most relaxed lunch you’ve had in a while, and certainly the most relaxed date.

Date.

He kisses your hand once more when you part ways in the foyer. You sort of want him to kiss your cheek (but you don’t really want your first kiss to be in the middle of work), but it’s still so new. And exciting.

You wheel yourself over to the elevator, and don’t even realise that Elsa steps in beside you until she gives a little cough.

“Nice lunch?” she asks. You jump in your chair, not expecting the question. She’s looking at you, expression unreadable. She looks… well, she looks a little annoyed. You bite your lip because you’re probably late. You lost track of time, and even though it hadn’t happened before, Elsa could most certainly make sure it didn’t happen again.

You hang your head and bit your lip. “It won’t happen again,” you say softly, grateful that the elevator is empty.
“What won’t happen again?”

You don’t really want to admit to it, but it’s not like it’ll make a difference. God, if only you could stop fucking everything up. “I’ll keep a better eye on the time. Maybe if I have lunch in my office, I won’t be late again?”

You look up at Elsa, expression pleading, only to find her already looking at you, confused.

“Anna,” she begins, “I only asked because you seemed quite…content. You enjoy that young man’s company. I wasn’t being passive-aggressive. I was genuinely curious.”

You blush bright red and your eyes widen. “Oh.” There’s silence for a few seconds, save for the churning of the elevator. It shudders, and you feel your heart lurch with it, but then it comes to a stop and the doors open.

Even if you had any idea what you wanted to say, you end up waiting too long. Elsa’s halfway down the hallway before you even think to exit the lift, and then she’s in her office, door closed. You don’t really know how to take her change in mood, but at least she wasn’t upset with you.

A few hours later, you see Olaf walk past and enter Elsa’s office. He doesn’t come out for a good half-hour, and when he does, he seems far less happy than when he was when he entered. But he sees you looking and flashes you a smile. You return it, but it feels weak. He doesn’t seem to notice, and once again, you’re left wondering.
That night, most thoughts have completely vacated your mind, save for one.

You don't have a passport.

Truthfully, you're too scared to tell Elsa, too. You could very easily text her or Olaf, but something stays your hand – least of all because, despite having a work phone, you've never had to use it outside of work. She'll probably decide it isn't worth it, running around in a panic to try and get one. She'll decide you don't need to come this time – you can do all the things she said *next time*, when you have a passport.

The thought is sad enough to make you cry as you're getting ready for bed. You've had your shower and you've gone to the bathroom, but you just kind of sit there and sob.

It's late by the time you manage to calm down and think rationally. You pull out your dreadfully ancient Netbook and wait for it to boot up before jumping onto the passports and travel website.

Apparently, you can get a passport within a few working days, provided it's lodged correctly. You just need to pay an extra fee. That's okay. You can pay it – actually, shouldn't you be paying for your whole passport?

Because, like, yeah, now you have actual money. But a lot of it goes to savings accounts that you don't have permission to touch. Emergency medical funds and 'rainy day' accounts. You probably won't be able to go out for lunch for a while, but that's okay. You can make some of your signature sandwiches and share them.

You shut the computer down, feeling the tension draining away at the same time. You can almost imagine Elsa's smile when you tell her your plan.

That's how you fall asleep.

You wake up sometime in the middle of the night. You're absolutely drenched in sweat, and your heart seems to be beating a thousand miles an hour, for absolutely no discernible reason. The flashing red numbers of your clock tell you that there's at least another four hours of sleep to gain, but you're actually feeling quite awake.

Joan is sleeping on your chair, and she's not very happy when you kick her off. May as well go to the bathroom while you're awake. You don't have a night-time schedule, mostly because you generally sleep all the way through. The streetlights filter through your windows, lighting the way to the bathroom. You have to prepare yourself before you turn the light on, because you know how bright it is.
You pull out a little bag from the drawer before washing your hands. You'll have to get more catheters before you go away – maybe a foley bag for the flight? Something to ask the doctor.

You lay everything out on the bench and shift to the toilet. You'd had to have the bathroom remodelled when you first bought the apartment because it was…not appropriate for your needs. But now there are bars and stools and it's all very convenient.

Grabbing a baby wipe, you clean yourself. Your heart gives a little lurch as the material slides easily, and suddenly your strange awakening makes sense.

Oh. Ohh…

You had a dream.

Biting your lip, you dispose of the wipe and prepare the catheter. You can think about it later (and oh boy will you think about it later). But it's really not good to be distracted while doing this. You've been tract-infection-free for almost four months, and you don't wanna break that record.

Adding the lubricant to one end, you place the other one into the bowel. You used to hate this part, but it got easier – and when you have to do it four times a day, you get pretty good, pretty quick.

Gently, you use a finger to find the urethra. The catheter slides in easily for the first few inches, but as always, there's a fight to get it into your bladder. But, eventually it goes in, and all you have to do is sit there. Wiggle it occasionally. This is the best bit because it isn't actually work.

The cath goes into the bin when you've finished with it. You've thought about getting reusable ones, but they never seemed to clean properly. You were on antibiotics for weeks the last time you tried. Never again.

You wash your hans and wipe yourself again, and by the time you get back to your bed, you feel like you could have just stayed there and fallen back asleep. Joan has taken up residence on your pillow, but she isn't quite as grumpy. She snuggles you for a few seconds before buggering off, but it still brings a smile to your face.

You spend the next few minutes of wakefulness praying that you'll return to the same dream you left.
Elsa calls you to her office the next day. You've barely turned on your computer before you get a message alert through the office IM network.

*Please pop in at your earliest convenience.*

Of course Elsa would say something like that, you think as you roll yourself down the hall. You remind yourself not to forget about the passport issue, while simultaneously hoping she feels better.

Oh, that's right. She was acting weird.

...Maybe today isn't the best day to bring up a problem.

As soon as you enter, Elsa shoots you a mega-watt smile that she immediately tries to fight back, with little success, and you think that maybe it was just your imagination.

"Hey," you say as you park your chair in front of her desk. "You, uh, wanted to see me?"

She nods, ponytailed hair swishing against her neck. It looks really nice when paired with the modest necklace and earrings – white gold, maybe. She's wearing a grey business dress, and for the first time, you wonder how old she is. She can't be that much older than yourself, but she just seems so... grown up. Her 'adultness' is definitely different to yours. More sophisticated.

But hey, your trousers are comfy and they cover your knees (which aren't very attractive) so you don't mind.

Elsa moves forward and stands right in front of you. Her hand hovers in the space between the two of you, but it doesn't stay there long before she's running her thumb over her fingers and withdrawing it.

"Anna," she says softly, mouth rolling over the word in a way you can't describe. "We have some business downtown. The driver will be meeting us outside in the foyer in half an hour, if there's anything you need to settle before then."

She has this weird way of talking, you muse, because it's all stiff and professional, but there's always a warmth in her voice and eyes, and a smile on her face, just for you. Her eyes don't even flicker to your chair anymore.

"Uh, sure," you say, confused. What are you doing downtown?

You wait patiently for her to say something else, maybe explain the unexpected excursion, but she seems lost in thought. When she catches herself, it's with a small jerk, and you wonder what's going through her head.

As quick as she first stood up to greet you, she steps back and takes a seat behind her desk. "It's in regards to our trip." she says after a few moments. "We need to get you a warm jacket and some stockings, for starters." She gives a wry smile and looks away.

That answer only leaves you more confused, however. Surely you'd be able to buy your own? If it's something to do with the company paying for it, well, receipts are a thing. Not only have you been given permission by the boss to play hooky and go shopping, but she's coming with you. It's all absurd.
And, isn't it summer in Norway, too? It's already mid-June. Surely Norway isn't too much colder than New York?

When you voice that, Elsa gives you a look and laughs, but just like last time, you don't feel like she's laughing at you. It's more like... you've made a joke she found funny.

Shaking her head, eyes still twinkling with mirth, she replies. "Well, the highest temperature in Oslo is about the same as the coldest temperature here this time of year."

You nod, and then bite your lip. She's planned all this, just for your.

"There's, um, a small... hiccup..." you say. Elsa cocks her head, and you continue in a rush. "I don't have a passport..."

"Oh." She says, and you wilt a little at the disappointment in her voice. But then she perks up again, smiling at you. "Well, we'll just have to grab the forms while we're out. We should be able to get the photos done today, too."

That was... easier than you expected, and you make your way back to your office in a bit of a daze. You're so deep in thought that you don't hear the knock on the door. It's only when Hans steps into the room that you notice him.

It actually hurts to turn down his offer of lunch. You have no idea when you're going to finish this little trip with Elsa. He deflates a little, before he's back to smiling, and wondering about tomorrow.

Of course, you agree.

He stays and chats for a while, until Elsa pops her head around the door and tells you that the driver is waiting for you. And even then, he accompanies you down to the lobby – it is, after all, where he works. You're just about to follow Elsa out the front door when he touches your wrist.

"Hey, could I uh... get your phone number?"

Silently, you nod. You write it on his hand, because you don't have any paper and you want to be cute, and the red flush that rises to his cheeks is adorable. Elsa's waiting patiently by the door, and you realise you're holding up pretty much everyone.

You barely buckle your seatbelt before your phone dings with a new message.

*Have fun! -Hans*
Contrary to what you thought would happen, you don't drive down to the post office to pick up some passport forms. Elsa keeps looking at you, but she doesn't say anything. The drive actually takes you to the other side of town, an unfamiliar shopping district appearing from between bland corporate offices and brick buildings.

Most of the shop windows are completely glass, bright candescent light shining from the beige and off-white depths, and there are trees planted in the sidewalk. It looks expensive.

Of course, that's precisely where the car stops. Elsa leaves you to do your thing as she speaks to the driver.

"He will pick up the appropriate forms from the post office, and meet us here when we've finished our business," she says, and you just nod.

The place Elsa takes you is a large, brightly lit shop, with rotating mannequins in the window. They seem to be wearing formal clothes, which you think is a little odd until you actually enter and realise it's a tailor.

What in the hell?

But you don't say anything as Elsa leads you through the shop. You don't say anything when she introduces you to the shortest woman you're ever seen – seriously, you think you must be taller than her. And you're in a wheelchair.

You don't say anything when you're getting measured and Elsa's choosing out fabric, and asking your opinion on colours.

You don't even say something when the woman – Edna, you think her name is – announces she has all she needs, so "just a deposit, dahling, and pick it up next week!", and Elsa takes out her wallet.

Actually, you're outside the shop, Elsa smiling to herself and wondering where you wanted to eat lunch ("because there's a lovely little Italian restaurant down the block") when you finally speak.

"Why are you doing this?"

Because this stuff doesn't happen. Your boss doesn't get you a tailor-made winter jacket for a week-and-a-bit stay in another country on business. She doesn't take you out to lunch afterward.

Why are you being given such special treatment?

Elsa flushes and looks at her shoes. She doesn't answer the question for a moment, and when she does, you're still not satisfied.

"You'll need a jacket, Anna," she says. You know that she knows that wasn't what you were asking, but you don't want to cause a scene by demanding a real answer. You can maybe keep telling yourself that it's just because Elsa is strange, but you know that excuse won't hold out forever.

She is strange. But she's- this is "hiding" behaviour. You glare up at her for a few seconds, but her eyes are still fixed obstinately on her shoes.
Like she's a child being scolded, and she's accepted her punishment.

"I can buy my own jackets, all right?" you say. It comes out harsher than you expected, and you run a hair through your bangs. "I... appreciate all this, Elsa, I do. But you don't need to."

"But I want to!"

The words are out of Elsa's mouth almost before you finish your sentence, and they're left hanging in the air between the two of you. She seems like she wants to bite them back. Her eyes widen and her mouth flaps, searching for something to say.

The word, "why?", plays on your lips, but you can't bring yourself to voice it. You tighten your jaw and look away.

"I... consider you a friend, Anna," she says slowly, softly. "I... understand if the fact I am your boss gets in the way of that..." She sighs. "I understand if you don't..." She trails off, but you can still hear the unspoken words. *If you don't want to be my friend...*

Why wouldn't you want that? You can't just tell her how weird this is. You don't even know what to say. You can't even remember the last time you made a friend (and Hans is... different). This is so new and unprecedented.

But... nice. It's nice. You're not sure what her definition of 'friend' is. Different to yours because... well, you work together. Go out to lunch occasionally. But that's like, a work relationship. Acquaintances. How can you actually become friends from that when there's such distance between you anyway?

When you look at her, though, you realise you can't say any of that. There's a look in her eyes, soft and hopeful, and you don't want to be the one to snuff it out. You don't want to because you're a little selfish, too, and you want to be friends with Elsa. She's never been anything but nice and polite and *accommodating*, and that's not something you come across much in your life.

So you offer up a shy smile and nod. "Sure, Elsa. Friends."
Of course, Kristoff doesn't react the way you want him to when you tell him. He pretty much reacts opposite to how you want him to. The rest of the day had passed quite easily, and Elsa certainly seemed more sure of herself. Or, rather, her actions. She let you pay for the drinks at lunch, and you spent the whole day just... out. You got paid for not being at work and it was awesome. It was still awesome, even if she took you to her favourite chocolate place and bought you some ridiculously overpriced fudge. But it's not really her fault that you didn't know how to tell her she didn't have to.

That you didn't really want her to. But why rock the boat? It's all harmless, right?

The only downside was that Elsa kept you too busy to respond to the messages Hans sent, and by the time you'd gotten home, you just wanted to go to sleep. You'd forgotten how tiring shopping was, because you barely ever did it (mostly because of how tiring it was).

But with two weeks left until the trip, you thought you'd better see your brother again at least once. This time, he came over to your house and you made spaghetti and meatballs. He let you talk about the day – and the week – and gush about Hans and, well.

You were happy. Are happy. You think. Well, the day was a success, at any rate. And you know that Kristoff probably doesn't mean to bring you down, but the point stands that he... does anyway. And it's not his fault – you were always the optimistic one – but his words do make you pause.

"So, lemme get this straight," he asks through a mouthful of pasta. He takes a sip of red wine and continues. "You got paid to go get a tailored jumper – that your boss paid for – and then you got lunch, on top of being recently promoted to her PA and getting to go to Norway with her?"

You nod. That's pretty much it.

"Doesn't that strike you as... weird?" he asks, and you frown. Not really? Why would it? When you ask him that, he seems to chew on his words for a minute before saying, "Well... what if your boss was a guy? Like, a thirty-something year old guy doing all this. Now is it creepy?"

Biting you lip, your eyes widen. Of course that's creepy. And you know exactly what he's getting at but you don't want to think of that.

Now he's brought it up, it's so stupid you didn't see it before.

"Oh God," you say. "Oh God."

"Hey, hey, it's okay, Anna," Kristoff rushes to tell you. You don't really hear him. There's a sick, sinking feeling in your stomach, and you push your plate away.

"Wh- what do I do, Kris?" you ask. "I'm- I'm going to another country with her. Alone. For a week. What- what if she tries something? What if- I don't want that!"
You feel his hand on yours, convincing you to look at him.

"I'm sure it's nothing, Anna," he says. "Do you want me to talk to her about it?"

Sucking in a breath, you shake your head. "I'll... I'll talk to her. Talk to Olaf – he's HR. He'll know what to do."

You finish your dinner – or what you can of it – and Kristoff doesn't hang around. He's "meeting someone", and you know it's his new beau but he doesn't say anything, so you don't say anything. He leans down and gives you a kiss on the cheek before he goes.

"Text me or call me if you need to," he says. "And let me know how everything goes."

With a final, parting hug, and a nod, he leaves.

You don't get a very good night's sleep.
Chapter 25

You almost have a heart attack the next time you go into work. Elsa's waiting for you in the foyer, a grin taking up half her face.

"Anna!" she says, and it's all you can do to stop the cringe as she says your name. "How are you today?"

She almost looks like she wants to say something else, but bites her tongue at the last second.

You answer in the form of a noncommittal shrug, and try to smile at her. It seems to work, because soon she's shepherding you towards the elevator. You catch sight of Hans, offering you a little wave from behind the reception desk, and you go to wave back. The lift doors shut before you have a chance, and your heart sinks. You don't feel very good about today.

And of course, Elsa's looking at you and smiling, and you don't get angry very often but at the moment you're kind of annoyed, and a little scared because like. You've read books on things like this. Abuse. Kristoff made you, and your therapist made you, and your third foster mother made you, so you know all the warning signs of a not-very-good relationship.

How you missed these, you're not even sure. You make a little checklist in your head on the way up the levels, and tick them off one by one

Monopolising your time? Yeah, probably. She did spring that excursion on you. Basically made sure you didn't have time all day to message- well, Hans, but you didn't have time to talk to anyone.

Trying to make sure you 'owe' her? Well, perhaps. Elsa keeps going out of her way to do things. She could very easily say something like, "remember when I did that thing? call this a favour for me", and you'd have no choice but to do it.

Keeping an eye on you? She did promote you to her PA. Doesn't that answer the question? The only thing you did for her was come up with a solution that, frankly, anyone could have in order to get her home.

Your heart is basically in your shoes by the time the elevator bell dings at your floor.

"Come on, Anna, there's something really exciting I want to show you," she says, still wearing that million-dollar grin. You can't even manage one this time, and she picks up on it straight away. You have this god-awful urge to cry, and she takes one step forward only to stop because you've moved back.

"Anna?"

Her voice is so, so soft, and she sounds so vulnerable and- no! Stop it! That's just another tick under the 'guilt trips and manipulates' box.

You swallow and shake your head. "I'm fine, just uh..." you stumble for something to say that can get you out of this. "Bathroom! Yeah, I uh, need to use the loo. I'll...meet you in your office?"

She nods and steps back, and you can feel her gaze on the back of your neck all the way down the hallway.
You actually do tear up, so when you knock on Olaf's door and he's looking over what seems to be important documents, he puts them away and invites you in.

"Anna, what's wrong?" he asks. "What happened?"

You wipe at your eyes and shake your head before saying, "It's Elsa."

And he sits right up and bites his lip. "Did she do something?"

"I don't kn- I think so," you say. You open your mouth to speak again but he interrupts you.

"Anna," he says, "are you coming to me as a friend, or as a HR rep? Because...if it's a rep, I need to document this. And no matter how small it is, when it concerns a CEO, everything – everything – is a big deal. And I'm not saying this to belittle how you feel at all. I just wanted you to be aware."

You nod and give a little sniffle. "Can I...tell you as a friend and you can tell me if I need to do it again with a rep?"

Olaf smiles. "Of course."

He's completely silent as you muddle and stumble through your thoughts. At some point he begins chewing on the end of a pencil, but he keeps looking at you and nodding whenever you pause. There's a frown on his face, but you don't know if it's thoughtful or worried.

Actually, throughout your whole story, there's only one interruption and it happens all the way at the end, just as you're searching for a way to finish. Olaf's intercom buzzes, and Anna's more than happen to let him take it.

"Hello-"

"Olaf! Have you seen Anna? She said she was going to the bathroom but it's been almost an hour and she's not there. I have no idea where she's gone – she's not in her office, and the boy at reception hasn't seen her!"

Olaf's eyes widen and he looks at you. Your hand has come up to cover your mouth and your heart feels like it's going to jump out of your chest because oh god will it stop?

He presses the button before Elsa starts speaking again. "Yeah, she's in my office at the moment. Someone's said something and she just wanted to talk about it. We've got it under control."

There's an audible sigh through the line. "Okay," she says. "I'll be in my office for when she's done."

"Got it."

Olaf takes his finger off the button and throws the soggy pencil in the bin. "Do you want to know what I think?" he says softly, and you can't even speak, can only nod. "I've known Elsa for a long time," he begins. "And in all that time, I've never seen her make friends. Or try. Or take an interest in anyone."

"But-" you start, but he sucks in his own breath and you cut yourself off.

"I'm not saying that her actions are excusable. I'm not saying that you shouldn't feel how you do about it. I'm saying that...well, she's shit with people. Like, really shit. I don't think she means to be as...confronting as she is."
He's silent, and you take your chance to talk. "But what do I do, Olaf?"

There's a wry smile on his face, tinged with a little sadness, and also something you can't place.

"You talk to her. Tell her how you feel and why her actions are inappropriate. You'll see if she's aware of it or not. If she is, you can come back to me and we can lodge an official complaint. If she isn't, well, it's up to you to decide what you want to do."

You nod, and manage your first genuine smile of the day. You kind of want to hug him, but, with everything that's happened, you're not even sure if that's appropriate. So you ask.

He just gives two thumbs up. "Consent is awesome," he says, and then pulls you into a hug. It's even better than the first one he gave you at your triumphant return to work. "Go get 'em, champ," he winks, and you roll out of his office feeling ten thousand times more confident than you did rolling in.

You can do this. You got this. You're awesome.
By the time you’re sitting outside Elsa’s office, all that confidence has drained to the bottom of your shoes. Maybe you should just go back to Olaf and file a complaint. That’d definitely get Elsa to stop, at any rate.

But…you know you can’t because what if it’s all just a gigantic misunderstanding? Could you ruin Elsa’s career – her life – because you were too scared to just talk to her?

Taking a deep breath, you knock on the door. You could just wheel right in, but the longer you put this off, the better. Maybe you’ll get lucky and Elsa’s got a meeting or something. Gone to the coffee shop because you were taking too long.

You know you’re just trying to think up excuses, but they work in keeping you calm until she opens the door, and you’re kinda grateful for that.

“Anna!” There’s a smile on her face, but it doesn’t look right. It looks…odd. She steps back and lets you in, and even though you park yourself in front of her desk, she doesn’t sit on the chair behind it. “Are you okay? I didn’t want to ask again if everyone was treating you properly but I still want you to know that you can come and see me if they aren’t. Is it that young man from reception? He’s not bothering you, is he? I can always move him somewhere where you won’t interact, if it would make you feel better?“

All throughout her speech, you found yourself gripping your hands together, tighter and tighter the longer she carried on. Your chest kind of feels like it’s on fire but you don’t know why – is it anger? Are you going to cry or be sick? Well, the second one isn’t an impossibility because you don’t- who is this woman?

You shake your head minutely. “It’s not him.” Your voice is way too soft, and you’re surprised Elsa could even hear you. She leans against her desk and folds her hands across her chest.

“Oh,” she says. You look down at your legs because you can’t bear to look at her any longer, and when she speaks again, that feeling only grows. “I understand you told Olaf, Anna,” she says, “But I want you to know that you can tell me, too. I only want to help.”

You open your mouth several times, unsure what to say. It isn’t until Elsa leans forward and says softly, “Let me help you, Anna,” that you find your voice.

“It’s… you,” you say, as loud as you dare. Elsa doesn’t seem to understand at first, but then her eyes widen and her mouth goes slack.

“I’m- I’m sorry, pardon?” she asks. Your eyes are glued to your hands, clenched tightly in your lap, and you repeat yourself.
“I went to Olaf because you were- are making me uncomfortable.”

When Elsa next speaks, her words are so soft that, even in the silence of the room, it’s almost impossible to hear. “I don’t understand.”

You almost laugh because of course she doesn’t understand. Why would she? But…maybe that means it wasn’t on purpose. Olaf did suggest telling her why her actions were wrong. So you take a breath and begin.

“You promoted me when I did nothing; personally came to my home to fix a mistake; invited me to a conference with you halfway around the world. You invite me to lunch and pay for things that I should be paying for. You got me a tailored jumper. You- you take me out and then pay me for it, but I don’t have the chance to say no in the first place…”

You chance a look at Elsa only to find her staring at you, hand over her mouth. And you don’t know how to take that because these types of people are good at acting too. She might mean it or she might not, and you have no idea because you don’t know who she is. You don’t know why she does the things she does.

But then she blinks and nods and looks away. Her hands move to wrap around her waist. “I see,” she says, voice thin. “I didn’t realise. I…apologise for my actions, and I understand if you want to…make some changes here. If you wish to work in a different department, that can be arranged – for no less pay, of course. It isn’t your fault that I make- that you feel uncomfortable here. We can- you can return to your office and make some…changes, if you want.”

And that’s a pretty obvious dismissal, so you just nod and wheel to the door. Give her a small smile when she opens it for you.

“Thank you for understanding,” you say. She just nods, and as soon as you’re out of the doorway, you hear it lock shut behind you.
You don't see Elsa for the next couple of days. You're pretty sure she's in her office, because you hear noises sometimes when you come to deliver invoices. You never get in because the door's always locked, but when you return from lunch, the papers have gone from your desk.

And okay, it kinda hurts. You're pretty sure now that she wasn't aware of any wrongdoing. If she was, she probably would have acted differently.

You get real proof, too, a few days later. It's a Thursday, which is usually a pretty laid-back day. When you get in, there's a yellow padded envelope on your desk, except it's not addressed to you, it's addressed to Elsa. You grab it and wheel yourself down the hall, and you're more than a little surprised when you hear voices coming from behind the door. You know you shouldn't listen, but you can't say you're not curious.

As you get closer, you start to think that it's maybe an argument – which is weird because you didn't even think Elsa was capable of raising her voice. Not that it's necessarily loud, but more like... forceful.

Another voice enters the fray, and it only makes you more confused because what could Elsa and Olaf be fighting about.

"This is the problem, Elsa!" he's saying. Projecting. It's definitely louder than a normal conversation. Not really yelling, as such – because who's stupid enough to yell at their boss? – but it's apparent he's a bit... exasperated.

"It's not the same, I want to say——"

"—Sorry, I know. I get it, Elsa, I do, but this isn't the way to go about it."

You frown a little because you have an inkling about what the problem is. That little hunch is all but confirmed with Elsa's next words, soft and hard to hear.

"How do I say sorry, then?"

There's only one reason you can think that would bring Elsa and Olaf in a room together, talking about making an apology, and you're both nervous and a little... excited? It's not really quite how you're feeling but it'll do. You want to move past this. You still- Elsa, despite making you uncomfortable, is nice. She's a nice girl, just a bit...

You shake yourself of those thoughts and turn around. It's probably better that they have no idea you heard, even if it turns out not to be about you.

You half expect Elsa to approach you during the day, but she doesn't. It makes you think that
maybe you were hearing things.

After lunch, your computer dings and you jump to open the email when you see it's been sent by Elsa. As you read it, your heart falls a little because it's not an invitation to a meeting, or asking you to come to her office. It's an email that's been sent to everyone, it seems, telling them of a compulsory seminar the following day. The topic, however, piques your interest.

It's on communication.

You don't mind – it's during work hours and you can't not go, so it means you'll be getting paid for essentially doing nothing. And... maybe Elsa will be there.

You try to get to work early the next day. Not like you're not going to find a seat or anything, but still.

Hans meets you in the foyer, smiling. You like his smile, and even better, it's directed at you. He has this way of making you blush, and today is no exception.

Apparently (and you're not even surprised) the building has its very own auditorium, mostly for events like these. Hans leads the way because you've never been, and it makes you simultaneously happy and a little ill when you realise that there seem to be some new refurbishments – a little wheelchair elevator to get to the stage, ramps. There's even a spot down the front where it's pretty obvious chairs used to be, but now they've been removed.

Hans grabs a loose chair nearby and puts it in that section before taking a seat.

"Uh, you don't mind, do you?" he asks, and you quickly shake your head. Absolutely you don't mind. You'd mind more if he decided to sit elsewhere (and hush Anna there's no need to be clingy).

So you wheel right over and plants yourself next to him, before taking a moment to turn around to see the crowd.

Despite your attempt to be early, the buses and trains keep to their own schedule, not yours, and you're really only about twenty minutes earlier than normal. The other seats have mostly filled, and the room is humming with the warm hubbub of hundreds of voices, but that's not what catches your attention.

Elsa's taken a seat about halfway up, and closer to the other side of the room. You watches as someone close to her jumps up to greet a friend, and when they sit back down it's a good two rows away from where she'd been sitting originally.

It doesn't seem like Elsa's noticed you watching, either, because she's staring at her lap. The auditorium fills around her, but no one tries to sit near her. One guy has to slide past her, and you watch as Elsa's mouth moves, saying something. Trying to, really, because it falls on deaf ears as he completely ignores her.

You're about to move forward to wave at her, maybe convince her to sit near you because this is honestly painful to watch, when Olaf gets up on the stage.

"Good morning, everyone," he begins, smiling. "Thank you for being here – we understand that you have a busy work schedule, and this might, to some, seem slightly out of the blue."

There are a few murmurs of agreement from the crowd, but they don't take long to quieten down. Olaf, picking up the microphone, begins to pace the stage.
"Now, when Ms Arendelle took over as CEO last year, she made a promise to make this company a better place to work. Some of you have already seen this in action – better benefits and wages, and better hours, too. But," he pauses for effect, and it seems like he's staring right at Elsa, "this is still a business. To bring those benefits, we all have to be at the top of our game. A cohesive business is a successful business, and cohesion needs communication.

"This is something that has become apparent, of late, that perhaps the word 'communication' leaves some people confused. We do, after all, manage to talk to each other during our work days – isn't that communication? So we've brought in someone just to go over the finer points. Who knows, maybe we'll learn something."

With a wink at the audience, he hands the microphone off to a squat gentlemen who really doesn't look like a master of communication. You kind of zone out because you're too busy thinking about something Olaf says. Nudging Hans, you ask him.

"Elsa's only been CEO for a year?"

He cocks his head and looks at you. "Well, yeah," he said. "Didn't you know that?"

Leaning back in your chair, you shake your head. This... changes things.
You don't get a chance to talk to her during the morning tea break. You're a little surprised to find that the seminar is an all-day thing. You just happen to be in the first group. After lunch, you'll go back to your own job and the other half of the building will go through the same thing.

You keep an eye on her, but Elsa doesn't move from her seat at all during the morning tea (and, well. You can't exactly go up the stairs to chat). You don't know if she did it on purpose, but it doesn't really matter. She doesn't seem to care. When it ends, you plan on waiting for her, except Hans swoops you to a nice restaurant for lunch, which sounds like a much better idea than waiting for someone who doesn't want to talk to you. You'll just...schedule a meeting with her and add it to her planner, or something.

They're led to a seat in the corner, out of the way and private, but not too far from the entrance. Hans has offered to pay, and like. He doesn't have to. But he wants to, and you're pretty sure that these are actually dates now. He's never asked you on a date, not using that word, but this is a little more than a friendship thing, you think (you hope).

"Is this a date?" you blurt, just before your eyes widen and you realise exactly what you said. Hans gives an awkward little chuckle, hand coming up to rub the back of his head.

"Well, I mean," he begins, and your heart sinks a little because maybe he was just being friendly. A friend. But then he continues. "I would...really like it to be," he said, and he looks about as uncomfortable as you feel. He doesn't meet your eyes when he says, "You are...a really nice person, and I'd love to get to know you better. If- if you'd let me."

You can't stop the grin from appearing on your face. Gosh, even Hans looks bashful. You look away, and you only manage to meet his eyes when you feel a gentle pressure on your hand.

Oh god he's holding your hand.

You're powerless to stop the blush, and you don't ever want him to move it. He has to, of course, because it's hard eating one-handed (not to mention impossible to hold someone's hand while moving, in your case) but throughout it all – lunch, and the return to work – Hans has a look on his face that tells you he wants to regain contact, too.

You told him, during lunch, the issues you've had with Elsa. Not specifics, just that something happened.

"I still want to work with her," you'd said. "She's nice, if a bit... odd sometimes. But we're supposed to go to another country next week and she refuses to talk to me!"
Hans had offered a sympathetic smile, but it was his next words that were most useful. "Maybe you need to just, I dunno. March in there and tell her what's what. From the sounds of things, she's been quite...hot and cold. It's not fair on you." His face had fallen to his lap, but his eyes still flickered up to your face when he continued with a, "I don't want to be presumptuous, but I'd wager that travel isn't as easy. There are obstacles you face that I don't even think about. Especially because it'd be your first time. The earlier you know what's up, the better. I, uh, assume."

You'd nodded, not at all minding the assumption. He was right (and at least he was thinking about that). You don't want to miss out on this opportunity because Elsa was being like this.

When you arrive back at work, Hans takes your hand and squeezes. "You can do it," he says softly, and then, without warning, presses his lips to your cheek. That was a date, and this was a kiss, and once again, you wish you weren't at work because you're twenty-three and this 'first kiss' business is taking its sweet time getting to you. But, now isn't the place. You just squeeze his hand back and nod.

"Thanks," you say. "I'll let you know how it goes."

You head straight for the lift, the date and the kiss giving you an extra boost of confidence. You're going to sort this out.

It's the first time you've ever truly taken advantage of the 'knock and enter' policy, you think. Or, at least, the first time you've ever appreciated it. Elsa's sitting behind her desk, and when she sees you she almost jumps up. As it is, she pales a bit, and doesn't meet your eyes.

"We need to talk," you hear yourself saying. It's gotta be the success of the day (either that, or the seminar actually worked), because you're definitely way more forceful than you ever thought you could be. Elsa seems to react to it, though. She clears her throat and nods her head, and she indicates the space in front of her desk.

"What- what would you like to discuss?" she asks, and you realise that she probably thinks you're going to quit, or ask to be moved. It...seems to be the first thing she always thinks, when things go wrong. She thinks people want to leave. Huh. It's odd, and possibly something to think about, at a better time.

"You're avoiding me," you say. There's little room for discussion, but Elsa still tries. You hold her back with a mere lift of your hand. "You're avoiding me because I said something you weren't prepared to hear. I didn't expect you to react so badly, but I won't apologise for saying it. I needed to say it. But," you continue, because Elsa looks decidedly unhappy and this wasn't supposed to be a bitch-out session. "But it's become obvious that my...grievances were based entirely on error and miscommunication." You smile. "You're not a bad person, not at all. You just... freaked me out a little."

You watch for several intense seconds as Elsa tries to get her bearings. She swallows thickly, but she doesn't look away.

"I... have been avoiding you..." she began softly; hesitantly, "because I didn't want to...scare you anymore than I had already done. I didn't realise how much actions came across until you mentioned it, and then I felt terrible because that is an awkward, scary place to be. I didn't want to- to pressure you into anything else..."

You let out a relieved smile because this is exactly the person you thought Elsa was. You didn't think she did it on purpose, and you're mostly sure you're right, now. Your attention is drawn back to Elsa when she gives a little cough.
"I, uh, I understand if you don't want to attend this Norwegian conference anymore. I don't want you to be uncomfortable, which it might be as Olaf is unable to attend. It would be just us for over a week..."

You blink in surprise. "Of course I want to come," you say, only a little confused. "I've never been to Norway before." Plus, you have another week to repair this work relationship a little more, too.

Elsa just gapes at you for a moment – obviously not expecting you to agree. So, you shoot her another smile.

"I better get back to work," you hear yourself say. Elsa's expression falls a fraction, but she hides it away before you have a chance to comment. "I appreciate this chat," you say instead, and Elsa nods. She walks you to the door.

"I really am sorry," she says, just as you're about to leave. "For making you uncomfortable." You grin.

"I know you are, and it's why I forgive you."

This time, when you wheel yourself down the hallway, it's clear of the sound of a shutting door.
Chapter 29

Chapter Notes

jesus christ this chapter did not go the way i wanted it too, but this is important stuff too. at some point, it will be used to show the differences between how elsa and hans interact with anna, which is ofc very important.

at this point, norway trip is in a constant state of 'coming up'. in-fic time, it's about a week away. irl updating time? no fucking idea. sorry. soonish, if i manage to stick to a regular updating schedule. i'm actually sick atm so i've just been sleeping a lot. also working on the last chapter of who dares wins is taking it out of me :/

It's surprising how well the rest of the week goes. Your passport comes in, and Elsa gives you a couple of days off to get everything together. You have to make a specialist appointment, but now that you have like, actual money, it's easy.

Hans offers to drive you, too. You don't know how he managed to get the day off, but maybe he works in a part of the building where it doesn't matter so much. It doesn't really matter, anyway. All that matters is that he wants to do it for you. You could have caught the train, but no. He wanted to help.

He doesn't come into the doctor's room with you, which is something you're grateful for. He doesn't need to know about your bladder function or blood pressure. The doc seems pretty happy, gives you a new script for oxybutynin and warfarin. You really should get better insurance, you think, as you leave the pharmacy next door, laden with drugs but over a hundred dollars down. The price of not dying, you suppose, and it's really not that bad now you have a job. Maybe you should ask if the company covers health insurance? Some of them do...

You have the rest of the day off work, as does Hans, so he drives you around this side of the city, pointing out his favourite spots. You don't really come here all that often because the public transport isn't fantastic, and you honestly have no reason to come this way except for the doctor. It's nice, seeing it through someone else's eyes. He obviously likes living here.

Turns out, when he asks if you wanna come back to his place for lunch, you may have another excuse to venture here.

Hans lives in a nice little townhouse off the main road. It's neat and quiet, with pretty brick awnings and vines crawling up the side. You point them out and he gives a sheepish sort of shrug.

"They were there when I moved in," he says. "I was gonna get rid of them, but I dunno. They add a bit of charm, dontcha think?"

You nod, and bite your lip to stop from saying something cheesy like, "Not as charming as you," as he leads you inside. Or tries to. There's a bit of a difficulty because like.

Stairs.

They're not big, only three or four, but they're still there. Of course his house has stairs. You hear
Hans swear under his breath, looking down at his shoes as he does so.

"Sorry," he says softly, and like. Maybe this is a sign or something. You don't really know what kind of sign, but it's still there.

So you bite your lip in a (hopefully) cheeky way and say, "Guess you'll just have to carry me."

And wow, okay. That's a bit. Forward. But he grins at you and takes a moment to run up to unlock the front door. He's bashful, though, when he comes back to you.

"Only if you don't mind," he says, voice low and soft.

You absolutely do not mind, but that's a bit much so you just say, "not at all," and lean forward.

You've never had someone carry you. At least, not since you were a teenager. It's just... not something that's done. An invasion of space and privacy and kinda makes you feel bad because yeah, that's right, you're totally disabled. You don't like relying on people for help.

But this is different. Hans is different. One hand comes wraps around your back, and the other tucks under your knees as he lifts you up effortlessly. Your stomach drops for a moment – you're not used to being picked up, after all – but he puts you down as soon as you're inside. You're left alone for a minute as he retrieves your chair.

His home is small. Not like yours. Yours is cozy. It looks like he doesn't care much about sentimentality. There are no photographs, or any really personal items. There's a bill stuck to the fridge, and a mirror in the hallway. The couch is leather and the dinner table seats two people. Hans had put you down on one of them, and it's given you a pretty good view of the front living area.

It looks lonely.

You're not one to talk, and of course you don't actually mention it, but maybe he knows because he looks around sheepishly.

"I don't get many visitors," he begins. "You're, uh, you're actually the first."

You have to fight back a smile because that would be too telling. Instead, you rest your elbow on the table, and your head on your hand, the other one rubbing against a knot in the wood.

"It's a nice place," you say. "What made you decide to live here?"

He takes the seat opposite, hands coming to rest near yours. You kind of want him to take your free hand. "Well," he begins, "I moved out as soon as I could. I really wanted my own place and this one was going cheap..."

His story is so different to yours. He gets up halfway to fix a salad for lunch, but he doesn't stop talking. Growing up in a huge family, always surrounded by people. The youngest of a dozen – you think it's kind of insane. In turn, you talk about Kristoff and don't really mention your own home life. It's not that you don't want him to know. It's just... well, it's not really tentative-date material, is it? It's not something he has to know.

Before either of you realise it, the sun's started setting and the streetlights have lit up. Your tummy is rumbling a little because salad isn't that filling, and you have to excuse yourself to go to the bathroom.
Hans' house isn't really set up for this. For you. His toilet is its own room, so you can't close the door. Hans has to show you where it is, and you can see it in his face when he realises the predicament.

"I'll be in the kitchen when you're done," he says, and backs off. You're far enough down the hall that he isn't visible, and your chair protects you further, but it's still... uncomfortable.

When you return to the kitchen, Hans is sitting at the table, looking over take-out brochures.

"D'you wanna get dinner?" he asks, and your tummy chooses that moment to rumble again, so you can't say no.

But you do want to go home, is the thing. Hans' place is nice, but yours is comfortable. Your chair fits and all your stuff is there. The later it gets, the harder everything becomes. You don't want to show him that. Not now, not yet.

So instead you give him a look, and ask, "Why don't... we go back to mine? I did say I make a really good tuna casserole."

Hans stares at you for a minute before he breaks out in a grin. "I would... really like that," he says. So would you.
Chapter 30

Chapter Notes

update because i love you guys, or something. not a fan of the reviews telling me that your 'interest is waning'. just stop reading if that's the case. i did say it would be elsanna, and it will be. if you follow me on tumblr you'll see how much i hate hans, and if not, then i'm telling you now how much i hate him. but i wouldn't do this unless i had a reason. he has a plan, as does elsa, and anna, and even kristoff and his bf. i have plans for them all. if you trust me, i won't let you down.

which is why i have to warn you that the hanna relationship is going to get 'better' before it becomes worse. expect more development on their end. but, expect more elsanna development. think of it like this: they'll have an entire week together in norway. who knows what can happen? :P

Dinner was a complete success. You're much more comfortable in your own home, and it's kinda nice, showing Hans just how independent you are. You disappear into your bedroom to take your medication, and you also get changed into something... nice. Spruce up your hair a little, put on a dash of lipstick. Hans doesn't make it obvious, but you notice that his eyes stray to your lips a little more often.

Joan hides under the coffee table and glares at you, but she's really just annoyed at having a stranger in the house.

He doesn't stay too late. Helps wipe the dishes and gives you a kiss on your cheek as he leaves. And maybe it won't take too long before you actually work up the courage to kiss him.

It's almost 9:30, and you do actually have work in the morning. A quick shower later and you're ready for bed. Joan jumps up near your feet and gets comfortable, and even though you had a pretty big day, you seem to spend ages just staring at the ceiling. You wonder what it would be like to kiss Hans.

He'd be gentle, that's for sure. Maybe cup your cheeks and doesn't add any tongue until the third kiss. Or maybe you'd find your courage then, and you initiate the French kiss. His hands would move, down past your shoulders to rest at your waist. Maybe they'd pause at your hips first, itching to move back up to your boobs.

You move your hands, just to cup them for size. Your nipples are hard, and maybe it's lucky that they're sensitive, too. Your breasts aren't particularly big, but they're nice. Well shaped. They don't really sag, which is a plus.

Biting your lip, you let one hand drift beneath the hem of your pants while the other one tugs gently at your nipple through your nightshirt. You focus on that sensation because it's the most powerful, but it doesn't mean you ignore your other hand. Palm pressing down on your clit, you insert a finger and swirl it around a little. Get a movement going, and then turn your focus back to your breast.
The fabric of your shirt feels good, and you bite your lip as you fantasise about someone else's. Fantasise about a body next to you – it's not your hands, and it makes it so much more powerful. You imagine them curled up beside you, skin against smooth skin, soft fat and muscle and all for you. Lips smile against your cheek as they place open-mouthed kisses, and your hands work ever-more fervently. A weight lands on your chest as something builds, in your breast, head, navel. You imagine they've rolled atop you, lips finally finding yours as the sensation gets more powerful. Soft breasts press against your own. And then it stops. Your head feels up with a feeling of pure delight and relief, and you let out a breath. It's been... a long while since you've done that. You're actually tired now.

Wiping your hand on your pants, you turn over. Now that the feeling has worn off, you're left feeling a little dull. It's mostly in your heart because... because you're twenty-three and you really want to feel this with someone. Maybe you will, soon. That thought is enough to bring a little smile to your face.

It's enough to let you drift off, pleasant dreams waiting for you.
You have two days before the flight (an early Friday morning flight, *ugh*), and nothing to do. Which is a bit surprising, but when you ask Elsa, she just shrugs.

"We're just really on top of things," she says. Which is unhelpful because you're bordered shitless. You've actually started playing solitaire on your computer because there's actually nothing to do. If Elsa notices, she doesn't say anything.

Things with her seem to have gotten easier, too. Now you know how new she is, you wonder why you didn't notice before. She never seems to talk or interact with people, and when she does, it's sort of...stilted. Like she's not really sure *how*. Your heart goes out to her because you've been in that position, and it sucks.

Hans has no words of help, when you talk to him about it. You don't mention everything, but like. He's been at the company longer than you. Maybe he knows something.

He doesn't. He just says that Elsa's always been sort of. Reserved. Even when she worked with actual people in the company, she was quiet.

"How did she get to be CEO?" you ask, and Hans shrugs.

"Family business. Her dad started it, but he retired about three months before Elsa took over."

You ask why, but Hans doesn't have an answer for you. That's fine. The conversation moves to other things, like your upcoming trip. You're in the middle of complaining about how early it is – you have to be at the airport at like, *five am* – when Hans gets a little frown on his face.

"How are you getting there?" he asks. "I- do the buses run that early?"

God, do you even *want* the catch a bus that early? "I don't know. Maybe I can ask Elsa if she minds giving me a lift?" you suggest.

"Oh, well, you could," Hans hedges. "Or... I could take you?"

Wow, that's- it's not even something you'd entertained. "You sure?" you ask. "It's really early..."

You look unsure, but when Hans only smiles and nods, you let your fears fade. He *wants* to do this.

So, you let him.

---

It is *definitely* too early when he comes to pick you up. Kristoff had been over the day before to help you pack – one suitcase full of clothes and special equipment, and a carry-on with your phone and passport. You've got a book for the flight, but you'll probably spend it sleeping if you're honest
with yourself.

It's part of the reason why you decided not to sleep in your pyjamas in the first place. It meant you could pack them, and didn't have to worry about getting up early enough to change. You still take your medication, even if it's a little early, and you manage to go to the bathroom before Hans arrives.

The drive to the airport is pretty quiet. The roads are quiet, at least. Hans has the radio on – some early morning talk show mumbles through the air.

"Excited?" he asks, and god he has no idea. It's scary, of course. You'd hugged Kristoff for a solid ten minutes last night, but you know he's going to be waiting for you when you get back.

Your hand finds his, resting on the gear stick, and when he looks at you in surprise, you only smile.

"I am," you say. "I can't wait." His hand squeezes yours, and some of the fear subsides. Hans will be waiting for you, too.

Elsa's waiting out the front of the terminal. The sun is just beginning to rise, and it gives enough light to show she's smiling. Stepping forward, she helps unload your bags – takes yours, and hers, as you let Hans wheel you inside. He probably just wants an excuse to enter with you, and you certainly aren't going to complain.

Elsa leads you up to a desk, where she pulls out her passport and lets the lady behind the counter weigh the bags. You made sure your carry-on was well below the maximum size, and your passport is in a convenient side-pocket. It's all very efficient (made even more so by the lack of other passengers).

And before you know it, it's time to part ways because only people who are flying can go through customs.

Elsa goes on ahead a little while you say goodbye. She stops, not too far away, but you aren't watching her because Hans has moved in front of you. He bends down quickly to wrap you in a hug.

"Have fun," he murmurs into your ear. "Text me when you land, and take lots of pictures."

You nod, "I will," and he lifts up a little. Not too much, because the next thing you know, his lips are on your cheek.

That's the moment you decide – realise? – that you wants something else. When he parts, you follow him, but not to kiss his cheek.

His lips are even softer than you'd imagined.

It's chaste, barely a peck, but Hans looks at you like it was the last thing he'd ever expected. Maybe it was. It doesn't stop him from leaning down, kissing you back. This one is less restrained, and you feel your face grow warm. It's not like he was tonguing you in public (even though you definitely felt it at least once). It was classier than that.

But then you remember that Elsa's waiting, and you let yourself break away. Hans looks just as flushed as you feel, and you clear your throat noisily.

"So, I'll uh, see you when you get back?" he offers, and all you can do is nod. You're barely able to
keep the grin from overtaking your face. You don't turn around as you move to join Elsa, fully aware that if you do, he'd be able to see it. You don't want to be that obvious.

But god. Your first kiss. That was certainly something.
You're glad you're early, because the duty free shop is big and awesome and you're not big on drinking but there's a huge bottle of a type of Bacardi you never see, so you get it. You ask Elsa if it's allowed – not on the plane, but rather, allowed because this is a work visit. Her expression, which had been kind of tight since you'd left Hans, relaxes, and she smiles out of the corner of her mouth.

"I won't tell if you don't," she says, and that's good enough for you.

You also buy a huge bag of chocolate because you know you're gonna get hungry and hell, it's chocolate.

Of course, after that, you're stuck waiting, Elsa having wandered off to ask someone about an aisle wheelchair on the plane.

The wait isn't too bad. There aren't that many people waiting in the same lounge, so you take the time to phone Kristoff when it's an appropriate enough time. He's always been a 'rise with the sun' kinda guy.

He answers on the third ring, obviously having just woken up. You feel a little bad, but he doesn't mind – you're going away, after all.

You've lined it up so he'll go over and feed Joan every day. You definitely feel bad about that, but Kristoff often brings dogs home from his job at the local animal shelter, and Joan isn't a particularly travel-savvy cat.

You chat for a little while, but then Kristoff has to go because he has work, and Elsa comes back. She waits patiently just out of earshot, giving you privacy to finish your call. When you do, she steps forward.

"We better make our way to the boarding lounge," she says. You nod and heft your carry-on bag onto your lap.

Elsa leads the way down echoey corridors. There are signs posted everywhere, and it really doesn't take long enough to get to departures. It's all a bit overwhelming, really. It's a lot busier here, but Elsa walks with a purposeful stride. It's sharp and quick, but even though you can't wheel as fast as she can walk, she never gets more than a half-step in front of you.

She takes you towards a service desk. There's a young lady there who must already know who Elsa is, because she gives a nod and picks up a telephone. You can't hear what she's saying because you're still too far away, and by the time you get close enough, she's finished.

"Ms Arendelle, Miss Ackerman," she says, smiling. "How are we this morning?"

Elsa offers a brief smile and a nod. "Well, thank you. Now, this is Anna's first time flying. If there is anything that could make it more comfortable for her, see to it."

The girl smiles. "Of course." She turns to you, just as someone else arrives, pushing a very thin wheelchair in front of them. "Miss Ackerman, unfortunately we can't allow your wheelchair in the cabin. For the duration of the flight there will be an attendant with a special aisle chair for your use."
The utmost care will be taken with your own chair, don't worry."

Biting your lip, you nod. You don't really like this, but what can you do? Your chair won't fit in the plane. Putting your bag on the floor, you begin shifting over to the other chair. It's awkward because there are so many people around, and this chair doesn't have armrests to help you, but you manage to do it.

At least you don't have to wait around in that chair. Because of its design, you can't push yourself, but it's time to board the plane anyway, so you make your way straight there. The nice lady asks if you want the other attendant to push you, or if Elsa doesn't mind. You honestly don't care, but you figure that the attendant probably has other things to do, and you kind of get the feeling that Elsa thinks you don't trust her – not after the whole 'gift' incident. But you do trust her, so you ask if she minds pushing you. Her eyes light up a little at the prospect, and you know you've made the right choice.
Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The first thing you notice is how fancy business class is. You actually feel underdressed, like you should be wearing a pantsuit or something. Elsa isn't, but that doesn't mean she doesn't look fancy. She kinda always looks dressed up.

She's really gentle, too, you notice, not pushing you too fast, and going over bumps as smoothly as possibly.

Then comes the difficult part of manoeuvring you into your seat. The airline staff can't help – some legal thing – and you don't really want Elsa to help. Like, sure, you can't walk, but you're not a complete invalid. Lucky the seats are so comfortable, though. Once you get into position, it's pretty easy to just slide into it.

It's actually soft enough that after a glass of juice – complimentary! with a rose! – you fall asleep. Only for a little nap. You stir when Elsa gets up to go to the bathroom, actually; even though the leg room is really spacious, you're not really used to people moving around you while you're sleeping. You try to stay awake because Elsa's tablet is open – she's obviously working – and this is a work trip.

Also, you were drooling.

When Elsa returns, you grill her about the plan for when you get there. You're going to be in the country for a little while – a week, planned. Which seems a little longer than necessary, but hey, paid holiday. You're not complaining.

The hostess brings you another drink (a glass of wine this time) as Elsa explains the purpose of the trip.

"Well," she begins, taking a bite out of some expensive cheese-and-cracker combo. "Arendelle Corp really is just a parent company, so we're going to be discussing a potential merger to expand our label."

You nod slowly in understanding. Or you try. "What?"

Elsa gives a little smile. "Okay, so. You know South Isles Island Resorts? We own them." Your eyes widen – that's only the most expensive hotel chain around! It's legit islands with a single resort on them for the obscenely rich to enjoy. You've had never been (naturally), but it's where you wanna go on your honeymoon, or something equally appropriate. Honestly, it'd cost more than the wedding.

As all this is going through your mind, you don't really notice Elsa lean forward, getting closer. Until she's right in front of you, of course. She's got a little grin on her face and her eyes dart around mischievously.

"Also," she whispers, "you know IKEA?" You nod as she backs away. She doesn't say anything this time, but her index finger comes up to tap her nose.

Good god. Elsa must be the richest person in the world behind that billionaire who overtook Bill Gates and J.K. Rowling.
You can't deal with this.

Luckily, you don't have to. Elsa moves on, explaining what you're actually going to be doing in Norway. From the sounds of it, Arendelle Corp wants to expand into less-upper-class experiences. Things for the average joe. Smaller hotel chains and little holidays – cruises and packages. That sort of thing. It's a good idea, too. 'From the company that owns this super duper expensive holiday you'll never go on, here comes a more affordable option that's still really good!'.

You spend the flight asking questions, though there're not all about the business. You kind of want to know more about Elsa, too. She's your boss and she's odd and powerful and you want to know more about her life.

She doesn't share much. "My mother and father came to America when I was very small. They moved back home after I had graduated after my mother's brother passed away. They wanted to be closer to family."

Family.

You kind of want to share your own life with Elsa, but she doesn't enquire and it's a bit of a downer. She asks about Kristoff, and you're confused for a moment before you remember that she has met 'that tall gentlemen who came to collect you for your birthday?'.

So you talk about him and your childhood. Elsa's interest was piqued when you mention he works with rescue animals, but you're not sure why and she doesn't comment on it.

But that conversation carries you all the way through the flight (with a brief break for an awesome greek salad and yet more alcohol). You have to go to the bathroom once – it's an eight hour flight, after all – but it's still a bit of a pain. Once again, the airplane staff can't really help, so Elsa comes too to help you into the cubicle. It's (apparently) a bit bigger than a coach cubicle, which is lucky. It's not quite as embarrassing as when you had to pee at Hans' home. It might be because Elsa's a girl, or it might just be because it's...not as uncomfortable. Who knows.

It's early morning when you arrive. Which kind of sucks because it was early morning when you left and you were on the flight for eight hours.

But on the upside, Norway is amazing.

Granted, you've only explored the arrivals lounge of Oslo Lufthavn, the international airport. But it's clean and the air is crisp and smells so different.

"So," Elsa asks when you exit the terminal, "it's about 8am, local time. How do you feel about breakfast before heading to the hotel?"

"What did you have in mind?" you ask. "As long as it's not like. Pickled fish or whatever."

There's a little grin playing on your lips, though it drops into something closer to disbelief when Elsa says, "I don't know. How about Subway?"

"...Subway?"

She grins. "Yeah, you know. Eat fresh?"

You just stare at her. And then stare some more because what? "Elsa, I know this is a business trip and all, but I really don't think my first taste of Norwegian culture should be a Subway of all
She nods sagely. "True. Well, a café it is. Fair warning, you're still getting a sandwich." And then she's picking up the luggage and heading towards an unobtrusive van, slow enough that you can easily catch up.

You're here. You're finally here, and you're going to make the most of it. It's going to be great.

Chapter End Notes

subway is a throwback to a convo i had with fozziewazxi (about subway, surprise surprise) and the ikea thing is a nod to texan red rose's scheherazade series (which i just finished marathoning yay it's wonderful go read it :D)
Chapter 34

Elsa has fantastic taste in breakfast foods. You kind of expected her not to because when do CEOs have time for breakfast? But no, she manages to find a nice cafe that actually has amazing coffee. The waitress begins speaking in Norwegian, but switches at your lost look.

She ends up changing back because Elsa takes the lead with ordering, and she does so in what appears to be (well, to your untrained ears) fluent Norwegian. You kind of just stare at her, mouth wide, and a pretty blush coats her cheeks when she realises you're staring.

"You... speak Norwegian?"

Elsa makes a vague gesture. She doesn't say anything, but a light blush pretties her features.

"I mentioned my parents moving back home. Well... this is home."

Wow. Huh. Maybe you should have guessed that (well, if not that, then something), because now that you know, there are definite clues.

She does have a subtle accent. Very subtle. The pale hair and striking complexion scream 'European model!' and you find yourself tracing her high cheekbones with your eyes.

You only notice when you catch her eye, as well, and clearing your throat, you look away.

"So, you grew up here? What was that like?" you ask, just as the waitress brings out a pot of coffee and some glasses. Elsa doesn't answer straight away. When she does, she doesn't say as much as you thought she would (or expected her to, either).

"It was... strained," she said. "My parents and I don't get along, and I left as soon as I could." She takes a sip of her coffee. "Anyway, there are much better career opportunities in America."

You don't say anything for a moment either. Earlier, it sounded like Elsa missed her parents; now, it kinda sounds like she doesn't like them. You're just a little confused.

"My dad wasn't American either," you say instead. "That whole side of my family is Welsh, actually. He even spoke the language. I used to love listening to him on the phone to his family. It would sound like he was singing." You let out a little laugh. "And when I read Lord of the Rings for the first time I always imagined the Elvish sounded like Welsh. He always said he was going to teach me, but... after the accident, I didn't have the heart to learn it anymore."

Elsa doesn't say anything – in fact, her gaze is trained on her cup – and your heart drops a little because talking about your dead parents is a pretty strong moodkiller. But... it's nice to talk about it. Them. You don't have much of a chance to with anyone else.

Clearing your throat, you follow Elsa's actions and take a sip of your own coffee. The waitress returns just as you put your cup back on the table, laden with plates of sandwiches (apparently) and fruit. You give the bread a suspicious look.

"Are you sure this is a sandwich?" you ask. "Where's the other side?"

Elsa's head jerks up, and she seems relieved you've changed the topic. Which. Is a little disappointing but you can see how she'd not want to know. She gives a little smile.
"It's an open sandwich. It's not supposed to have another side."

You don't really care because sandwiches, and it actually tastes really, really nice. Maybe better than real sandwiches because now you're getting all the flavour, undiluted by too many carbs.

When you finish, Elsa calls for a car to be brought around. Frederikstad is another hour's drive away – there used to be an airport, apparently, but it's closed now – and it's already mid-morning.

You're waiting on the footpath when her hand lands on your shoulder.

"I am... sorry about your parents, Anna..." she says. She's looking at you, blue eyes revealing that she does seem genuinely sorry; there's nothing empty about her words. You feel like tearing up all over again.

So you look away, though you bring a hand up to pat the back of Elsa's.

"Thank you," you say softly. You want to say something else, but you don't know what.

So, you just sit there in silence until the car comes.

Elsa's hand doesn't move the whole time.
Chapter 35

Chapter Notes

all'y'all comments and reviews make me feel great btw. this story is (hopefully) back on track with its thursday updates – at least for the time being. I have a lot coming up with school (first assignment is due next friday OTL ) but i'll try and remain consistent ;)

The drive to Fredrikstad isn't that bad. It's not too hot or cold, and the view is beautiful. There's so much green... and it actually looks pretty amazing.

That being said, by the time you get to your hotel you're really in need of a shower. It feels like the recirculated flight air is still sticking to you. You also want to send Kristoff a quick message because he's probably worrying and you wanna let him know you arrived safely.

"We won't be starting work until tomorrow," Elsa says as you follow her through the foyer, driver walking a few steps behind with your bags. The hotel seems a bit dated, but it looks clean and the staff are all smiling. "If you want to have a nap, feel free."

Wow. Now that she's suggested it, you are kinda sleepy. Maybe you should have slept more on the flight...

"What are you going to do?" you ask, just as you get to the front desk. Elsa doesn't answer for a moment – she's gotta collect room keys and stuff, you suppose – but when she does, she's got the same impish expression she had when she mentioned IKEA.

"You're not the only one who got some cheap grog," she says, and you almost feel like blushing, though you're not sure why. Gosh, does anyone over the age of 20 still even call it that? "I'm going to have a bath and a drink, and then perhaps find a good place for dinner. Do you have any preferences?"

Dumbly, you shake your head. Jesus, is this a work trip or a holiday?

You're saved the embarrassment of asking that stupid question when the receptionist moves out from behind the desk. He says something in Norwegian, and Elsa nods.

"He will show us to our rooms."

You're led out of the foyer and down a glamorous hallway. It looks really posh, but you're still kinda grateful when he bypasses the lifts. You're not sure you trust the electronics in a place this old. You stop outside an elaborate door, and with a swipe of a keycard, it unlocks.

It's a nice room. Not overly spacious, but hell, it's the fanciest hotel you've ever been in, so you're not going to complain. On your immediate right, there's a small kitchen, with a dishwasher and oven and everything! Even a regular sized fridge! Directly in front of you is the 'living room' – a small couch and TV, plus a coffee table – and to your left you can see a bedroom. The bathroom must be through there, too. The driver, who's followed you this whole way, bless, arranges your bags neatly by the couch.
"Wow, this is great," you say. "I wonder what yours looks like, Els."

You turn to her, and she gives a brief smile. "Likely the same as yours," she responds. "There's nothing stopping you from having a look."

A soft cough gets your attention, and you look to the receptionist, confused. Elsa's got a similar expression on her face.

"Apologies, madams," he says, "But we cannot permit Miss Ackerman into the elevator. Health and safety – I'm sure you understand, Ms Arendelle."

Elsa evidently does not understand, judging by the narrowing of her eyes and her following words. "I'm not sure I do," she says. "We booked two rooms directly next to each other for ease of access. Why would I need to take the lift while Anna does not?"

The driver's completely vanished and you feel your heart sinking, following the way your head dips.

"That's correct, ma'm," the receptionist says. "You booked two deluxe suits; however, one other stipulation was the requirement for a disabled-access room. Unfortunately, the only disabled rooms we have are on the ground floor. Surely your booking manager told you this?"

You hear a sharp exhale. "No, they didn't."

There's silence for a few seconds, and you can feel Elsa's eyes on you. You don't want her to do anything silly, and you're really desperate for a shower now, so you decide that now is the time to pipe up.

"It's fine, Elsa." You lift your head to look at her, smiling a little bit. "Don't worry. We can still reach each other through the internal phones, right?" The receptionist nods. "There. It's all fine." You almost feel like adding on an, I don't need a babysitter, but that wouldn't help anyone, and chances are Elsa had only wanted close rooms for functional reasons, not to watch over you.

She obviously looks uncomfortable, but you don't have to argue your point again for her to acquiesce. "Okay," she says. And then smiles. "Okay. I will leave you to get settled in. I'll be back in a few hours."

She still doesn't seem happy once the door has close behind her, and you're not exactly sure why.

Not that it matters at the moment – you can ask her later. Right now, there's a shower with your name on it.
Chapter Notes

this is half of what i wrote – other half is coming out next week because a) it got really long and b) i have an assignment and an exam and it's only technically week two.

i dont have much time to write

hey, at least im on time...

There's a dresser for your luggage, you notice, but it's really far away and hell, it's your hotel room. So, you don't bother unpacking, instead just opening your bag out in the living room. It's not like you're gonna spend much time out here anyway.

You just reach in and get some clean underwear and a nice blouse and pants. You've got enough clothes to last a few days but you'll have to ask Elsa if there's a washing machine or something to use.

The bedroom looks gorgeous, with a spacious bed and charming decor. You can't wait to have your nap.

First things first, though.

The bathroom is a little squishy, which makes it hard to manoeuvre. It also means you don't notice the obvious problem until you're already inside.

There's no shower.

Shit.

Instead, you have this really old-fashioned bathtub – the one with clawed feet that's raised off the floor. The rim comes up to your shoulder and your heart just sinks.

When the receptionist said 'disabled-access', you assumed he meant 'able to access the amenities'.

And it's fine, you don't desperately need a shower right now. But you will, at some point. You won't be able to go a week without cleaning yourself.

Okay, that's a problem for later. You'll... tell Elsa when you meet up with her. You still have time for your nap, after you text Kristoff.

Everything's all good.

You get a response to your, arrived safe! hotel looks nice but it doesn't have a shower so imma talk to elsa later message a few minutes after it's sent.

stay safe! take lots of pictures! love you!

It brings a smile to your face, so you just respond with a little love heart.
After you take your shoes off and throw them on the luggage, you return to the bedroom. You're really keen to try out this bed. You've never slept in a bed that wasn't yours, so that's exciting.

By the time you get there, though, you realise that sad fact is going to stay that way. You hadn't noticed on your way past the first time, but the luxurious bed sits almost as tall as your shoulder. There's no possible way you can get on it, and even if you could, you'd probably tip off the side when you tried to get back down again.

Well. At least the couch looks comfy, too, you think, even though your heart is sinking just a little. But, it's only the first day. It's far too early to be disappointed. You'll feel better after a nap, no matter where it is.

The couch is not as comfortable as a bed would be. That's okay. It means you wake up as soon as Elsa knocks on the door. Means that it doesn't take as long for you to answer, either.

She's perfectly put together and you're just wearing trackpants and a loose cotton top.

"Had a nice shower?" she asks, peering into your room. "Nap comfortably?"

You bite your lip and let her into the room. You don't answer for a moment, but she notices something worth commenting on anyway.

"Is there a problem with the bed?" she asks, noticing the pillow and blanket you'd sprawled on the couch.

God, why does all the embarrassing shit happen to you?

"Not exactly," you say. Elsa looks at you expectantly, and, well. There's no sense in pussyfooting around. "I can't use it. Or the bathroom."

At that, Elsa's confused expression darkens. "Pardon?"

You give a helpless shrug. "It looks great but- remember when we were talking, earlier, and I mentioned I have trouble with tall beds?" She nods, and you gesture towards the bedroom. "And I can't use a bathtub. No way I'll get in or out..."

You wish you didn't have to cause Elsa such problems. Her whole posture just kind of slumps as she makes her way back towards the door.

"I'm sorry..." you whisper out. You wish you'd kept your mouth shut, but at the same time, you wouldn't have been able to last all week like this.

But Elsa's eyes widen and she holds her hands out. "Oh, no, Anna. Don't apologise. I'm sorry. I was assured that you'd be comfortable here. This is entirely my fault – I should have double checked. I'll be back in just a moment, okay?"

Now it's your turn to be confused, but you let her go.

What's she going to do?
Evidently, Elsa's plan was as simple as a "go and see the receptionist". You don't wait for her to come back. Instead, you follow her from the room. She notices, and pauses just outside the lift for you to catch up.

That's nice of her.

It means even more when you realise just how upset she is, mostly because when you're upset you don't want to be nice to anyone. Usually, you want to sulk. Or lash out, depending.

But here she is, smiling at you so you don't worry, and then letting her voice turn icy when she replies to the, "Ah, Ms Arendelle. How are you liking the accommodation?" question put to her.

"Lacking," she says. "My associate here, after not only being downgraded in her room, has also come to realise that your so-called 'disabled-access' features are not accessible at all. Anna-" She turns to you, voice startlingly warm. "Would you like to explain the issues with the room, or are you comfortable for me to do it?"

Your eyes widen. You're not sure how to answer that – no one's ever asked.

Once more, you're struck by how nice it is of her.

"Oh, um. That's okay. I can do it," you say. Elsa nods and takes a small step back, giving you the floor. Swallowing, you turn to the receptionist. "I mean, the room looks great, but. I can't use it. The bed is too tall and I need a shower with a chair, not a bath."

"Can't your companion help you?"

What.

You're struck dumb for a second because... what? Of course, you've been asked these questions before. You just didn't expect it on a business trip with your boss. Even Elsa's eyes widen, obviously taken aback.

"No, I don't- I don't need help," you say when you finally regain your bearings. "I just need certain features. Any person in a wheelchair will say the same. I'm not a child."

The receptionist sighs, like they're the one being put-out, and you're getting more and more uncomfortable. You can feel Elsa bristling next to you, but she isn't saying anything. She's letting you take control.

"Miss Ackerman, I'm sorry, but we don't have that many disabled-access rooms. I'm afraid you'll
just have to let Ms Arendelle help you. And, surely isn't a bath better anyway? It's not like you can stand in a shower-

"Enough."

Elsa's voice, low and dangerous, cuts through the air. She's not yelling, but it's projected loud enough that you can feel a few people turn to look.

"Now, I could have dealt with the lying because Anna said it was fine," she hisses. "I was not told the rooms would be on separate floors and I made the booking! I was assured that the rooms we had would be appropriate for our purpose, but apparently you can't even give your guests the most basic of respect and courtesy – which costs you nothing, may I add – and so I shouldn't be surprised that we're paying for this pathetic service. Now, you will refund the rooms and apologise to Anna. And then you will read a book or watch a youtube clip on how to speak to people with some common decency, and perhaps I won't demand to talk to your manager. Are we clear?"

You release a breath you hadn't realised you were holding. The whole room is looking at you (well, at Elsa) and the poor receptionist is pale as a sheet. You'd probably feel bad if he hadn't been so rude to you.

As much as you don't like to admit it... those kinds of comments hurt. They show such a lack of understanding. And most people don't care.

But then the receptionist sniffs a little. "I'm afraid we don't do refunds-" he begins, before faltering.

It's the wrong thing to say.

You're not sure how Elsa does it because everything shifts to Norwegian and another person comes over who must be the manager. The receptionist gets an impressive scolding – he looks like he might burst into tears – and now you feel actually sorry for him. He's probably not a bad person. Just a really crummy hospitality worker.

Eventually you get the refund, which is great except it means you have to go and pack up your things again. Eh, it's not too bad. Now you're glad you didn't bother unpacking. Elsa meets you in the foyer ten minutes later, glaring darkly at the young man who is – maybe – unemployed at this point.

When you get outside, you notice the sky's darkening a little, and now you don't have a place to stay the night. Elsa sits down on a bench, presumably to wait for another driver. She just looks so drained.

"I'm sorry," she ends up murmuring. "God, can nothing go right today?"

Your face falls a little because... is that what Elsa's thinking? That today has been terrible? Yeah, there were some elements that could have gone a little better but-

"I dunno," you say, reaching over to clasp her hand. Patting it softly, you say, "We didn't die in a thousand fiery pieces over the Atlantic. I haven't got food poisoning from that fake sandwich from this morning." You smile, and it only widens when Elsa tries to return it. "And I bet there's a motel around somewhere that has a ground-floor room with a shower and a decent-sized bed." You sigh, looking away for a moment. You can see a car approaching that looks just like the one from this morning.

"Don't be sad, Elsa," you add softly as the vehicle pulls up. "I don't think today has been that bad. It's actually... been pretty all right, in my opinion."
And then you're off moving, rolling towards car with your luggage on your lap. You can hear Elsa getting to her feet behind you.

"Where to?" the driver asks once you're both settled. Elsa looks at you for a moment.

"Take us to a motel," she says. "The nicest one you know that has showers."

You can see him quirk an eye in the rearview mirror, but he says nothing but a, "Yes, m'am." You let out a little giggle.

"See? Already looking up."

All Elsa responds with is a smile.
You're both kind of hungry, so on the way to... wherever... Elsa gets the driver to go through a drive-thru. It almost seems a little fancy, but you're kinda just used to greasy McDonald's. This isn't greasy. Apparently it's still fast-food, even though there are definitely traces of vegetables that are't half-wilted. That probably says more about the culture shift than you. This has a lot of chicken, and tastes pretty good.

Elsa pays for it, and she preempts any arguing from you with a, "Business trip, Anna. Don't worry about the expenses." You frown a little, still prepared to argue, when she continues. "Even if I weren't the CEO, no one's going to care about a thirty-dollar meal. Trust me."

So, you do.

Kristoff always said you trusted too easily, you think as you eat your food. Elsa is focused on her own and doesn't notice you looking at her. Maybe you do trust too easily, but at this point, perhaps Elsa's earned it, too.

Ten minutes later, you're pulling over and the driver is getting your chair. It doesn't take you long to manoeuvre into it, and as you roll forward, you take in the building in front of you. The luggage stays in the boot, at least until you know whether or not this place is going to be fine for you.

It's a low-set building, with perhaps three or four levels. Also, it's not as brightly lit on the outside, but once you get in, it definitely seems a little...cosier than the last place. Elsa dings a little bell on the counter, and an older woman, probably in her sixties, comes tottering out, cup of tea in her hand and a dressing gown over worn pyjamas.

"Hallo!" she greets, and you understand that. Then she continues in Norwegian and doesn't switch to English, even after Elsa seems to ask if she speaks it. You don't like not knowing what they're saying, but you know Elsa's got you covered.

There's that trust thing again.

And, it means you're watching her and are privy to the massive smile that graces her face, just after the woman finishes speaking, and just before she turns to you. Elsa opens her mouth to speak, but is interrupted before she can get a word out. Whatever the old woman says is clearly not something Elsa either wanted or expected.

They argue back and forth a few times before Elsa closes her eyes and nods her head. After a moment she turns to you.

"So," she begins. "There's some good news. They're happy to let us investigate, but Bente has assured me that the facilities are completely up to par with what we're after. She, apparently, also has some mobility aids that are available for use."

Geez. That sounds pretty good. All you need is furniture you can reach, plus a shower chair. You're really not fussed on anything else.

But then Elsa's words really sink in, and you find yourself frowning. "So, what's the bad news?"

At that, her lips tighten and move to the side, like she's sucking on a particularly sour lolly.

"They only have one room. There will be another available the day after tomorrow, but for the time
being, we would have to share."

Honestly, you don't really see what the problem is. You don't even have to tell Elsa, either, that you think it's a non-issue, because she sees it written on your face.

"I just..." she begins. "After the... problems... we had earlier, the last thing I want is you to feel uncomfortable or coerced in any way."

That's... actually really sweet. Thoughtful.

So you just smile at her. "I don't feel like that at all."
Chapter 39

The room is really nice. Not as pretty or classy as the hotel you'd just left, but this one has a shower and there's a railing next to the toilet. Bed is an appropriate height.

Elsa doesn't seem nearly as keen on it, but then again, she's probably used to the best of the best. You're not quite sure how to feel about that – on the one hand, you're sad you've put her out. You've basically made her downgrade – have to share a room with someone – when it wasn't really necessary for her.

On the other hand, you refuse to be upset or ashamed of the reason why. Truly, it was the hotel's fault. It's the 21st century, for crying out loud!

It still forms half the reason why you let Elsa have a shower first. The other half is the fact that it can take you a while sometimes – no sense in keeping her up waiting for you.

So, while Elsa has a shower, the first thing you do is set out your clothes for tomorrow and pull out your pjs. The second thing you do, just as you hear the water shut off, is set your alarm for tomorrow. You don't really want to get up before six, but you have to be at an office by eight for a meeting and it can take a bit of time to get ready.

When Elsa reappears, you're taken aback for just a moment. Her hair is down and her face is scrubbed free of makeup. Still no pimples, but she looks less like an untouchable CEO and more like a friendly colleague. She's got silk purple pyjamas, and you're a little embarrassed about your old Tweety Bird shirt you sleep in.

"All free," she says, smiling at you. You don't get a chance to smile back because then she's not looking at you, moving towards her side of the room.

There's two twin beds, separated by about half a metre and a bedside table. By the time you're rolling into the bathroom, Elsa's settled into the one furthest from the door, a novel in one hand and flicking the reading light on.

The shower is absolute heaven after the day you've had. There's a chair in the shower, pushed against one wall but still easy enough for you to reach. It's a little awkward – you've had time to get used to the way your home is set out, and this is obviously different.

Still, it's amazing how much energy you have after a shower. You get dressed and take a moment to pee before you wheel out, mindful of the fact that Elsa's probably asleep.

The light above her bed is still on, though, so you're surprised for half a moment that she's still awake until you realise that she's not. Her eyes are shut, reading glasses dangling precariously at the end of her nose. Her chest rises and falls with each breath, and she's almost certainly lost her place in her book.

You decide to take your medication before dealing with that, but it ends up taking a little longer because you're a little distracted.

In all the books you've ever read, sleeping is supposed to be peaceful. But Elsa doesn't look that way at all. There's a furrow in her brow and a slight downturn to her lips. Her head has rolled forward, and you can tell she's going to have a wicked ache if she doesn't move.

Also, she's snoring, which is a pretty clear sign her body isn't happy with the way she's dropped off.
Giving your own frown, you move your chair to the other side of her bed. There's no way you could squeeze it in between the beds, but that's okay. Reaching forward, you touch her shoulder.

Already wincing, you give a little shake. "Elsa..."

As expected, she jolts awake, sucking in a breath at the same time. As she blinks owlishly at you, you realise just how close you are to her. It doesn't stop you from mumbling a, "Hey... you'll get a cramp sleeping like that."

Instead of the expected result – which would be for Elsa to move – she freezes. You can tell straight away that you've scared her, so you back off a little to give her some room. It's probably creepy, and that's not how you want to come across, so you move your chair to the side of your bed so you can begin the task of getting into bed.

It gives Elsa some time to compose herself, evidently, because by the time you're done she's put her book away and taken off her glasses. Even with her movements sluggish by sleep, she moves faster than you.

You don't even get a chance to respond to her hushed, "Good night, Anna," before she's turning her light off, rolling over to go to sleep.

When you mumble, more to yourself than her, a small, "Night-night," you can't help but feel a little stupid.
Chapter 40

Chapter Notes

I have updated a number of chapters; up until this point, there had only been 37 released here, so make sure you've read 38 and 39 before starting this one! :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

You wake up sometime in the early hours of the morning. It's a little surprising, mostly because it had been some time before you'd actually managed to fall asleep, despite the jet lag.

And, also, the jet lag.

You try to go back to sleep, but it doesn't quite work out. Your body is stiff, and it's cooler in the room than you'd expected it to be. It's not winter, but you still might end up sleeping with a jumper on tomorrow night. Glancing over, you wonder for a moment if it would wake Elsa if you got up to grab a sweater.

That's when you notice that... her bed is empty. Looking around the room, her suitcase is still by the end of her bed. It's closed, and probably locked. Her pyjamas are folded neatly on her pillow, though her bed is unmade. A glance at your phone tells you that it's about half-five and you've got about half an hour before your alarm goes off.

May as well start getting ready for the day.

Fortunately, you don't need a shower. It still takes some time to get yourself sorted, but by the time your phone is trilling, you're just finishing putting your hair up.

Elsa still hasn't come back.

You've got your phone out, the messaging app open to text her, when you pause. How should it be worded? You can't exactly ask her where she is: you're not her mother. Plus, it's not like she's going to abandon you in another country. All her luggage is still here, for one. For another, you are here for work, so...

Just as you sigh and begin typing out an insincere, "Good morning!", your phone buzzes in your hand.

It's a text. From Hans.

Eyes widening, you realise that you haven't spoken to him since you pashed at the airport terminal (and that thought brings a blush to your cheeks. At least, for that, you can be glad that Elsa is out...)

Hey, gorgeous, it reads. There's a little emote of a face blowing a kiss, and you try really hard to bite back your smile. It doesn't really work. Call me when you get this. I want to know you arrived safe!
There's a little heart emoji, and even as you begin dialing you know he's going to hear the smile you can't keep down.

When he answers, his voice is a little gruffer than you'd expected. And then you realise that it's probably some godforsaken hour (but really, he texted you first! And he said to call!).

"Hey..." you say, suddenly unsure. It seems he doesn't have anywhere near the same level of uncertainty as he speaks.

"Hey, how's my girl?" he asks. You bite your lip, the corners curling up as your heart swells, just a little. You like this.

And it sucks, completely, that it has to happen while you're overseas for a good week. Why did you have to work up the courage to kiss him just before you knew you wouldn't be able to?

Though... perhaps that's the answer, too. If... if it hadn't been successful, then you'd have a break to reevaluate. You wouldn't have to awkwardly avoid his eyes of a morning as you come in; wouldn't need to seek advice from Kristoff – who has more than enough of his own stuff to sort out.

... You really need to call him, too.

But not right now, because Hans is saying your name and bringing you back to the conversation.

"Sorry," you tell him. "I just... I'm still waking up."

"I was just heading to bed. It's almost one in the morning here."

You bite your lip again, but it's not so much about holding back a smile. "Sorry," you say. "You probably want to sleep..."

"Mmm, yeah... I kind of just want you here, too..."

Oh god. This is. Wow. You let out a slow breath, swallowing dryly.

"I-"

"You've only been gone a couple of days, and it's so noticeable," he continues, cutting you off. "And I think it was a little rude, actually."

Your heart seizes in your chest, but it's not as bad as the words normally would have made it; there's too much humour in his tone to really affect you like that.

"O-oh?"

"Mhmm. How dare you kiss me like that before going away for a week?"

It's obvious, in his tone, that he's not actually upset or angry. You're a little unsure, though, because you've never... done this before. You're not sure what to expect. You're not sure what to say.

So, you just clear your throat, and say the first (stupid) thing that comes to your head: "W-well, absence makes the heart grow fonder..."

He lets out a little laugh that's interrupted by a yawn. "It's definitely working, then," he says.

Just at that moment, the door clicks open. Elsa pauses when she realises you're up, before continuing. The door shuts, and she makes her way towards the bathroom, putting a brown paper
bag on a small table in the corner.

"Hey, I better go," you say. There are other things you want to tell him, but with Elsa in the next room, the quiet atmosphere that had surrounded you is gone. Hans gives another yawn.

"Yeah, me too. Busy work day tomorrow. But... try and call in the afternoon?"

"Sure! I'll... talk to you later?"

"Goodbye, Anna. Don't work too hard." And then he's gone.

You have a good feeling about today.

Chapter End Notes

Happy Nanowrimo!

Apologies. There are so many reasons for why it has taken so long to update, but it really just boils down to two factors:
1. I moved abroad for work. Literally, I am on the other side of the world; and

This is not edited (because nano) and I'm going to try and update as frequently as possible. We'll see.

Thank you for sticking it out xx
Chapter 41

Turns out the small package Elsa brought in is a bakery bag. There's a bagel in it, which she offers you before mentioning the time.

It's not long past half-six, so it seems like you've got plenty of time. Elsa disagrees.

"The meeting begins at eight," she says, words coming shorter than you'd expected. You nod mutely and try not to make it obvious that you're watching her.

She looks... tired. There are bags under her eyes, only somewhat-successfully hidden beneath her makeup, which isn't quite as flawless as usual. Even her movements are slow, sluggish.

It doesn't seem like she got any sleep last night. Which is, of course, ridiculous. She'd fallen asleep while you were in the shower! But then... she hadn't looked comfortable. And you know that you sleep like a log, so maybe you snore or something and it kept you up.

This hasn't ever really been an issue before. At least, not since you were 16 and finally – finally – moved into a foster family that had enough space for you to have your own room. You don't think you snore, but you might. Maybe you fart a lot in the night, or something.

You're not going to ask. If it's that bad, Elsa will mention it. And you only have to share for one more night, according to- what was her name? Bente?

So even though you want to ask Elsa what's wrong, you won't because it's not really your place to pry, either.

Even if some part of you wants to reach out and... you're not sure. Maybe pat her on the arm. Suggest that she should maybe forgo the meeting – you're sure everyone will understand, what with the jet lag and stuff.

But you don't. You keep your mouth shut and eyes averted as she disappears into the bathroom again with her toothbrush. You take the opportunity to pack your purse.

You wonder how long you're going to be out for, but it seems weird to break the silence now, too. You've spent too long thinking about it. So you just grab everything you think you'll need. Your medication and a few spare catheters and a pen and notepad, just in case. You're got your wallet and you double check that your passport is still safe and sound in one of the compartments of your suitcase.

By the time you're done, Elsa's returned. She still isn't really looking at you – a feat, when you realise that she's moved towards you and is offering you whatever is in the bag. You take it with a small 'thanks', not looking inside it yet. She moves towards the door and holds it open for you, turning to lock it behind the both of you when you make it through.

The old woman is at the front desk, and she gives you both a smile as you move past. You return it, with a nod too, just for good measure. She seems to like that. She calls out something in Norwegian to Elsa, and even though you can't understand the words, you definitely can't miss the curt tone in which Elsa responds.

You don't like it. And it's not really your place to have any kind of opinion on how Elsa talks to others, but you know that you wouldn't like that icy tone directed at you, and it's not fair on poor Bente to be at the end of that.
Perhaps Elsa realises, because she says something else and it sounds a lot warmer. Bente smiles a little and nods, moving towards the back. She doesn't reappear, and you notice Elsa heading out the front door.

She holds it open for you, too.

It doesn't take long before you're in the car, wheelchair safely in the trunk and speeding towards your destination. Elsa's staring out her window, silent.

Pensive.

Your heart goes out to her, a little. She's an enigma, but fundamentally a good person. You want to get to know that person.

So, you work up the courage to speak. "Hey... are you feeling okay?"

Elsa's head whips around and she looks at you. There's something in her eyes that just breaks; you can't describe it. Just staring into her glassy eyes, and the emotions that play there, fill you with an unexpected sensation of sadness.

But then she speaks, too, an "I'm fine, Anna," before leaving it at that. She looks back out the window, and you are very sure that she's not fine, but you're already been shut down before.

And, given that you made such a big deal about Elsa asking you that question, it doesn't seem fair to push the issue.

It only takes another ten minutes to get to your destination. A towering building with the logo of Arendelle Enterprises at the very top. Elsa gets out of the car and stands around, tapping on her phone while the driver gets your chair.

It shouldn't make you feel as hurt and confused as it does.

But then you have to push that to the side because Elsa's already heading into the building, and you don't want to be left behind.

Right, yes. Work to do.
The meeting is long, and boring, and takes place almost entirely in Norwegian. You're in a huge conference room, with Elsa at one end and an old dude at the other. She's talking about something, and of course you can't understand her, but you also can't think of anything but her voice because it just sounds so lovely.

You've never really noticed before; you were always too focused on the words. But not now.

The people along the table, other than those at the two ends, don't speak. They sit there, listening, sometimes writing down notes. You're not even sitting at the table, which is why you have a chance to notice all these things; you're kind of against the wall, just observing.

You're not sure what Elsa was thinking, bringing you along, because you really can't do anything at all.

It also means that you're ignored for the entire duration. Elsa has her focus taken up with the conversation (and if you had to guess, all the other people are probably shareholders...), which means that she doesn't notice you watching her. After her attitude that morning, you're a little cautious. She doesn't seem to be feeling herself, and it's a little concerning.

So you're able to watch her in peace, observe her. She keeps blinking really slowly, and almost seems unwell. Sometimes, you see a flicker of something pass over her face; you're not sure if anyone else notices, but you do. It almost looks like... pain. Or nausea perhaps. Which, if she hadn't had much sleep, you wouldn't be surprised. You still remember your sleepless nights of early adolescence, and how ill it made you.

It goes on like this for a few hours before everyone stands up. You're dozing where you sit, and as soon as the sight of everyone getting to their feet filters to you, you realise that you've probably been noticed as having fallen asleep, which isn't really a good look.

But not noticed by Elsa, because she's straightening papers until the last person leaves, and then she just kind of sits down in her seat and puts her hands on her head.

You're about to move over to her and she speaks. It's obviously directed at you, even though she doesn't look up. She hasn't looked at you all morning.

"Anna, would you be able to get a coffee for me? Black with one sugar, thank you."

"Oh, uh, sure," you say, moving towards the door. "Would... you like something to eat at all? Maybe a salad or a sandwich?"

"No, thank you. Feel free to get something for yourself, though. Just be back here in half an hour."

You nod, even though she can't see it because she's still not looking, and move out of the room.

There's a cafeteria on the second floor. You don't know why it's on the second floor – it actually seems a bit stupid, you think – but there it is. It has a combination of hot and cold food, and as soon as you arrive, you find yourself eyeing off a brie and cranberry sandwich. They have a coffee machine, and it's probably shit but it's the best you're going to be able to find for her, so you get a grande espresso with one sugar.
It doesn't seem to suit her. Like, it *does*, because she's a CEO and sophisticated and it's just a coffee order, but at the same time, she also seems like the sort of person to enjoy like. A shot of caramel or something. *Anything* to liven it up a little.

It's stupid and you're definitely overthinking it.

So, you buy her a coffee, and get yourself a milkshake and the sandwich before heading back upstairs. It's only taken about ten minutes total, but you don't wanna be late. It would probably be super embarrassing to have to wheel in halfway through the meeting. Definitely wouldn't make Elsa feel any better.

As you come up the hallway, though, you can hear the muffled sound of voiced. It's still not in English. You peer through the glass window walls to watch as Elsa talks to someone else.

You're not sure if he was in the meeting. You weren't really thinking about anyone else at the time. They're both standing up, though you can see Elsa swaying, just a little. Her arms are crossed in front of her body, but she's angled away from you so you can't see her face. The dude is probably a similar age, maybe a little older? You're not sure. He's got a beard, well-trimmed, and he looks pretty good.

Objectively speaking. You have a boyfriend.

Except he doesn't *seem* very good because he takes a step forward, into Elsa's personal space. She steps back, but hits the arm of her chair. He keeps walking.

You know what this is. Or, you think you do. You're undecided as to how to progress, just for a moment, when you realise that you really need to go in there because if you happen to be really mistaken, then no harm no foul. But if the thing inside is what you *think* it is, then you need to be there to support Elsa.

So, making sure the drinks re still balanced on your lap, you wheel forward, more obvious in the corridor and impossible to miss as you open the door and, probably less gracefully than you could have done it, work your way inside.

He takes a step back straight away, and Elsa moves towards you. You're not sure if it's actually because she wants to help or rather, because she moves away. Either way, she holds the door open for you as you move towards the table, heading towards her seat so you can put her coffee there.

"Hi! Sorry if I'm interrupting," you say.

"Ms Arendelle and I--"

"Not at all, Anna. Thank you. Now, I wanted to go over our itinerary for the rest of the day. I know you probably want to eat your sandwich, but would you be able to take some notes?"

You glance between Elsa and the guy, nodding your head. "Uh, of course." You put your sandwich and milkshake on the table, fishing into your handbag for a pen and notepad.

"I shall leave you to it, then," the dude says, leaving the room without waiting for a response. Elsa sighs and sits down as soon as the door shuts behind him.

"Don't... don't worry about writing anything down, Anna," she says. "Enjoy your lunch. Sorry."

"Was he uh..." You're not quite sure what to say. Elsa just looks at you.
"Thank you for the coffee," she says, not answering your question. And, well. You probably shouldn't ask about things like that.

Nodding your head, you grab your lunch and return to your spot along the wall.

The sandwich doesn't taste as nice as you'd hoped.
Chapter 43

Chapter Notes

short chapter is short, sorry. i do, however, have ten more chapters already written ahead :)

She's better in the second half.

Elsa, that is.

Possibly – probably – the coffee had an effect, because she perks up for the last bit of the meeting, not looking quite as ill, or as tired. It could also be because the last part of the meeting only goes for another hour or so, which means that it's concluded a little past 2pm.

You're absolutely exhausted. You think you manage to hide your yawn until everyone leaves, but the way one woman smirks at you makes you realise you haven't.

You're starting to get the impression that you're really... not that cut out for business. Not that you ever had aspirations to become a businesswoman (and really, you're not even close. You're a PA). But the meetings and flying and political shit just isn't for you. You're definitely gaining a newfound respect for those who can hack it.

People like Elsa. She seems to be born to do this role. You don't think anyone noticed her exhaustion, and she's very good at wording things so that everyone feels like she's given them equal thought, even when she probably hasn't. She's got an amazing fashion sense, and she's probably loaded.

It would be stupid to lie and say you didn't want that, either.

So you yawn again, watching as she struts in front of you in tight heels, pencil skirt shifting on her hips with every step.

Even if you could walk, you'd probably never look that good. Never make people stop and stare just by moving.

Well, you kind of already do that anyway, but it's the wrong kind of stop and stare. It's the pitying one. When you see people watching Elsa, it's longing in their eyes. A desire to be like her, or simply just be her.

The elevator is packed, and it takes a concentrated effort to hold in your yawn. Your eyes water, and it was probably to do with the airplane air that had your eyes feeling like they were on fire. Seems a little odd to only affect you now, though.

Maybe you just desperately want sleep. You can't imagine how Elsa feels.

As soon as you get into the car, though, she's pulling out her computer and typing up something. And you absolutely, definitely, should be doing work, too. You take out your own computer and type in your password. You're positive that there's something you need to do.
But then your eyes drift shut, and though you manage to wake yourself up a couple of times, you're completely aware that it won't last forever.

It doesn't. You fall asleep within minutes.
When you wake up, you're still in the backseat of the car.

And, you're alone.

There's a brief moment of fear before you realise that you're not completely on your own. In the car, sure, but you can see, just through the window, Elsa standing outside. She seems to be talking on the phone. The driver is still in the front, too.

"Miss Ackerman. You're awake," he says, and you immediately feel absolutely ridiculous about falling asleep. You're here to work, not nap!

But, that's not entirely fair. You're not even sure what you're supposed to be doing here. Hopefully Elsa will give you a better indication soon.

Nodding to yourself, you take a closer look at your surroundings. You seem to be in a parking lot of some kind, perhaps a restaurant?

You don't have long to think about it because Elsa returns soon after. She's looking at her phone and doesn't even notice that you're awake at first.

"Oh, Anna!" she says when she finally glances up. "I'm sorry, I thought you were still sleeping."

Your lips twitch. She sounds a little perkier, a little happier. More upbeat, or something. That coffee really must have done wonders. She's still typing something on her phone, which is fine because really you shouldn't have fallen asleep to begin with, and the least you can do is wait for her to be done.

She looks up just as your phone goes off, face all serious once again.

"I've just sent you some details. I would like you to make a reservation for two at the supplied restaurant, thank you. Outside, preferably, though if they only have indoor seats available, somewhere in the corner is also acceptable."

You nod and pull your phone out. You're a little curious because thus far, Elsa has organised all the things for this little adventure. You're also a little nervous because what if they don't speak English.

It doesn't take long for you to realise that the idea is ridiculous, because doesn't everyone speak English? Except Bente, of course.

Reading through the email, you take in the details. Elsa wants a reservation for two at a place called... Hos Thea? You're not sure how you're supposed to pronounce it. It looks pretty swank, you think as you pull up the website for the contact number. Right in the centre of town, and it seems to be a little more on the expensive side. Given that she's the CEO, you suppose Elsa can do pretty much whatever she wants so long as she keeps pleasing the shareholders.

A young girl picks it up, and she probably starts with Norwegian but switches to English when you start speaking. "Hello" and "hallo" sound very similar, after all.

"Oh, uh, hi. I would like to make a reservation for two for tonight, if possible."

The girl on the end of the line gives a little hum. "For two? We have only one spot at five-thirty,
and one spot at nine in the evening. How is these?"

Putting your hand over the speaker, you lean forward. "They only have openings at five-thirty or nine. Do you have a preference?"

Elsa bites her lip, fingers still tapping out a steady rhythm on her phone. "Go nine. It will be better."

Nodding, you return to the call. "Hi, yes, um, could we do the nine o'clock one? And, uh, is it possible to sit outside?"

"Outside? Yes, that will be okay. What is the name for the reservation?"

"Oh, uh, go Arendelle." You spell it out, just so she doesn't get it wrong, and then give your number because they asked for it, and hang up not long afterwards. It doesn't take long to get the confirmation text.

It's in Norwegian, but it has the time and the name of the restaurant on it, so it's probably fine.

"Okay, tonight at nine. All booked," you say, feeling a little, stupidly, proud. You finally did something instead of be a nuisance to Elsa!

She glances up and, seeing you looking at her, shoots you a brief smile.

"Thank you, Anna. We're headed back to the room now, by the way. I have some work to do, but would rather do that while comfortable." You nod. You kind of wish you had some snack food – you wonder briefly what Norwegian chocolate tasted like. Or, even better, Norwegian hot chocolate. The very idea has you salivating a little, and you ride out the rest of the drive imagining more little things you could try while you're here.

Maybe the restaurant will have something really interesting to try. Who knows.
Chapter 45

so ive got like, up to chapter 60 written. i wrote 10k words today so this is my treat for you all :) I hope you like it!

still not edited tho, soz

It doesn't take long to get back to the room. Bente isn't at the front desk, but an older gentlemen is. Probably her husband, or maybe her brother. It seems a little unlikely to you that he'd just be working part time at a motel unless he were.

Of course, you might be completely wrong, but who knows. You don't have the courage OR the language skills to ask, so you don't bother. You just follow Elsa towards the room.

As soon as she enters, she heads towards the bathroom. Again. It's about the only place to get some privacy in here, though. You see her yawn again before she closes the door, and you wonder how she's going to last until dinner. A quick glance at your phone tells you that it's just past 3, and she hasn't eaten lunch, either. Not unless she did while you were sleeping. Which... is not out of the realm of possibilities. You're a pretty heavy sleeper even when you're not exhausted.

When she comes back out, her hair is out of its braid. It's much longer than you first thought.

"Feel free to order room service tonight," she says. "They'll put it on the room tab and we'll pay when we get another room." You nod, and then she's heading towards her suitcase, grabbing a computer charger and an adapter and moving outside to the veranda to keep working.

Room service. So...

It's stupid, but you... thought the reservation had been for the both of you.

It's not rejection, not really, but it still cuts. You didn't expect to come to a new country and spend the second evening alone, is all. You haven't moved from your spot near the door, so when Elsa comes back in, heading towards the small kitchen, she pauses.

"Is that acceptable?" she asks, in that stupidly sophisticated voice of hers. You nod and hurry to say something; think of any excuse.

"Y-yeah. I just... hope the menu is in English!" you say. Elsa gives a half-hearted smile that seems to be more about making you feel like your joke was funny than to convey any actual comfort. She gets a glass of water and returns to her seat outside.

You, on the other hand, get comfy on your bed. Open your computer to at least make it look like you're doing work. There's probably a hundred emails to answer, and it lets you distract yourself. You don't really notice the time passing, except for when your stomach starts grumbling.

Funny, though. You don't really feel all that hungry.
Sometime after six-thirty, Elsa comes back inside. The sun is still shining brightly, and she leaves the curtains open even as she closes the door. Puts her computer away and pulls out some clothes and heads towards the bathroom.

She spends... a lot of time in there. You hear the shower running for almost 45 minutes, and then the hairdryer for another 20. She doesn't make any kind of reappearance until close to eight, when she opens the door to grab her phone and call the driver.

Your mouth is completely dry, and you can't tear your eyes away.

You've always known that Elsa is beautiful. But you've never had to confront that beauty while she was wearing what has to be the most expensive dress ever made.

It's blue and pale and made of some kind of satin that shimmers like a thousand stars. There's a slit in it, riding up to halfway up her thigh, and every time she walks, you think that you might just get a glimpse of a little more.

Of course, that's completely ignoring her bust, or the delicate necklace that rests above it.

God, you could spend a million bucks on cosmetic surgery and you'd never look half as beautiful as Elsa.

Thankfully, she doesn't seem to notice you staring. She's frowning at her phone, but this time, you absolutely can't work up the courage to ask her if she's okay.

It's daunting, almost intimidating, seeing her like this.

You've got your gaze firmly fixed on your computer, reading a stupid email about some kind of presentation some company wants Elsa to give, when she speaks.

"Right. I'm not sure when I'll be back, or how long this will take. Feel free to turn off any alarms; we don't have anything on until tomorrow afternoon."

You look up and nod, eyes roving over her again. She moves towards the door, and that's when you find your voice.

"Hey, Elsa?" She turns to look at you. "You uh, you look really nice."

Her eyes widen a fraction, and she offers a jerky nod. "T-thank you, Anna."

And then she's gone, leaving you alone.

You sigh, close the email, and open up Netflix. If you have the evening to yourself, you may as well enjoy it.

Opening up Doctor Who, you settle in to watch The Doctor and Rose save the world, one disaster at a time. A throwback to your childhood.

Maybe you should see if Kristoff is awake...
Chapter 46

Chapter Notes

i want you all to know that i have reached the part where i am writing (if not posting, yet) the elsanna moments. they're coming up~! :) and, guess who's back to their regular thursday post schedule? enjoy!

Kristoff is awake, because it's only early evening in the States. He answers, a little breathless, and you have the absurd idea that he's been jogging.

Not so absurd when he says that he has.

"Oh my God, Kristoff Bjorgman, doing running?" you ask, humour infecting your voice.

He grumbles, but there's no bite to his tone when he says, "There's nothing wrong with taking care of yourself. Gotta do it for the health, Anna."

"Righttt," you say, tone light. "Doing it for the health. Not for any other reason, then?" He doesn't answer, and his silence tells you more than words ever could. You laugh. "I wanna hear all the deets one of these days," you say.

"Yeah, yeah, whatever. Anyway, enough about me," he says, slowly catching his breath back. "Tell me about Norway? Is it cold? Have you eaten something gross yet?"

"No, and no. Though, Elsa is..."

"... Disgusting?"

That gets you laughing, and unglamorous snort shooting out your nose. "No, she's... actually pretty amazing. I mean cold. She's a bit... I dunno. It's hard to explain."

"Well, have you taken many photos yet?"

"Nah. Haven't had a chance to go sightseeing. But, I'm free tomorrow morning so maybe I could do it then? What's there to do in Oslo?"

You can practically hear his shrug when he says, "I dunno. Google it."

According to Google, there's actually plenty to do. There's a zoo, and some museums and art galleries. A few more historical sites and stuff. You're actually a little spoiled for choice, now that you're looking into it.

"What do you think I should do?" you asked, after reading out the list. Kristoff gives a hum.

"Probably something that you can only do there. Also, something with a gift shop. I expect an awesome gift, Miss Adventurer." You smile.

"Should I buy something for your bee-eff?" you ask. He gives a laugh. That's a good sign!
"Only if you can smuggle a reindeer here. Or a Norwegian mountain cat. He loves animals."

Your bottom lip sticks out in thought. "But you hate animals. How did you even meet this dude?"

"Hey, I don't hate animals! I just... never found one that liked me back. And anyway, we're talking about you here, not me."

"You win this time, Bjor—" your words are interrupted by a yawn, and oh yeah, you were up early and only had a little nap in the car.

"Sounds like it's bedtime," he says. And usually you'd probably fight him on this, but you do want to be up early enough to actually do something fun.

"Ugh, alright, spoilsport. I'll try and ring tomorrow?"

"Yeah, okay. I'll talk to you then."

You say your farewells and hang up. You have to go and have a shower, but it relaxes you much more effectively than anything else could have. Then it's medicine and peeing and making sure the light is out before you get into bed. You've done that before.

It's not long past 9 by the time you're ready for sleep, but despite your earlier exhaustion, it doesn't come easily. Your mind wanders to Elsa; who would she be meeting, to get dressed up like that? What sort of meeting takes place this late, at such an expensive hotel.

Was it... that guy from earlier?

As soon as you think that thought, you brush it to the side. She was definitely not interested in him.

You fall asleep wondering.
You wake up early the next morning, hand down your pants. Which is. Well.

Ripping it out, you look over to Elsa's bed. Hopefully, she didn't see you. Hopefully she's still asleep and hopefully you weren't making any noise because that shit's just embarrassing.

But it's not a concern because she's not even there. Her bed is still made – doesn't even look like she came back last night. Everything was how you left it when you went to bed. Reaching over to grab your phone from where it lay charging, you scroll through. No messages, no emails. Nothing from her.

And suddenly you're angry. Your chest burns because this is not what you signed up for.

You're not entirely sure what you did sign up for, but that's beside the point. Sure, it might have been a secret meeting. It might even have been a date. But it's a really shit thing to do, to go on a business trip and then just not keep one's personal assistant up to date. A simple message is all it would have taken, just so you knew the plan.

It means you have no problem – not that you would have – with getting dressed in a nice outfit and calling up the driver to take you somewhere. You ask him to go "somewhere historical", and within half an hour you're at Akershus Fortress, a huge, amazing castle that, apparently, had not only been a fortress, but also a military base, a prison, and the temporary seat of the Prime Minister.

Even better, the admission is free. You pull out the camera Kristoff had loaned you and take loads of snaps. You're not really that well-versed in architecture and history and shit, but you still can't help but be in awe of this place.

There's some guided tours, in English, so you sign up because you've always felt more comfortable in crowds. Also, you find yourself really loving the Norwegian accent.

It's a young woman who shows you and about twenty other tourists around. She point out the buildings, and talks about their purpose. There are signposts with all this information, but it's nice hearing it from a real person. Makes it seem more real.

The best part, at least to you, is that there's no place that is impassable. You'd gone on little holidays around the US, and almost always, there was a place you couldn't go because it wasn't wheelchair accessible. Not here; even if there are stairs hundreds of years old, the've put ramps and stuff on it so you can still move about.

It is hard work though. Seemed the old Norwegians didn't believe in flat surfaces.

Still, you enjoy it, learning about this history and spending some time alone. Elsa's allowed to, so why shouldn't you?

It takes a few hours to see everything, which is perfect because it's not even midday yet, so you should be able to find somewhere nice to eat. Of course, you stop off at the gift-shop. You buy a keychain for Kristoff, which seems a little stupid but you know he's going to like it.

Except then you second-guess yourself, so you buy him a small statue of the castle, too, just because it's cute and memorable. They even wrap it up in thick butchers' paper to protect it.
You put it safely in your bag and begin making your way towards the road. Once you call the driver, it doesn't take long for him to get to you. And maybe you shouldn't be using him as your own personal chauffeur, but you're pretty sure he's being paid by the day and not by the amount of fuel you use, so you don't feel bad at all.

Elsa's still not back when you arrive, but you're not quite as bitter about it before. You're not gonna let it affect you because you had a nice day and took some nice pictures. You go and get ready for whatever meeting you have, but given that she isn't back yet, you decide to lie down and have a nap.

Of course, it doesn't quite work the way you wanted it to because as soon as your head hits the pillow, you're worrying about things that mean you can't actually nod off.

You still have lots of emails. And Elsa is AWOL and you should definitely be more concerned about it. It's not like– she's a big girl, she can take care of herself. But, part of being a PA is that she literally pays you to take care of some aspects of her life.

Not that she really lets you, though. You field phone calls and emails, but you don't know her itinerary. You don't know when or where this meeting this afternoon is, and you probably definitely should.

So you sit up and pull your laptop close because you may as well deal with what you can, and that mostly just includes, at the moment, emails. That one from the dude about having her give a presentation is still sitting open, and you, at least, know what to type.

Thank you for your interest in having Ms Arendelle give a speech on- you look back at the email. The use of policy to increase communicative practises in big businesses. Ugh.

Thank you for your interest in having Ms Arendelle give a speech to your employees. Attached is a contract; please sign and date at your leisure. If there are any concerns, don't hesitate to send an email requesting a callback, and one of our HR managers will be in touch.

From the office of Ms Arendelle,

CEO, Arendelle Enterprises.

You're pretty happy with the email, and after attaching the contract – which is nothing more than an interest to enter in an agreement, with the fees and conditions all laid out – you move onto the next email.

You're kind of glad that you took the time to respond to the emails, because it really doesn't take long at all to get through the bulk of them. There are a couple that are harder to deal with on your own, so you pin them to the top to deal with later.

You're just beginning to feel pretty good when the lock turns. Naturally, you turn to look at it, and you're not surprised to see Elsa.

And even though she hadn't returned last night, you're still somewhat taken aback by her appearance. Somehow, she looks even worse than yesterday. Her hair is limp, and her make-up (or whatever little of it remains) is terribly skewed. There's a dark mark on the side of her throat, and you think you have an idea of what it is.

Also, she's still wearing that pale blue, beautiful dress.

She doesn't seem that happy to see you, and why would she be? She's got 'walk of shame' written
all over her (even though you've got zero experience with it). You avert your eyes, giving her some privacy – or what little you can afford in this space. She disappears into the bathroom, pausing only enough to get her things.

And, as usual, you're just left with more questions than answers.
Chapter 48

She doesn't look at you at all on the way to the next place. You're not surprised. Her shower had taken almost an hour, and you may have heard some crying but you could also have just been hearing things. It's not nearly cold enough to explain the scarf she's suddenly donned, and you feel uncomfortable but don't have a very good reason for why.

Elsa, as you've noted before, is a very good looking woman. Who probably does things because that's what she likes doing. Maybe it's because she wasn't covert about it - at least... not covert enough. You're here for business, not pleasure.

Maybe it's because part of you is a little hurt, too. You spent the evening alone while she went out and had fun. Just because it's not your type of fun doesn't make it any more disheartening.

But, you're not going to torture her about it because it's obvious that she feels bad enough. So instead you just tell her about the emails you responded to, and the ones that you didn't. Mentioned that you went sightseeing because you had time, and talking about how beautiful Norway was.

"I can't believe you traded this for America," you say offhand.

"I wish I'd never come to America," she responds, voice low and bland. Your eyes widen in surprise, and Elsa finally looks at you. It seems that she didn't mean to say that, and she looks away again. "Sorry. It's a nice enough country, full of opportunities. But, I wonder what might have happened if I had stayed in Norway."

"How old were you when you moved over?" you ask. Elsa tilts her head slightly.

"Oh, about fifteen? I was... not a very respectful child, so my father sent me here for school. They bought everything I needed – and some things I didn't. An apartment, so I didn't have to live at the school. Paid for a maid. Bought me a car..." Her voice gets unexpectedly tight.

"It sounds lonely," you comment gently. There's a few seconds of silence as she gathers her thoughts – and, it seems, squashes her emotions.

"Like I said, I was not a very nice child. I definitely deserved it."

"You're wrong," you say. "No one deserves to have their parents push them away. There are so many other things they could have done. And hey, you turned out fine, so you were always capable of it."

Elsa sucks in a breath, and you smile at her. She doesn't smile back, but this time, it's okay. Her eyes flicker between yours, and she seems to be thinking about something. You feel like you've said either something very wrong, or very right, but you're not entirely sure which.

In fact, the moment is only broken when the car pulls to a stop and the driver gets out to grab your chair. This time, she waits for you. It seems like such a drastic change from yesterday, which is stupid because nothing's changed, really. In fact, it feels like, if it had changed, then it should have changed for the worst.

But you've shown Elsa that you're willing to look past last night; water under the bridge. It seems to be rubbing off on her, too.
This meeting is at a smaller building. It doesn't have the Arendelle Enterprises logo on it; in fact, it seems to be more like a small business. There are only two floors and a dozen staff. Your meeting is had with two of them, a girl and a boy, in a small office on the second floor. Someone brings in a tray of coffees and biscuits, and while it's a business, so it's kind of formal, it's also kind of relaxed, too.

The two people you're talking to smile at you. They speak in English if possible – though the guy's English is not quite as good as the girl's, and nowhere near Elsa's level, so sometimes he slips back into Norwegian if there's a word he doesn't know.

At least in this way, you actually can get an idea of the types of things Elsa does; the kinds of things business meetings talk about.

This one seems to be about a recent acquisition Arendelle Enterprises had made, which may mean – you think – that Elsa also now owns this business. Sometimes it's hard to understand them through the accent. Either way, they seemed to be discussing how to like. Move forward with fully enveloping the business (which, now that you've got a chance to observe, seems to be called Pirtek. It's a nice name).

They make bicycles. And why Elsa wants to run a small company like this that makes bicycles, you can't fathom at all. Either way, the meeting ends on happy notes – really, really positive notes, actually, if the other people's faces are anything to go by.

They're going to give her a cut of their profits, but in turn, it seems as though a lot of money is going to be invested into the research department.

Again, why? Bicycles haven't changed much over the last fifty years, and they seem to be pretty good so far. You ask Elsa what's up as you head towards the car, only because you're basically dying of curiosity.

"Doesn't Arendelle Enterprises do like. Holidays and stuff? You said on the plane?" She nods. "Why are you buying a bike company?"

For the first time all day, her expression relaxes. You might even go so far as to say that she smiles at you, even if it's only a small one.

"Pirtek doesn't make bicycles," she said, holding the door open so you can move into the backseat. "They make bicycle parts, but they actually specialise in hydraulics and tyre systems."

Which really doesn't answer your question at all, but then she's closing the door and walking around to her own side.

It's kind of funny. When you were young, you wanted to do something with sport – you used to be a dancer, before the accident, and you'd wanted to carry that on.

But, you'd never been able to afford one of the chairs that athletes used. They were lighter and, more importantly, worked a little differently. Not a lot, but enough to double the price tag.

This company probably had a really good understanding of those kinds of chairs.
get ready for some elsanna y'all.

a treat because this means i have to insert a chapter (which i haven't written yet) and also my life is going to be ridiculously busy until january because i uh am moving overseas. again.

i'll still try and update weekly, but hopefully this will tide you over :)

Elsa doesn't go out that night, something for which you are extremely grateful. She orders some dinner through Uber Eats, which apparently exists in Norway; the food isn't something you recognise, but there's a starter, and she pulls out the alcohol she'd bought at the duty-free shop and pours a glass.

Bente knocks on the door about ten minutes after the food arrives and says something to Elsa. Elsa looks at you from the corner of her eyes, and you try and be a little more interested in your food than the conversation going on. It's not like you can understand them anyway. After a few minutes, Bente leaves, and Elsa returns to you.

"Everything okay?" you ask. She nods, taking a forkful of food. It doesn't quite make it to her mouth before she returns it to the plate, letting it rest there.

"It seems as though we will be roommates a while longer," she says, not meeting your eyes. "Is that... okay?"

You look at her for a moment. "Of course it's okay with me," you tell her, because it is. You just... don't want to put Elsa out any more than you already seem to have been.

So... you tell her that.

Elsa doesn't respond straight away. Her hand rests on her fork, which rests on her plate, and she seems to be trying to think of a way to answer – even though you didn't really ask a question, your words still need a response.

"Anna, I..." she starts. Then, she heaves a huge sigh and takes a rather large gulp of her drink. "I'm sorry that I haven't been very good company this trip." Her eyes flicker to yours, and once more, you're desperately curious as to where she went last night.

Who she went with.

You wish you had her confidence. You're the only person you know who is a virgin, and honestly, you kind of want to get it out of the way just so you can cross that hurdle. At the same time, though, you want it to be meaningful.

Hans has already... made his own thoughts clear. Maybe you should talk to him. When you get back.
But Elsa's talking again, so you focus on her.

"I feel like... nothing I do is right."

What? That can't be true. A look into her eyes, even focussed away from you as they are, confirms her words, though. "Why do you feel that way?" you ask, trying not to pry but... Elsa really seems like she wants to share this time.

If she didn't, why would she have mentioned it?

She takes another drink, realises it's empty, and pours another. And maybe that's why she's sharing; because she's drunk. Or, not quite drunk. Definitely moving into the 'inebriated' phase, though.

"I keep trying to make things okay and sometimes I feel like I do a good job of it but then other times I just... it gets to me, which is stupid because it's not even about me but there you go. I feel like no matter what I do, it's never going to be enough!"

Your focus is entirely taken up by Elsa, by her words, that it takes a moment to realise that you feel a little cold. You don't like her words, what she's saying. She's talking like she hurt someone, and while that was a possibility, she'd never do it on purpose. Even though it sounds like she definitely blames herself for whatever it was. For some stupid reason, a ridiculous thought pops into your head: did she like... kill someone?

Of course, that idea is complete nonsense. Sure, she might be a CEO, but there's other things that aren't murder. Corporate espionage. Fraud and money laundering. Blackmail.

All things that the woman in front of you is not capable of. Sure, maybe you don't know her that well – not as well as you'd like – you've still always been a fairly decent judge of character.

Except with Kristoff. You really didn't like him at first.

But other than him, you've been great! And besides, if Elsa is so upset about something that she might not even have done, then doesn't that prove that she's a good person?

It does to you, at least, so you move over to put your hand on her arm.

"What do you think you did, Elsa?" you ask gently. "Because I don't think you deserve all of the pressure you're putting on yourself. You're a great person, and as long as we all keep trying, that's all anyone can ask, right?"

You smile at her, and she looks up at you. Her eyes are glassy, and they bore into yours. It actually leaves you kind of breathless.

"I-" she starts, but doesn't finish. You have the stupid thought that you should really hug her. You've always been a tactile person, and she looks like she needs one.

Slowly, you move your hand up her arm as your other one comes up to her side. It's slow enough that she has more than enough time to move or give some kind of indication that she doesn't want it.

She doesn't. Elsa's eyes stay on yours even as you close the distance. It's a little awkward, hugging from your chair when the other person isn't really making any move to hug back, but it's okay because she does start to relax when your arms enclose around her.
And then her head falls onto your shoulder and, with a start, you realise that she's crying.

It's soft and low, except for every few sobs where she lets out another cry that almost sounds like she's in pain. Her hands hold you close, and it's the tightest embrace you've had in years. You hug Kristoff sometimes, but it's different with Elsa. Your shoulder dampens and her short fingernails dig into your back.

But, you keep holding onto her, patting up and down her back every so often as you make gentle shushing noises. Not to get her to stop crying, but just to tell her that you're here.

It goes on like this for some time before she slowly pulls herself together. She doesn't let go immediately, and it could have been for any number of reasons; maybe she fell asleep (unlikely), or she doesn't want to face you (probable).

You don't know what prompts you to lift a hand, but it stops rubbing her back and begins petting up and down her scalp. Her hair is up, so the first thing you do is take out the hair ties. A small grin rises to your lips when you notice that they're the cheap plastic ones designed to look invisible. They're a pale blue – the same colour as her fancy dress from the night before – and blend in really well to her hair, light as it is.

She doesn't move, but she does relax into you. Her arms fall limp, still around your waist but not holding on anymore. She's warm and comfortable and needs comforting, so you don't try and move, and you don't try and speak. You're happy to stay here as long as she wants.

Given that, you're not sure how long it's been before Elsa finally does move. Long enough that her eyes aren't red, though they're still a little swollen. Her face looks sticky, and you're not sure if you should avoid her gaze or not. She presses the ball of her hand into her eyes and groans.

"I'm sorry," she says, hands still covering her eyes. It muffles her voice, but given that she hasn't actually moved back very far, it doesn't matter. "I shouldn't have..."

"Hey, it's okay," you rush to comfort her. "Do you... is there anything I can do?"

She shakes her head, hands finally moving. Sucks in a mucousy sniffle and stands up. "No, it's-thank you, though, for the offer. I... I just need a shower. Sorry."

You nod and move back, just far enough for her to get past you and collect her clothes for her shower.

Given how long she's taken in the past, you decide to start packing away her dinner. There's a small mini-fridge, and the containers are resealable. They'll be cold by the time you get around to eating them. Once again, you're lost your appetite.

You also put away her alcohol, because it's entirely possible that Elsa can't hold it – at least, nothing more than a glass of wine with lunch. It smells pretty strong, at any rate.

Just as you predicted, Elsa's in the shower for a long time. You hear, over the sounds of the tap, her crying again, and wow that makes three times in one day.

Maybe she's missing home, or is hormonal or something. You always feel bloated and sensitive when you're on your period (and you usually get a huge pimple because you can't control your cravings at all which, naturally, just makes it worse).

If you have a chance, you want to go to a Norwegian chocolaterie, or bakery, or somewhere that you can buy a treat for her.
When she returns, you've moved to your bed, laptop in your lap. You have Netflix open again – you never managed to finish your episode of *Doctor Who* (in fact, you'd barely started it). You look up when she reappears. This Elsa is a far cry from the one you saw on the first night, and even further from the one yesterday. With her makeup gone, the bags under her eyes are the first thing you notice.

She looks at you, almost guiltily, before making her way to her bed.

"Els-"

Her step falters as she looks at you. You try to hold her gaze, even though you weren't really sure why you'd spoken her name. A little idea flickers in your mind, and you grab tight.

"Do you... wanna watch some Netflix with me? We can push the beds together and... I dunno... Sorry, it's a stupid idea..."

You don't mean to sound so self-deprecating, but it's kind of hard. Elsa probably just wants to go to bed and forget today ever existed.

But then, surprisingly – amazingly – she smiles. It's small, but definitely there.

"That sounds nice..."
Chapter 50

Chapter Notes

AN: i think it's funny that on the fiftieth chapter, something finally, finally happens. It's only little (please don't get your hopes up too high) but it's there, and they're progressing (also can promise that next chapter, there's a little more :) ). I got some really positive feedback regarding my characterisation of Anna last chapter, and it made me really happy, so here. have a shippy chapter :)

Everything happens so quickly and efficiently that it's almost surprising. Perhaps Elsa puts herself to work so that neither of you have to linger on the absurdity of the situation.

But it's almost too late to back out now – and you don't truthfully want to – so you leave it. Get in your chair and help move the beds (once Elsa's removed the bedside table in the centre).

Of course, then you realise that Elsa is in her PJs and you're still grotty from the day. And you don't want to leave to have a shower because that definitely gives you both breathing room to regret such a suggestion, but you have to do it.

In what feels like a world-record for speediest shower taken by a paraplegic, it's only about fifteen minutes after you leave that you're wheeling back, hair damp but clean. Elsa's sitting on the bed on her phone, but she's actually rather close to the middle. So, at least there's that – she doesn't seem to be trying to keep her distance. Even if you're not actually there yet. That's a nice thought.

She even smiles at you as you come in. As you move onto the bed, you can see that she's not actually doing work tonight; she's not answering emails on her phone, which is what you would have assumed.

She's playing Angry Birds, of all things.

"So, what's this show about?" she asks, once you're comfortable. Your look at her, aghast.

"You're never seen it?" She shakes her head, eyes wide. "Oh, man, you're in for a treat. This was my entire childhood growing up."

Elsa just lifts her eyebrows, but says nothing.

It's a little awkward at first, if only because you're not quite sure where to put your legs. Elsa has hers spread out, and she's lying almost luxuriously on the bed. The laptop started on her lap, but you both quickly realised that it needed to be between you so you could both see it. Not that you really need to watch it – you've seen this show a thousand times – but it's nice sharing it with someone.

Eventually, you just splay your legs out, too, so you're both half-lying down and leaning into each other. Elsa is completely enraptured by it; you can tell. Sometimes you glance at her, just to gauge her reactions to certain things. Her face is so expressive sometimes...

You don't even notice your eyes drifting shut until there's a sudden bang from the small speakers that jolt you up. You look at Elsa, only to find she's already looking at you and smirking. It's only
little, but it's definitely there – and really, you're too used to this to actually be embarrassed anymore. You take it as a sign, instead, that she's forgotten about how shitty the day was. If you can help her forget by basically falling asleep on her, then you aren't going to complain.

And anyway, the episode is nearly over, so you let yourself relax (but not too much), sinking into the pillow. Elsa's shoulder presses against yours – she's still watching, evidently not as tired as you are. You feel a little bad when it's over because Elsa closes the lid, even though it was your idea.

"Come on, you're exhausted. We can always watch the next episode another day," she says, obviously not accepting your feeble complaints that she, at least, should be able to enjoy it.

"Why don't we put on a film or something then?" you suggest instead. You're not really ready for this day to be over yet, despite everything. Elsa gives you a look, so you try for your best puppy-dog face. It must be pretty good, because Elsa caves almost instantly.

"Don't look at me like that," she says, and you perk up the moment she reaches for the laptop again.

"Yay!" Your tiredness is all but forgotten as you cheer, and even Elsa can't help but give a smile at your good mood. It doesn't last, though; barely ten minutes into the film and you're already nodding off again.

Elsa was just... so warm... and so comfortable... And soon, you stop fighting it.
Chapter 51

Chapter Notes

second update tonight, so make sure you've read chapter 50 before you read this one, otherwise it won't make sense :)

happy christmas or something lol you can thank turwen for getting this chapter out early ;)

You wake up sometime in the middle of the night. You're not sure what does it, actually, until you breathe in and get a lungful of tobacco and nicotine, and you realise that Elsa has moved. Your computer blinks from the bedside table, and you realise you must have fallen asleep – even after you said you wouldn't.

But then you breathe in and your nose twitches because it's definitely a cigarette that you smell. Is someone smoking outside the door to the apartment? You turn over to have a look when you realise that Elsa's bed is still pressed against yours, and Elsa is nowhere in sight. That's what makes you sit up and try and get a better look around. You're just fumbling for the lamp light when something on the verandah moves. You freeze, before your eyes finally adjust.

Elsa's sitting out there; you'd only noticed her because she'd moved, adjusting the way she sat on one of the chairs. Her legs are tucked up underneath her, and the door is open the tiniest amount; enough that you can hear the bustle of midnight traffic. And, evidently, enough that the little wisps of cigarette smoke can curl through and invade the room.

She lifts her hand again, taking a drag. After she breathes out, she uses her other hand to bring a glass up to her lips.

This... totally explains why she looks terrible in the morning. You had no idea she even smoked, but why in God's name would anyone ever abandon the luxuries of sleep to breath in literal tar?

Which... is not something you're going to tell her, but you can't help the thought as it crosses your mind.

You're a little torn. You could try and go back to sleep, but despite how good you usually are at dropping off, you know that it wouldn't really work here. Not when your nose feels a little like it's on fire.

Another option is just to pretend that you're asleep, in case Elsa comes back in and also because you're more likely to just drop off if you're ein a position to do so.

Or, you could go outside to Elsa. Given the night she'd had, though, you sort of want to leave her alone. If this is how she can find some peace, then you're loathe to disrupt that.

You do none of those options. You make sure you're lying down, but you don't try to go back to sleep. Instead, your eyes remain on Elsa, watching her through the glass door.
Slowly, she finishes that cigarette. There's a few minutes where she doesn't do much of anything else; just sits there, observing the Norwegian skyline. You wish you could see the Northern Lights from here...

She throws back her head and finishes her drink before standing up. You shut your eyes, because you don't want her to know that you're awake and watching her. That would be weird.

And also, that same thought about giving her some peace rattles around your head. She's a grown woman who can make her own decisions and shit.

She doesn't move back to the bed straight away. It sounds like she's... in the bathroom. The sound of brushing teeth reaches you, and you're tempted to open your eyes to look. But then the sound of the water turns off, and there's a flick of a light switch and everything behind your eyelids goes dark.

There's the sound of a sigh before finally the bed moves; Elsa's weight, sinking down into it. You don't know what she's doing, but it feels like she's looking at you. Or, at least, looking towards you. The sheets rustle and you feel them pulled up above you a little more.

And then Elsa moves again. At first it seems like she's shifting, not quite asleep yet, before you realise that's not quite right.

She's moving closer to you.

By the time she's done, her arms are pressed between you, head tucked under your chin. She heaves a huge sigh, breath all minty with only the slightest hint of tobacco; you probably only notice because you know that's what she was doing.

Eventually, she drifts off, but you don't. You'd think your mind is buzzing, but it's not. It's just... not letting you sleep. You commit yourself to feeling tired the next day, and you sort of wish you'd asked Elsa about the itinerary before all the drama.

Not that it was bad! Not that you blamed her, either. It was just hard to see your boss break down and then have to go, "So, what's on the list for tomorrow?"

In your very unprofessional opinion, you reckon that she probably needs a relaxing day. Something fun, and nice, to get her mind off whatever is bothering her. There's plenty of sights to see, and you really want to experience as much of Norway before you go.

It would be even nicer if you could share those experiences with someone.

Maybe it's that thought that lets you move, just a little. After all, Elsa is asleep and any action could be attributed to moving in your sleep.

You lift an arm and use it to wrap around Elsa, drawing her just that little bit closer. She sighs, and you freeze, afraid you'd waken her up. But when she doesn't move or say anything, you guess that it was just a reflex action at someone... doing whatever you just did, and she didn't actually awaken.

She feels so small in your arms, and with that thought, your mind finally quietens, and lets you drift off.
When you awaken just after six-thirty, you're surprised to find Elsa already up. Her hair is damp, which means she's had a shower, but hasn't used the hairdryer.

How does she function?

"Morning, Anna," she says, once she notices you're awake. "We don't have anything on today, so how would you feel about doing a little sightseeing? I'm afraid we have another long meeting tomorrow, so may as well take advantage of the downtime while we can."

You don't answer straight away; your brain needs some time to kick into gear, and you're a little distracted by your boss. She hasn't put makeup on yet, either, but there's nothing about her actions or appearance that seem affected by her late-night siesta.

Maybe you just dreamed it? But now, because you can still remember the way she'd curled into you afterward. Blinking, you shoo that thought away because Elsa's waiting for an answer and you don't want to dwell on why she did that. "Uh, sure. Man, I wish I'd known – then I could have slept in!"

She gives an odd little smile at that.

"Sorry," she says. "I really just thought of it this morning. Feel free to go back to sleep if you'd like – we really do have all day."

You get the impression that she is genuinely happy for you to go back to bed, but she's actually kind of happy right now, and you'd rather be awake to witness it. You're not sure what prompted the change, but it's nice, seeing her smile.

"Nah," you end up telling her. "Early bird catches the worm, or whatever. I might – if you're finished – have a shower though?"

She nods and moves to the side, indicating the bathroom door. "Take your time."

It doesn't take long for you to collect all your things; clothes and medicine and you almost forget your toothbrush, but you manage to see it before you make it to the bathroom.

The water is hot and warm, and it steams up the bathroom wonderfully. You take the opportunity to shave your legs and your underarms. Make sure your hair is clean and you brush your teeth before you leave. You even put on some makeup because you're going out, and you're going to be
seen with Elsa, and you're fairly positive that she does not want to be seen with a slob.

She's sitting on her bed, computer open. Probably reading emails or something. When she stands up, you actually notice her outfit; three-quarter pants and a polo top, complete with the buttons and the collar. Her hair has dried, and she's put it up in a ponytail (just how long were you in the shower for?).

There's a warmth in your chest as you look at her. She's just so effortlessly classy. It almost looks like she should be picking up some golf clubs on her way to the country club, not wandering around the capital of Norway.

You really only brought business-appropriate clothes, because you weren't sure what the protocol was; you still manage to dress down a little, going for a pair of trousers and a satiny top. You'd usually tuck it in for work, but you haven't bothered this time. Elsa smiles at you.

"Ready?" she asks, and you give a grin.

"Sure!"

You ask where you're going, once you get into the car. Elsa just purses her lips in this really cheeky kind of way. It makes her look young.

"Do you want it to be a surprise, or do you actually want me to tell you?" she asks. And you're really curious as to where this Elsa has come from, and kind of curious as to wear the cool boss from the last few days has gone...

But you just shrug. "I don't mind. Surprise me, then." There's a smile on your face that Elsa mirrors, and she doesn't say anything else.

It gives you time to ponder her.

Which... you seem to be doing a lot of that, lately. And it's a little odd, but the more time you spend with her, the more you realise that Elsa is a little odd. A lot odd. It's not that she has to be an open book at all, but the hot and cold, the secrecy.

Even thinking back to a few weeks ago, her complete look of horror – directed at herself! – when you'd explained how she had been making you feel with the gifts and money and stuff... How does a typical person do that and not notice?

You suppose that's the answer, isn't it; Elsa isn't a typical person.

The more time you spend with her, the more you want to find out who she is. You don't know her favourite food, or her favourite colour. You've never worked in a place as classy as Arendelle Enterprises, but you have worked before. And in those jobs, it's always been fairly easy to make friends. People either tried extra hard because of your chair, or they were just more willing to give you a chance.

It's hard, working in a place where you don't really have many friends. You didn't keep that many from high school, and you didn't go to college. Kristoff... is pretty much all you've got.

And Hans now, too. The thought brings a small smile – a private smile – to your lips.

Now to just... get Elsa to open up a little.
Maybe... maybe you need to try a little harder. As in, make it obvious that, if she were interested in being friends (which she's said so before!), then she shouldn't feel like she needed to... do whatever it is she's doing.

It's one step forward, two steps back with her, it feels like. You're not quite sure why. You hope it doesn't stay like this forever.
Chapter 53

You end up having a really good day out with Elsa.

The first place you stop is a museum. There's a display of Norwegian History and Culture, and when she tells you, she almost looks embarrassed. Like, she thought she'd had a great idea but now that you're here, she thinks it's stupid.

It's really, really not.

"This is awesome," you end up telling her. The admission is free, again, and honestly. "Where else am I gonna get to see all this cool stuff about Norway in one spot?"

The best part is, they allow photography. There's a small exhibit which doesn't, but you're more than fine with that. There are some really horrendous period paintings that you take a selfie in front of to send to Kristoff. Elsa's acting all dignified and shit, wandering around and actually reading all the information, and here you are, taking the piss.

But then she catches you and smirks, obviously trying to bite back a grin.

You stop off at the gift shop and buy Kristoff an old Norwegian coin. There's a basket of tiny stuffed reindeer that cost the equivalent of $5, so you buy one for his partner, too. You don't know anything about this mysterious man, but it seems serious – and Kristoff seems happy.

Plus, he did say to get him a reindeer!

After that, you stop off somewhere for lunch. Time seems to absolutely fly with Elsa, and you're enjoying yourself. You eye the glass of wine she has with lunch, but it's all right, and she doesn't even end up finishing it. Maybe it didn't taste very nice or something? You elect for a Coke, mostly because if you don't have some kind of caffeine, you're gonna be wrecked by this afternoon.

So lunch is had at a nice café, with some live music. It's bright and open and the food tastes really nice. Elsa gets some kind of salmon dish; you're not so keen on seafood, but they have chicken. It tastes delicious.

Elsa asks you about yourself; what your hobbies are. It's a little embarrassing, but you don't actually have any. Not really.

You like reading. You've been meaning to read Love, Simon, or whatever the original title was called, out of solidarity for Kristoff. He's probably not interested in a movie about a gay teenager, but from everything you've seen about it online, the gay community were pretty happy with the representation.
You mention this to her, and she looks at you with mild curiosity. She seems to actually care, and there's no judgement or anything.

Not that you'd thought she'd be homophobic or anything, because she certainly seemed to have a progressive outlook, but one couldn't always tell.

"Was it a surprise to you?" she asks, and you give a small shrug, finishing a mouthful of food.

"A little. He'd been dating this chick, Esmé, for years. And it's not like... well. When we were growing up, foster homes were usually pretty shit. And even if the home was good, the other kids weren't always. If he did know, I'm not surprised he didn't share it. I never noticed it."

She nods. "Well, I hope it works out for him," she tells you, genuine sincerity in her tone. You smile.

"What about yourself? Anyone special in your life?"

Elsa's expression falls a fraction, and she shakes her head; a tiny twitch that would almost have been easy to miss if you hadn't been concentrating on her.

"No. Dating never quite works out for me. And besides, I have plenty to keep me busy."

After that sentence, it definitely sounds like the conversation is over; she doesn't want to talk about that side of her personal life, and you don't blame her because it's really rather personal.

Something a therapist mentioned, when you were younger, was about reciprocal learning. Or whatever the term was. Basically, you know that you can't expect Elsa to share anything about herself that you're not also willing to share.

And you're happy to share, so why shouldn't you?

"I used to think the same about me," you say. "Still kinda do. Like, it's hard dating in a chair, so I've never bothered before."

"Mr Westergaard is your first boyfriend?" she asks, surprise lacing her tone. You nod. "I... see..."

You're not sure what that's supposed to mean, so you shrug. "Yeah, I mean. No one else has ever shown interest. And I'm not the prettiest girl or whatever. But I've always had Kris and I've always had Joan, and they're the most important people to me."

"Joan?"

The corner of your lip curls up. "Well, she's not a person. Joan's my cat. She was probably hiding when you- after there was that mix-up with the promotion. I got her from the pound as a kitten a decade ago. She'd been in an accident too, and I fell in love with her. And when people are fostering a kid with a wheelchair, most of them are decent enough to let her have a pet, too."

Elsa doesn't say anything for a moment. She's nodding her head, and she takes a drink of her wine before commenting. "I'm glad you have things you love, and who love you back," she says.

The conversation has taken a suddenly depressing turn, but at least Elsa isn't looking at you like she expects you to burst into tears – or that she's about to burst into tears.

"Yeah... Kris is looking after her while I'm overseas. I'm trying to take as many pictures as possible for him: where would you recommend we go next?"
You, frankly, don't actually care where you go next; you just want to take Elsa's mind off sad topics.

She hums a little, looking you in the eyes. "How do you feel about the zoo?" she asks, eyes glinting.
By the time you arrive at the zoo, the sky has darkened with the threat of rain. A stiff breeze picks up, and you shiver twice; the first due to the wind, and the second because, as you reach into your backpack, you realise that the lovely jacket Elsa had made for you isn't there.

You pull everything out to see if maybe it slipped to the bottom, but it's not exactly a small item, and you know that it hasn't.

Dammit, why do you have to be so bad at this? You made a huge deal out of the fact she bought it for you, spent a lot of money on it for you, and now you can't even remember to pack it.

Heart sunk low, you turn to Elsa to tell her. You hope it isn't too cold outside, or that the clouds part soon. You really hope it doesn't actually rain. The words die on your lips, though, because she's rifling through her own bag, pulling out more than enough fabric for one jumper.

"The day started so bright," she begins to explain, "but the weather here can change very quickly. Fortunately, I checked the forecast. Small chance of rain, but still a chance."

Then she's handing you the jacket, putting her own on and zipping it up once you've taken the garment.

You copy her movements, and then kind of feel like snuggling down into it because it's puffy and ridiculous but also really, really warm and comfortable.

Norwegian zoos are like literally every other zoo you've ever visited. A different variety of animals, but they have all the usual ones: elephants and giraffes. An aviary and a monkey enclosure.

You love it. There's something just so comforting watching them be... them. There's even a little baby elephant playing in a pond, and it just looks so happy! The rest of the elephants are kind of just standing around relaxing, but not the little one. You let out a very unglamorous snort when it falls over, and even Elsa gives a little laugh.

She also laughs at you when you try and take a terrible selfie, but it's not malicious; it can't be when you manage to goad her into posing with you. She crouches next to you, and it's actually a really good angle to get the little elephant in the background.

They even have an Australian animals exhibit, with some kangaroos and koalas. The kangaroos are like a petting zoo, which seems really absurd, but the giant marsupials look like the laziest creatures as they relax in the sun. For just over four krone – about fifty cents – you can buy a little bag of feed to give them.
You're leaning out, hand flat with some of the grain on it as you feed a kangaroo when you hear a shutter click. You weren't even aware of Elsa standing back taking a picture of you until that sound.

"Hey!" you call out. She looks taken aback for a moment. "If you're taking pictures, you need to be in it, too!"

There are plenty of staff, and one is more than happy to take a snap for you. They're probably used to tourists. Elsa crouches on her knees behind one of them, next to you, and the zookeeper takes a few different ones for you.

You can't wait to send them to Kristoff.

It must be the day for photos, because Elsa has one more surprise for you way. As you leave the kangaroo enclosure, she points at a small kiosk.

"Did you want one more picture?" she asks. You're not sure what kind of picture, so you say the first thing that comes to your mind.

"Only if you're in it with me."

Her whole face relaxes, and she smiles. "Of course!" She begins to direct you towards the kiosk, and you know automatically that this one is going to be a little fancier.

It is.

Snow foxes. Unbelievable.

You have to pay, but you also get to hold it. There's one each, and they even get a chair for Elsa so you're on the same level. When you get the picture, she has on one of the biggest smiles you've ever seen her wear.

You're going to treasure this. Forever.

"Thank you," you tell her at the end of the day, as you head towards the pickup area of the zoo to wait for the driver. You're looking at your hands. Are you really going to tell her this?

She deserves to know.

"Yesterday you seemed really..." Annoyed at me? Upset? Wishing I hadn't come on the trip? "...tired." It's not anywhere near being the right word. Elsa seems to understand, though. When referring to her actions the previous day, it would take an especially dense person to not realise, you think. And Elsa is far from stupid. "And I guess it put me out a little, too, because I'm still amazed that I'm even here, and so I'm just hoping that you're having a time as nice as I am..."

Elsa lifts an eyebrow. "You're having a nice time?" she asks. You nod. "Well, I suppose I understand that being true for today, but... I do realise that I have not been making you feel as comfortable here as I should have."

You don't try and refute her; you owe it to both yourself and to her to not lie. All it would do is seem disingenuous.

So you shrug and say, "It wasn't that it's been a bad time. I've been... is it okay to say that I was a little worried?"

"About what?"
Now you're moving into dangerous territory. Not that you think there will be any kind of overtly negative consequence for speaking your mind, but you don't want any of the other consequences. You don't want her to feel awkward or uncomfortable.

But then, this isn't quite the same as when you had to approach her about the gifts and stuff. It's not quite as negative, which means it's not as scary.

"About... you..." you say, voice still small. "You just don't seem to be sleeping very well, and you were acting a little odd." When you look at her, her mouth is open in a small 'o'. She shakes herself soon after.

"Oh, you noticed?" she asks.

At that, the corner of your lips twitch up.

"You asked if we could be friends a while back. I care about you," you shrug.

At that, she looks away. "You're too good, Anna," she says after a moment.

You're not sure what to make of that.
Chapter 55

The rest of the week passes by in a blur of activity. It seems as though you probably only needed to be here for like, two days, because after the third meeting, you stop attending them.

Elsa stops attending them.

"We really didn't have that much to do," she had said when you asked her about it. "I wasn't sure how successful that first one would be, though, so I needed to ensure we'd have time to rectify any... issues."

By 'issues', it's obvious that she means like, people not doing what she needs them to do. Though if that meeting that you understood – the one in English – gave any indication of the kind of businesswoman Elsa was, then you certainly weren't going to object to her business practises.

The only odd – and it definitely is odd – thing that happens comes at the end of the week. The night before you're due to fly back home. You'd gone to lunch (and it had been a very nice lunch) before returning to the room. After that, you'd set about packing your things while Elsa... did what Elsa did.

She got dressed up, and she drank.

"Going out?" you ask, just as she slips into a pair of really nice heels that probably cost more than your annual salary, and you don't really know why that makes you feel the way you do – low heart, a little disappointed. Not that you should, because the look of utter annoyance that crosses Elsa's face is enough to have you giggling a little. It's enough to make her own expression drop for a second, to be replaced with a wry smile.

"I uh-" She seems a little surprised at having been asked. Her mouth closes firmly for a moment, and you're already beginning to reprimand yourself, when she speaks. "My mother- when I caught up with my mother earlier in the week, it did not end well. Given that it may be some time before I see her again, I wanted to... well." She gives you a brief smile. "I'd much rather spend it here."

She... would? And, wait, she went to see her mother? You try not to let your confusion show because people don't normally return in... her condition... if they've just gone to see the folks.

But if she's happy to mention that evening in casual conversation, you're not going to make it weird.

Instead, you offer what you hope is a sympathetic smile. "Want me to wait up? I can get Uber Eats to drop off some ice-cream and we can pig out when you get back?"
The smile stays on her face, but it gets a little sad. "I'm afraid I don't know when I'll be back," she says. "No need. But thank you for the offer."

And the thing is, she genuinely sounds touched. Like she's honestly happy that you bothered to ask.

And they say that close enough is good enough, and you're starting to find that it's mostly true, but not quite. Because it is 'good enough', and maybe you're just being a little selfish for wanting more, but every time you think you're making progress, she seems to sidestep it, just a little.

She's a mysterious little egg that you kind of want to crack.

You frown at the metaphor. It's not a very good one.

Fortunately, Elsa doesn't notice. She's putting her purse together – she's already neatly dressed, hair done up in a bun. It's very... austere.

Still beautiful, but she definitely looks like she's trying to impress someone. Her mother?

But then she's sending you a smile and heading for the door.

"If I don't manage to see you before tomorrow, have a good sleep," she says. "And don't worry about setting an alarm; our flight isn't until the afternoon, so take tomorrow to sleep in."

And then she's breezing out the door. You can hear her heels all the way down the hallway.

It doesn't take you long to pack your things. Then you empty your bag and repack it because you weren't sure if you'd done it right the first time.

You had.

But even after all that, it was still too early to go to bed.

So, you pull out your phone and ring Kristoff.

He answers on the third ring, but he sounds busy. There's lots of background noise and talking, and you find it hard to hear him. Even though you'd like to ask about Joan, and about how his week has been, you don't. Instead, you just double-check that he can still pick you up from the airport tomorrow evening.

You're still at a loss to do once you hang the phone up.

Maybe... you could ring Hans?

You should have before now, but you've kind of been having fun without talking to him. Like, you miss him, and you can't wait to maybe get back and kiss him again, but at the same time, you've always been your own best friend. You've always had to be, so being alone isn't really anything new.

At this point, it's almost preferable.

So, you unlock your phone again. It rings almost twelve times before he answers, and he doesn't seem to have looked at the called ID because he says, "Yes?" in this really impatient voice.

Oh dear, he's probably been waiting on a different call or something.
"H-hey, Hans," you say, not entirely sure why you stuttered a little but trying to soldier on.

"Oh, hey Anna."

You frown a little at the- is this attitude? You're not sure, but you don't like it.

"I uh, I have some time free," you tell him. "If- if you're free too and wanna chat?"

You can almost imaging the shrug that accompanies his, "Sure, I'm free. I guess you've had a really busy week, huh?"

That's more like the Hans you know. He was probably just surprised because you really... should have called a little more frequently.

But instead of dwelling on that, you clear your throat and agree with him instead. "Yeah. Crazy busy. I meant to call, I'm really sorry – but I'm coming home tomorrow!"

"Oh, that's good! We'll have to do something."

"Yeah!" You launch into a bit of a spiel about flight times, and the fact that Kristoff is picking you up, but you make sure to end it on a good note. "How about brunch or something the day after?"

You still have some cash – you'd saved it for this trip, but you didn't really spend that much of it. The usual expenses, like food and taxis, didn't really apply this time.

But Hans gives a groan. "I can't do that," he says. "I'm really busy this week outside work – lots of commitments piling up. How about next weekend?"

It seems a little odd to you, but he's probably had these things scheduled for weeks. Has probably told you about them, too, but your mind is like a sieve at the best of times.

So you just say, "Oh, okay then," and leave it at that because it is okay, even if it is also a little strange.

"But..." he says, something new entering his tone, "I can't wait to see you again. Maybe do a little more of that thing you did at the airport?"

Immediately, your face flushes, and you're glad he can't see you because that would have been horribly embarrassing. You almost want to shield it anyway, even though there is literally no one present.

"Really?"

"Mhmm. Maybe even... some other things?"

Oh God. You are most definitely the brightest shade of red ever, and he hasn't even said anything really terrible! It's actually really good! You don't quite know how to respond to him, so you give a non-committal kind of noise. Is that- has he been... imagining... things? With you?

You've never done anything like this before. Ever. And before you have a chance to stop yourself, you're blurting out, "Are we dating?" like some goddamned tween. Maybe he can walk you home and ask Kristoff if he can take you to see the latest Disney movie.

Yeuch.

"I mean-" You try and fix it – even though you didn't actually break, or ruin, anything. Because you really shouldn't have asked, and you're actually fairly certain that you've already established
that you are, in fact, dating, but it doesn't hurt to have a little bit of reassurance.

"I would love to 'date' you," he says, before you can get too carried away explaining yourself. "If that means I get to experience everything about you, then absolutely I want to date you. Anna, would you date me?"

And he's definitely teasing but he's not actually making fun of you. You let out a little giggle, because apparently everything he does turns you into a schoolgirl, and you have to bite the inside of your cheek just so your smile doesn't get too big.

"I would really like to date you, too," you tell him. "What- what sorts of things do you want to experience with me?"

At that, he lets out a chuckle. "Everything."
You end the call not much later than that. You're not quite ready to hear exactly what Hans has been thinking about doing with you, so you tell him you need to finish packing. He doesn't argue with you about it – just says that he'll see you at work, and asks you to call when you arrive safe at home.

But the thing is, you don't have any more packing to do. You don't have anything else to do, and even though you should be, by all rights, completely exhausted, you're not.

Or, you are, but only in mind. Your body feels more awake than ever, and you know precisely why.

You can't do anything about it now, though. And you shouldn't. Elsa could be back literally at any minute, without warning, and then you'd be put in a far more awkward position than you would ever want to be in.

But... maybe you can go and have a shower. A long one.
It takes a full hour and a half before you're finally completely done in the bathroom and ready for bed. You leave out your toothbrush and paste, plus your shampoo because you might even have time for a shower before your flight, and you'd rather do that.

It has the desired side effect of making you sleepy, though – the hot water was lovely, and without Elsa there, you had no qualms with sitting below the steamy faucet for as long as you wanted. You use the time to open your pores so when you shave your legs, they're so wonderfully smooth it's actually almost ridiculous. And you do the same for your underarms, and it means that you've got all the gunk out from your face.

No pimples for you this week. You hope.

It's probably high time you treat yourself to a full-on pamper – like an actual spa day. Maybe Kristoff would come along, too.

You scoff to yourself. He's into a dude, but he hasn't actually said that he's gay – and, that's a huge stereotype that isn't fair to force on him.

It would still be nice to do something with him, but he was more inclined to spend money on a film than a mani-pedi.

You don't want to go to bed yet, but when your head hits the pillow, all thoughts of staying up vanish. You've left Elsa's side untucked so she can just slide in when she gets back, and maybe you should have asked her why the beds stayed joined. You must be far more tired than you'd thought, so even though you want to greet Elsa when she comes home, you know that unless that happens in the next two minutes, it's not going to happen at all.

And it doesn't. You manage to plug your phone in to charge just before you're completely gone.

You wake up to someone cursing. At least, it sounds like cursing – you're not entirely sure because it's not in English. It comes again, and at least the voice is familiar, if not the words. Rolling over, you flick on the light switch, and the room immediately flares into your field of view.

Elsa's staring at you from near the bathroom door. Her suitcase is splayed open, and it kind of looks like she tripped over it.

"Ohhhhh God," she says, eyes wide. Is she... drunk? She's definitely not sober, though at least this time her hair and makeup are still on point, and her dress is free from crinkles and ruffles.

Okay, wow, this was really not what you expected to happen at all. Elsa wavers a little on her feet, but she doesn't seem as though she's swaying too much. And really, you've got no chance at helping her – if you try, you'll honestly probably just get in the way.

"Elsa?" you say instead. She shakes her head vehemently.

"Mmm-mm," she says, very obviously not wanting you to say anything more. "Bathroom. Back soon." She reaches down to grab something from her suitcase – hopefully her pyjamas – and leaves. You take the opportunity to check your phone.

It's just past midnight, which means you'd only been asleep for a couple of hours. It would have been nice to sleep a little longer, but it's obvious that Elsa hadn't actually meant to wake you up at all.

Probably, she didn't want to be seen in the state that she's in, even though it's not like she was
completely off-the-walls drunk. Just perhaps a little tipsier than was wise on a business trip.

It's a little strange, though. You'd think it were out of character for her, but then, you don't really know much about her personal life. She said she was meeting her mother, but this... doesn't really make sense. Her relationship with her parents seems really... complex. And you don't understand it, and you don't think you ever will, but it's completely obvious, even to you, that something about it has Elsa on edge. Makes her sad.

At least this time she made it home, you think wryly.

Sitting up more fully in the bed, you fold your hands over your lap and wait. Elsa doesn't take long to reappear, hair loose and the guiltiest, most contrite look on her face.

"Sorry..." she says, very quietly and very gently. You're not entirely sure what she's apologising for – waking you up? Or something else?

It seems that not even she knows. She slides into her side of the bed without looking at you, and turns away. This is different from earlier in the week; this... chill you feel emanating from her, it isn't quite the same.

"Hey, Els..." you say gently. "Is everything okay?"

The thought occurs to you that maybe you shouldn't be asking her when she's drunk and might possibly answer even when she didn't truly want to. But it's quickly squashed because you can't deny that you do want to know. And you want to help.

She doesn't move for the longest time, and you wonder if she's perhaps fallen asleep. You let out a little sigh and move to turn off the bedside light when her voice comes through the still air.

"I'm sorry," she says. Her voice is tight, and you're not sure why. She still doesn't turn around to look at you.

"Why are you sorry?" you ask instead, because her talking is better than her not talking.

"I just am..."

And that's an absolutely terrible answer, but it's the best one you've got.

For now.

"Is it because of this week?" you ask, shifting a little closer. "Because please believe me when I say that I've had a blast. It's honestly been really nice spending time with you here."

There's movement as Elsa nods, a very slight motion that could very easily have been missed if you weren't looking at her. "I'll remember that," she says. You nod and bite your lip. She's still not happy. Suppressing a disappointed sigh, you flick the light off.

You have a sudden thought, just as your head hits your pillow: maybe... maybe she just needs a hug? The thought makes you feel very foolish. She's like traversing a minefield sometimes; you never know how she's going to react to anything you say. Maybe you should just stop trying to force her hand, then.

But then you remember that night, earlier this week. When she had a cigarette and a drink and then came back in. She had curled into you, on purpose. And the beds are still connected so... you just move. Do what the little voice is telling you to do.
Elsa freezes solid when you arm comes to wrap around her. You hold her from the back in the same way Kristoff used to. Back when you were a teenager and the pain of your parents’ passing still struck hard and fierce against your heart. Sometimes, all you needed was someone to hold you; and maybe that's what Elsa needed, too.

"Good night, Elsa..." you murmur. She chokes once, briefly, but doesn't say anything. It's okay. She doesn't need to.
Elsa is subdued the next day. It's different to usual, though (and the fact that she even has a 'usual' level of subduedness is enough to have you biting your lip because that's so sad).

You wake up late, and though Elsa looks like she's going to collapse from exhaustion, she's actually up earlier than you. She's got deep circles below her eyes, so dark that even her flawless makeup can't completely remove the evidence.

For a brief moment, you wonder if she was up in the middle of the night smoking again, before you shake that thought away. It's really none of your business. Plus, she was probably really exhausted after the evening that she'd had.

Instead of forcing conversation that she probably doesn't want – and may not have mental faculties to entertain – you get on with making sure you're packed up. You're pretty glad that you decided not to pack all your toiletries, because you're definitely grateful for the shower. If nothing else, it pulls you away from the suffocating silence.

But it's kind of weird because when you come out, Elsa shoots you a smile and offers to take your bag. She holds your chair while you move from it to the car, and when you pull up at the airport, she's the one to bring it round while the driver gets the bags. She can be so abrupt sometimes, but other times, she surprises you with her thoughtfulness.

There's a bit of time before your flight, so you stop off at the first-class lounge. Elsa gets a glass of chilled mineral water and a coffee – no alcohol today, it seems. You opt for a hot chocolate because the airport is a little chilly, and also because chocolate.

When she sits down, you see her wince. Just for a moment, but it's still enough to have your mind whirring. You wonder if it has anything to do with the mark on her neck, still hidding by a scarf.

You're staring at your drink, because you can't look at her, when the announcement comes over the PA system. You're not listening at all, mostly because you can't understand it, but then Elsa murmurs a soft, "Damn," beneath her breath. Then it's translated and you understand why. Sort of?

It seems as though a flight has been delayed – and judging from Elsa's reaction, it's probably your flight.

"Is that us?" you ask her, more to break the odd silence that sits between you than for confirmation.

Elsa sighs. She seems so small. "Yes, unfortunately. Do you mind if I go and enquire about it?"

That's a really strange way of phrasing that, you think, but you nod anyway because you don't mind. Elsa shoots you a small smile and gets up. When she's gone, you peer into her coffee, mostly because something strikes you as weird. She's barely touched it.

You're not happy. Which- it's not like you have to be happy all the time, but you're not... content, either. There's something niggling at you, and it isn't about Kristoff, and it's not about Hans.

It's something about Elsa that has you down; you know that she probably doesn't want to drag you down, and it's not that she's doing that, exactly...
You don't know how to describe it, so you try to push it from your mind instead. Elsa doesn't return for a little while, and by the time she does, you've mostly finished your chocolate.

She looks absolutely drained. "They're trying to fix something or other. Something stupid," she tells you as she sits back down. "Shouldn't take long, but our flight will most definitely be delayed."

"Oh."

Elsa nods, closing her eyes. They don't open for a moment, like she's having to build up the strength to look at anything. "I'm sorry for this. You're probably desperate to get home."

At that, you give a shrug. And you shoot her a smile. Why does she always think that you don't enjoy her company?

You're about to ask her when you realise that it really isn't the time for this sort of questioning. She's tired and seems to have had barely any sleep all week.

So instead you just look at her and say, "Hey, nah, it's fine. I get to spend even longer in a different country. That's pretty cool."

It's a fairly weak excuse, but you honestly don't mind. It's not like Elsa delayed the plane or anything – accidents happen.

But she smiles and looks down at her coffee. Maybe she'll actually finish it now.

The issue must have been more severe than you'd thought because it's three hours later that you finally get another announcement that it will be boarding soon. Of course, "soon" means in another hour, but at least you have a solid time frame now. You message Kristoff to let him know that it's delayed, which means that by the time you arrive it's going to be getting late – you're not sure of the time – so he doesn't need to bother. You'll get a train or something.

He double checks, of course, but it's surprisingly easy to convince him. He probably wanted to marathon *Vikings* or something. And, the airport is really far out of the way.

So Elsa goes off to find an airplane chair for you while you do that, and much like last time, she asks if it's okay for her to push you. You're happy for her to help. You duck to the loo first because you probably should do that before going on the plane. Then it's into the other chair as yours is packed up, and you hang around the boarding lounge for another ten minutes before they finally let you get on the plane.

Elsa takes out her computer, like she's going to do some work, and you probably should but you can't really be bothered.

It's ten minutes after take-off that you realise Elsa isn't doing any work, either.

She's fallen asleep.

You smile to yourself as you lean over to close the lid of her laptop. Good for her.
There was one thing you hadn't thought of: there's no buses or trains running by the time you arrive.

While you wait in line to clear customs, you try and ring Kristoff. Hopefully he can come and pick you up? You really don't want to pay for a cab all the way back home. You did tell him that you'd be able to do it, but you can't, and you're beyond feeling shame about asking for help. There's no point anymore.

It seems to be a cab for you, though, when he answers – whispers a, "hey," which is already odd – and once you tell him, he makes this horrible little sound.

"I- Anna..." He doesn't seem to want to say why, and you just sit there silently because there's not much else you can do. Finally, he says, "I'm... not at home. After you rang, I... took the weekend off. If... if you know what I mean..."

You frown, partially confusion and partially sadness, before it clicks. Oh. And yeah, if you listen carefully enough, you can hear what sounds like another person breathing. Or snoring. That explains the whispering.

"I do want to hear all about this new guy," you say, because you do and also for something to say. "Anyway, go and... do whatever it is you do. Canoodle. I'll manage."

"Sorry—"

"Nah, it's fine. Thanks anyway."

You hang up and make a face. Elsa's been politely ignoring your conversation, but she definitely would have overheard the fact that you need a lift.

"Have..." she began, before biting her lip. You look at her, eyebrows lifted. "Have you tried your, er, boyfriend?"

"Hans?" She nods. You haven't, and even though he dropped you off, it still seems a little odd to ask such a huge favour.

That being said, you're pretty sure he did ask you to ring when you arrived safe. So, you unlock your phone and try his number.

And then try it again because he doesn't pick up the first time.

You don't get another opportunity to call because by then, you're at the front of the queue. You have to content yourself with leaving a voicemail, but given that it's seriously early in the morning, you're not surprised when he never rings you back.

You try not to panic as you get through the border control and Elsa moves to the side to ring her driver. The most a cab is gonna cost is maybe seventy bucks, and maybe you'll get lucky and the company will reimburse you. But it's not the point; how is anyone supposed to take you seriously if you can't even get home from an airport? You should have realised this would happen when Elsa first told you that the flight was delayed!

So you really try not to panic but that doesn't work so well. Especially not after you've finally
made it through customs and you're waiting to collect your bags, because it means that Elsa is going to be going home and you're gonna be on your own again.

It's really not fair, and really not something you want to deal with. You've had such a nice week!

Unbidden, you feel tears rising to your eyes. You keep your face turned down because you don't really want Elsa to notice – which is really, really silly because it's not like she hasn't cried around you before. Once, it was literally on top of you.

But she notices anyway, just as she's about to head for the door because she's got her bag in hand and yours... yours is still spinning around on the carousel.

"Oh- Anna, what's wrong?" she asks, and you can't answer because you know you won't be able to hold back the sob, so you just shake your head. She's probably super uncomfortable, and you're not surprised when she leaves. Makes the tears come even faster, at least until she comes back. You glance up and notice that she's collected your bag.

At least you don't need to worry about that.

Usually you don't like it when people crouch near you – you may be smaller in stature because you're literally sitting down, but it always felt condescending. Not this time.

Her hand comes to rest on your knee, and you only know because that brings it into your line of sight. Fucking legs.

You're thirteen and everything is the end of the world again. There's probably people stopping and staring because you're in a wheelchair and also crying in the middle of an airport, but you try not to think about that.

"Hey," Elsa says, voice low. "Is it- how are you getting home?"

You offer a shrug, more a shake of your shoulders than any meaningful gesture, still blinking rapidly to stem the tears. A few have dribbled over your cheeks, and if any more get through, you know it's going to be the end. She must realise that that's why you're upset, and it seems that she does because she moves her hand just enough to tap yours.

"Would... would you like to stay at my place tonight?" she asks. It's enough of a surprise that you finally raise your head to look at her. There's real worry in her eyes – concern? for you? – but also hope. "It's very late and this way we both know we'll get home safe."

You start to refuse her, because it's weird going to your boss's place, but it dies on your lips because you're also not in a position to decline her invitation.

So you wipe away your tears and collect your bag before you head towards the taxi pickup zone.

Looks like the trip will continue for a little longer.
Elsa's home is... well.

There isn't really one single word that you can use to describe it. 'Amazing' isn't really specific enough, and 'beautiful' feels like an understatement. It's a little... indescribable, really.

It's big. It's the sort of apartment takes up the entire top floor of the building. She has to put in a key and a code just to access it, because the elevator opens up directly into her foyer.

Your first impression is that it's a little... impersonal. And then she leads you through it and you have to reassess that notion because, while the apartment isn't decorated the way you would do it, that doesn't mean it's a cold place; doesn't mean it's just a house that Elsa resides in.

There are small features that distinguish it from being a house into being a home; there's a picture hanging in the hallway of someone who appears to be Elsa, smiling while on either side of her are two adults – likely her parents. She seems to be about ten, and really, really happy.

As you venture further in, there are other signs. A vast bookshelf, with varying genres. You see 1984 on one shelf, along with other classics, but His Dark Materials and Wicked on another. There's a true-crime section near some biographies, but the one thing they all have in common is that they seem to be looked after, but used.

So, she's a reader? That was interesting. She hasn't ever really said anything about her interests – and why would she? But it's still something nice to know.

On another wall, there's all these snow globes lined up. There doesn't seem to be a particular pattern to their order, but there probably is to her.

"So... welcome to my home," Elsa says, gesturing around vaguely. You smile at her.

"It's lovely," you tell her. You move over to the snow globes – there's one front and centre, and bigger than the rest. It seems to be Elsa's pride and joy because she moves with you, and picks it up fondly.

"My parents bought this for me when I turned fifteen."

She holds it out for you, and you take it tentatively. You tip it upside down so the snow swirls before taking a proper look at it.
Inside are two girls building a snowman together. It's amazing, and the level of detail is just staggering. You could almost believe that they were real – one girl even has a smattering of freckles across her cheeks.

"It's beautiful," you tell her truthfully. "I can't believe you collect them."

She smiles, and you hand it back. "It's what began it, that one," she admits. "I just love the way the snow, or the sparkles, move around. Winter has always been my favourite season, so watching the particles drift down... well, it was as close as I could get in summer. Especially once I moved away from Norway."

She watches it for a few more minutes, entranced. There's a peace in her eyes that has been absent all week, and you're suddenly grateful for the terrible ending to the holiday, because without it, you wouldn't have seen it. Without it, you wouldn't have been given the opportunity for this peek into Elsa's life.

Once more, she doesn't seem like an untouchable businesswoman, or even a boss. She looks like someone you could truly be friends with.

But then she seems to realise where she is, and, importantly, who she's with, and she takes a small step back. The globe goes back on the shelf, and she turns back to you.

"I'm sorry," she says. "I'm probably keeping you up. Would you like a shower now, or in the morning?"

You take a few seconds to think about that. You'd really, really love a shower now, but that would probably keep Elsa awake too, so you shake your head.

"The morning is fine. You're probably desperate for sleep too," you tell her. It seems as though the nap on the plane did her some good, but nothing can really match sleeping in a familiar bed. She smiles at you.

"Just a little," she admits. "Well, I do have a guest room. Apologies – it hasn't been used in some time, but the sheets are clean." She indicates the hallway, and begins moving down it. "My room is at the very end. If you're up before me, help yourself to whatever is in the fridge or cupboard. There isn't much, but I asked Clarice to make sure there was some fresh bread and milk brought in earlier today."

"Clarice?"

"The maid," Elsa admits, almost guiltily. "She comes in once a week – I'd do it myself, but I just don't have the time."

You bite back a grin. "Don't worry – if I could pay someone else to do it, I definitely would."

Elsa gives small laugh. "Good to know," she says. "Regardless, there should be some food. And coffee – it's a pod machine, so not the best, but it will still taste nicer than the freeze-dried stuff."

You have zero doubts about that, and you nod. She turns to leave, but you reach out a hand to tap at her wrist before she gets too far. When she turns back, she almost looks surprised by the contact.

"Just... thank you, Elsa," you say earnestly. "I really appreciate this."

She smiles. "It's really no problem. Thank you for... well, pushing through this week. I haven't been the best company, I realise, but... I honestly did have a nice time this week. Hopefully next
"Time will be even better?"

"Next time?"

She quirks her head. "Well, nothing's set in stone, but I'm certainly expecting some kind of stuff-up. I give it three months before I need to go back to fire someone, or something." She says it with a smile, and you know she's mostly kidding. Still, the idea of travelling again intrigues you, and you almost can't wait.

Especially if she realises that it could be an even better experience for the both of you.
Chapter 60

You wake up the next day feeling about the most well-rested since you'd left home. Elsa's guest bed is unbelievably comfortable. The only thing that your bed beats it at is the fact that it's your bed; this one is definitely superior.

Once you're fully up and you've been to the bathroom and taken your medicine, you head to the kitchen for some breakfast. There's whole milk in the fridge, along with some butter and jam, so you make yourself some toast. It seems weird because Elsa isn't here, but she did say that you could help yourself. After that you go and have a shower because it's starting to feel uncomfortable and you still haven't seen Elsa.

Even her shower is luxurious. She doesn't have a shower chair, but why would she need one when there's a bench in there anyway? Like, honestly, it has an effect similar to a mermaid on a rock under a waterfall. The pressure is perfect, and you can set the temperature by degrees using a little waterproof panel on the wall.

You're a little jealous, you've got to admit. If she maybe invited you over again, you absolutely wouldn't complain.

And maybe you could make your tuna casserole for her.

... Or you could make her something nicer because she probably has no interest in tuna fucking casserole what a moron.

You ruminate on that while in the shower. You've completely lost track of time when you hear a knock at the door.

"Anna?"

Oh damn, that's right. You're not wasting your hot water, you're wasting Elsa's. You hurry to turn off the taps.

"Yeah?"

There's a moment of silence before she talks again. "I'm going to be heading out shortly," she calls through the door. "You're free to stay as long as you need, but if you'd like me to give you a lift back to your place, I'm more than happy to do that. Please don't think I'm kicking you out!" she adds at the end. You have to smile to yourself at that.

"Hey, no problem," you respond. "I'm- I'll be out shortly!"

"Take your time!"

You don't, because that would be rude. You were literally just sitting in the shower staring off into space because it was that comfortable; you have no reason to be in here any longer.

You do take a little longer than usual to dry off, mostly because even her towels are the most comfortable things you've ever felt. It's honestly getting ridiculous. It's a towel, it shouldn't feel as nice as it does.

Maybe one day you can save up and get a place... well, not as nice as this. And truthfully, you're perfectly happy in your place. But having a few more of these sorts of things would be nice.
You didn't check, but Elsa's cutlery is probably like, real silver or something too.

She's in the kitchen when you appear, freshly scrubbed. She's wearing makeup, as per usual, but this time there's no evidence of any tiredness or bags. A glance at a clock on the wall tells you that it's almost ten in the morning. Despite the late bedtime, it seems that a sleep in was what you both actually needed.

"I see you've already had breakfast," she says, nodding to the plate and knife by the bench. Oh damn, you should have washed up.

"S-sorry," you tell her, moving towards the sink. "I should have-"

"Hey, that wasn't a..." She pauses, sighing. So do you, and you turn to look at her. There's a dry smile on her face, and it actually almost isn't a smile. Her lips are turned up, but she's not happy.

"We never seem to be quite on the same page, do we?" she asks. You're actually a little taken-aback by it.

But she's not wrong, is the thing. You... thought that comment meant something different from what she did. Even in the lift, all those weeks ago, about you having lunch with Hans...

"I guess not," you reply, an expression matching hers rising to your face. She sighs once more, and your first thought is that she's tired of you, or the confusion, or something. But now that she's mentioned it, you're positive that you're wrong.

"I don't want to keep saying things that can be misconstrued," she begins. "And that's not your fault at all! Please don't think I'm blaming you. It's just... one of those things that happens. But it's something I would like to fix, if possible. What do you think?"

You bite your lip before answering; you're not sure what answer she wants. Hell, you're barely sure what she's even asking. "I... don't really know," you end up saying. "What are you suggesting?"

She's silent for so long you wonder if she actually heard you. "I..." she sighs again and looks away. Something about her seems so vulnerable in that moment. "I don't have many people I consider myself close to," she admits. "It's hard, being in my position, to make friends. It's not something I've ever been particularly good at, either. I'm... not a good person. But I want to be."

You're a little stumped. She... doesn't think she's a good person? That's preposterous! But you look in her eyes and you can see the truth there: she really... doesn't think she is.

You don't know what to say. Your mouth opens and closes a few times while you struggle to find words.

"Please- I didn't say that for any kind of... pity," she tells you. "Just... to let you know that I mess up sometimes and even though I can see myself doing it, I'm not quite sure how to stop it. And I can see it in your eyes when I say something that sounds bad, or that you take it in a way I didn't mean for it."

She really seems to be looking for some validation, so you say the first thing that comes to your head.

"It would take a hell of a lot to get me to dislike you, Elsa," you tell her. "And I mean... I'm not going to tell you that I haven't felt a little... put out by you sometimes. But I do always know that you don't mean it. We hashed that out weeks ago, didn't we?"
"I guess," she says quietly. There seems to be more that she wants to say, but either can't, or won't.

If it's important, you think, then she will. When she's ready.

"So," you say, moving on. No point in either of you dwelling. "You were going out?"

"Oh- y-yes. I can drop you off at home if you wanted, or..."

"Or?"

"Or... well, you- there's no need to part ways so soon. If- if you don't want to...

Part of you is kind of ready to go home, but... home is always going to be there, waiting for you.

This is a chance, here and now, to maybe... make a friend. A proper friend. Because while both you and Elsa have made the suggestion before that perhaps you could be, it's never been anything either of you have ever been good at.

"Well, I suppose I am still technically on a bit of a holiday," you tell her. "What did you have in mind?"
Chapter 61

Chapter Notes

hi guys! just so you know, i've written past the hanna sex. just so you know, when i release the chapter of hanna sex, i will be releasing one chapter per day until the elsanna happens :) 

thanks for sticking with it so far

The plan, it seems, is a bit of shopping, mostly. She lets you start a load of laundry before you go so your clothes will be nice and fresh, and apparently Clarice is coming back today so she's going to put them in the dryer so they're going to be dry, too.

"Is this work stuff or friendship stuff?" you ask her once you're in the car. Despite being rich, it seems as though Elsa doesn't have her own car. You wonder if she can drive at all – you can't imagine being technically able to drive and choosing not to. Even if you were rich.

You don't mention this to her because it's still too early in your friendship to be questioning her life decisions.

She shrugs. "What do you want it to be?"

You grin. "If I say friendship stuff, can we like, go see a movie or something?"

It's a silly suggestion, but it's been years since you've gone to the movies. No money when you had someone to go with, and now you've got no one despite having money.

"You want to see a movie with me?" she asks. And it sounds a little different when she says that, but it's functionally the same, so you nod.

"I mean. Yeah. Why not? There's probably either something really good on, or something really shitty."

A smile works its way onto her face, and she gives an amused shrug. "Sure, why not?"

You barely hold back a fist bump. Why has friendship been so hard with her lately? It really doesn't make any sense.

But you're both making up for it now.

The movie ends up being one of the shitty ones. You have to sit close to the front because it's not like you can walk up the stairs, but Elsa doesn't seem to mind. It's the sort of theatre that is a little more expensive, but the seats are more comfortable and they even let you order like, special hot food that they bring out to you. It's pretty great. Elsa gets a glass of wine – she drinks a lot, but if you were as rich and powerful as she is, then you probably would, too. You opt for a soda because it's the movies and it's just one of those things.

You do decide to get something a little nicer in regards to food. You don't really want to be picking
popcorn out of your teeth all evening.

The movie is... not great. It's a drama of some kind and it's not like. Terrible. But probably because the friendship thing is weird, it's a little uncomfortable. But that's something that will pass, so you try not to dwell on it.

Afterwards, you wander around the shopping centre. As it turns out, Elsa had to pick up a package from a cooking store. You're not sure what it is, and when it turns out to be a special kind of grater, you're even more confused. She just shrugs and says, "I like baking." And well, that's good enough.

"You might have to teach me," you say. "I can cook but I can't bake to save my life. It's too... precise."

She gives a little laugh. "Really? I think cooking is much harder. True, I suppose baking does need to be a little more... thoughtful... but at the same time, once you understand how certain ingredients interact, it's much more predictable. I always undercook food, but when I bake... I don't know. It's just easier."

"Well, I'll make dinner and you can make dessert," you say. She gives you an odd look at that, just for a moment – barely a flicker, really, but long enough to have you rethinking your words. You push past it, try not to think about it, because you really don't want to.

"What's your favourite thing to make?" you ask. She thinks about it for a moment.

"Krumkake," she finally answers. "It's this Norwegian cake-thing. It's kind of hard to explain?"

"What does it mean?"

"Oh, it's like. A crepe? Or a waffle. It's rather sweet, and I normally fill mine with whipped cream and fruit."

"That sounds pretty good," you tell her. "Maybe I should give baking another try one day.

You ask more questions, trying to get a feel of who Elsa is as a person. She loves Norwegian food, and you wonder for a moment why she decided to stay in America – obviously there's a lot of business back in Norway. No reason why she can't do it all there. She also tells you that she has a bit of a sweet tooth.

"Does that mean like. Sweet coffee and cakes and stuff?" you ask innocently. Or try to. She gives a shrug.

"I suppose. I've just always had my coffee black, but I don't have anything against sweeter coffee. It just usually doesn't give me that caffeine boost I need."

You nod, but inside you're mentally celebrating because you knew that she was the kind of person to enjoy a coffee not entirely dark and bitter. "Well, I'll get you a sweeter one next time," you say. She just smiles.
okay quick question but when i said i was gonna release 1 chapter a day until the elsanna stuff, i meant elsanna in my opinion. when things start happening. but to y'all, and in regards to this fic, what is elsanna? because i can't upload one chapter a day for like 2 months xD (not that it would take that long but i was thinking maybe like for a week?)

also i cut this chapter in half. if i remember, i'll upload the rest before next week so you have two chapters to look forward to :)

Work is hard the next day. Elsa drops you off at home, and Kristoff is going to drop Joan off while you're at work tomorrow, but you're really not ready to go back. The holiday has been a nice respite.

Then again, you really want to see Hans again. You try and call him again, and he doesn't answer. It makes you frown a little, but you can ask him tomorrow. Instead, you just send him a text.

_Hey! Did you wanna grab lunch tomorrow? My treat!_

He doesn't respond straight away – or even in the next hour – but you're in the shower and then you're getting ready for bed and it's not like you're just waiting for him to respond.

You're not.

You don't sleep as well that night, even though you've got no logical reason not to. It makes you super tired the next day, and you struggle to get out of bed.

Sometimes you wish that you didn't have to get up so early, but you do. You've got so much preparation to do for the day. It can take up to ten minutes just to get changed, depending on how bad you fuck up like, putting on your pants and shit. You're pretty good by now, but the more tired you are – like this morning – the easier it is to make mistakes.

You very nearly miss your train, but you just manage to catch it. If this becomes a usual thing, you might have to start setting your alarm a bit earlier. The thought is definitely unappealing, so you resolve to just... Be faster.

You're in such a rush you don't even get a chance to check your phone until you're on the train. You've got a text from Hans that just says, "Sure!"

You're not sure how you feel about that.

He isn't behind the counter when you come in, and you're cognisant of the time so you don't wait around for him. You text back in the elevator, just a quick, "I'll be going on lunch at about midday," just so he knows. After that, it's emails and phone calls and meetings. Lots to organise, because even though you were only gone a week, you were gone a whole week, and even though
you were checking your emails, this sort of stuff piles up.

Elsa comes in at about 10 and seems to be simultaneously exhausted, but also the most upbeat she's been in weeks. There's a healthy flush to her cheeks, and she seems completely unperturbed that this is the latest she's ever shown up to work. She gives you a giant smile and reminds you of yesterday.

"It was really nice," she says. "There's a new movie coming out on Thursday if you wanted to try and catch it?"

"It's probably not a good idea to be out late on a work night..." you begin. Her face falls, and you quickly add on, "But I'm free Friday night if you are? Or even Saturday morning?" You add the second suggestion, just in case she isn't free. It is a Friday night.

"Saturday sounds great. I'll book the tickets, just in case."

After that, she leaves you to do your job. Hans comes up at twelve on the dot. He seems different, but you can't place it.

Well, he acts different, too, but that is definitely noticeable when he steps around your desk and looks at you. There's a look in his eye that you can only describe as 'hungry'.

"Can I kiss you?" he asks. It's literally the first thing he says, and immediately you feel a blush rising to your cheeks. You nod, and he leans forward, lips claiming yours.

Oh God, it's even better than at the airport. His tongue touches your bottom lip, and even though you really haven't had much – or any – experience, you sort of feel like you should open your mouth and let his tongue in.

So you do, and oh god it's so much better. You don't know how long you sit there, lip locked, but when he pulls away you're completely breathless. And a little glad that Elsa's office is next to yours and you're pretty sure you did hear her door shut.

"You're... really good at that," you say. He just grins.

"Just for you."

The words have a promise in them – promise of more, and a promise that you're not sure you can handle. He's- well. He's already admitted to liking you, and to have imagined you under certain... other circumstances.

You're not sure if you're ready for that yet, but you don't think it's going to take long.

"I uh... so. Lunch?"

"Can't I just have you instead?" he asks. But then he pulls away and he's smiling so you know it's a joke. Mostly. You know he wants you, too, but in the same way that you want him. Soon, but maybe not yet.

Instead of going out, you both just go to the cafeteria. It's curry day today. You buy a butter chicken, and it's super creamy and mild and really, really delicious. You make sure to rinse your mouth out as you're taking a drink of water, just in case he kisses you again.

Now that you've done it, doing it at work when other people can see isn't nearly as scary. In fact, you almost want them to see. You've never been really interested in dating because no one had ever
been really interested in you. But, that's changed, and you absolutely want to take advantage of it.

As soon as you're back in your office, you send Kristoff a message.

*Hey, i want all the deets about your new boyfriend because my own love life is great and i wanna hear about yours!*

You're not expecting a response, and you know that Kristoff knows that because you don't actually get one. You also know that he knows he's going to be forced to talk about it next time you catch up, but you're okay with holding off on that conversation until he's feeling just a little more comfortable.

But you're not gonna wait for long because you really want details.
Chapter 63

Chapter Notes

I keep forgetting to put this at the beginning of chapters, but you can 100% thank Turwen for quality control. Her beta-reading is serious on point :)

the question I asked last chapter still applies. It's looking like a lot of people are okay with defining elsanna (in this context as) they both like actually like each other and shit. In which case, yeah, it's not gonna take long at all :) 

Kristoff surprises you when four o'clock ticks around and he rings you. You let it ring out, but only because that's the time that Elsa decides to pop in and tell you that she's leaving early. She's still smiling and in a generally pretty good mood, which is probably why she's leaving several hours earlier than usual. You're kind of supposed to stay until at least she leaves, and then usually you have things to pack up and reminders to set, so you don't normally leave until about half an hour after her. Even if you don't think you're actually going to get much work done.

So she says goodbye and you wave back, and by the time that's done, the phone's stopped ringing. You do make a valiant, if in vain, effort to catch the call.

Luckily, Kristoff picks it up when you call him back. You'd have to have words with him if he didn't.

"What's up?" he says, as though he hadn't been the one to ring you. You narrow your eyes, even though he can't see it.

"So. Tell me about this boyfriend of yours."

Kristoff makes a sound. It sounds like a scoff, and you grin. Gotcha.

"Can we at least start the conversation on a different topic? How was Norway?"

You sigh, but it's in fun because you did promise yourself to let him get comfortable. Plus, you haven't had a chance to debrief him yet.

So you tell him about the mini adventure you had. He does ask about Elsa, probably because the jacket-incident (and the 'going out to dinner' incident) – is still fresh in his mind. He hadn't really had any closure about that, after all.

"It was odd, but that's okay. I ended up going back to her place afterwards because the plane got in so late, though."

"Oooooooh," Kristoff teases. You roll your eyes.

"What are you, fifteen?" you ask him. "Though, she has been in a much better mood. She looked tired today, but also like, super happy. She wants to catch another movie later this week. Guess she got some good news or something." Kristoff is silent for a moment, and you get annoyed by it after
a few seconds. "What?"

"Well... what kind of happy?"

That's an odd question. You shrug your shoulders. "I dunno. Like, she seemed tired but also like she'd had a really good night's sleep. And she definitely acted happier. I don't know!"

"Uhh..." He doesn't say anything else. He's obviously thinking, and he's also obviously expecting you to pick up on something. You don't.

"What?"

"Anna... it kinda sounds like she totally got laid last night."

"What?!"

You honestly don't mean to say that as loud as you did, and you're really grateful that Elsa's already left because that sort of thing would definitely have her coming into the room. Kristoff sniggers.

"That's the post-coital like. Glow. She totally got some last night."

You snort. "Elsa doesn't do that."

It's obvious that he doesn't believe that – you don't even believe that because you remember how she looked that morning in Norway – but it was different then. You don't want to think about it now, so instead you use the topic to move to something you'd rather think about. Sort of. No details, but...

"So, tell me about this boyfriend of yours. Don't think I haven't figured out why you abandoned me at the airport!"

He sputters, but it's not from the accusation. "I don't need to tell you that."

"Dude, chill. I'm not asking for like, details. Ew. But obviously it's going well?"

Kristoff is silent for a moment, and you're briefly concerned that you've really misinterpreted the situation. But then he speaks in this really soft tone, and for the first time, you feel protective of him.

"It's... he's great. And not just like. The private details. I really want to... I dunno."

You can't help the smile that appears on your face because it's honestly the first time you've heard Kristoff sound like this. You're not going to tell him that it sounds like love, because he's old enough to figure out his own feelings himself, but you're not going to pretend you didn't think it.

"It sounds like you really like him," you say instead. "So, when do I get to meet him?"

"I don't know. When do you get to meet him?"

"Krissss..."

He laughs, finally, this big laugh that he always does when you do something that amuses him. "Fine, fine. I'll ask him when he's free next to meet the family, so to speak. Though- I uh, I haven't told Ma. So... can you like... keep it on the down-low?"

You sigh. "Yeah, fine. But you better make it up to me."
He laughs again. "Love youuuu."

You hang up not long after that, mostly because it's time to leave. He promises to set a time for you to meet his boyfriend. You want to introduce him to Hans, too, but it's probably better to do that at a different time. Obviously Kristoff is still getting used to having a boyfriend and not a girlfriend.

But hopefully soon.
There's one other thing about your conversation with Kristoff that sticks with you on your train home.

Elsa.

And you absolutely should not be thinking about her personal life like this, especially because you've really only just started being like. Actual friends with her. But once the idea is in your head, it becomes really hard to dislodge it.

Which is completely ridiculous. Elsa was a very nice looking woman who was a little bit older than you and obviously had no trouble getting someone who she was interested in – and who was interested in her – for an evening.

And she was more than welcome to it. People have needs and just because you've never like... done that with other people... didn't mean everyone else was as slow as you were.

But you can't help but think about other things that you really really shouldn't be thinking about.

Like... who would Elsa be interested in? Someone like Hans? Or someone like Kristoff? Because even though Kristoff is the closest thing you have to family, you're not gonna lie and say you haven't like, imagined him. He's a pretty good looking bloke.

Also not interested in women, so Elsa doesn't have a shot at him exactly, but someone like him.

You force yourself to stop thinking about it (and you do have to literally force yourself) when it starts getting even more personal, like her likes and dislikes. You don't even know your own likes and dislikes, let alone know enough about Elsa to imagine hers!

Joan greets you at the door, and as with every night, the first thing she does is scold you for being away. Then she heads towards the kitchen because every time you enter the front door is, evidently, dinner time. It provides a really good distraction, at least. So does dinner; you've decided to try and cook this fairly simple pasta dish that you make ten times more complicated by forgetting where you'd put the recipe so you just end up winging it. It doesn't taste half-bad, but it also doesn't taste half-good, either.

You're going to find the recipe before you try making it again. After that, it's time for a shower and bed.

And you should have realised, given what you'd spent so long thinking about on the train, what you would dream about. But, sometimes you're a complete moron, and this just happened to be one of those occasions.

So, you wake up the next day after having a rather vivid sex dream of your boss and you're still really kind of turned on from it. You're really close to calling in sick, only because you don't know if you can handle facing Elsa today.
Stupid Kristoff. He just had to mention that Elsa was a woman who had sex.

It really shouldn't have affected you the way it did, but it had and you have to live with it.

You're brushing your teeth when a really, really unwelcome thought strikes you.

Are you... are you gay?

This... isn't the first time you've dreamed like this. And there was that girl, Ella, who thought you'd asked her on a date even though you hadn't.

But had you been subconsciously trying to ask her out?

Oh wow you are not prepared to think about this. It's stupid. Everyone has weird sex dreams – they don't have to mean anything at all. And no, you hadn't been asking her on a date, you had just asked her for a coffee because you wanted to make friends. It's absolutely not your fault that she'd taken it like that.

Also also, you have a boyfriend. One whom you were really into, and who was really into you. Elsa looks nice, and maybe you'd sleep with her in your dream, but you'd really rather sleep with Hans in real life. So, there.

Not gay.

You're much more successful at pushing that thought from your mind as you go about your day. Probably because you're on your way to work and after that you actually arrive at work and you have lots of things to do.

If nothing else, the weird dream has convinced you that you're actually ready to like. Step up your game with Hans.

You have lunch in the cafeteria again, and you take the opportunity to ask him if he wants to go out Friday night. You're not sure if you're ready for sex like, this week. But, you're absolutely ready to be exclusive and have lots more opportunities to make out and stuff. He seems to be of equal mind.

"Back to my place afterwards?" he asks, grinning. You giggle.

"Maybe..." You try for coy, and you think it works. Of course, you ruin it with your next words, but at least he doesn't seem to mind. "I um. I've never been this serious with someone before. And I don't know if I'm ready for much more yet... but when I am, you'll be the first to know. Is that... is that okay?"

"Hey, yeah, that's fine," he says. And it's a bit of a weird topic, especially to have at work of all places, but while you've got the courage to tell him. "I'll be ready when you are."

That's pretty much exactly what you want to hear, so you lean over to him. You want to kiss him but you finally lose your confidence, so you settle for just resting your head on his shoulder.

Why are you so awkward?

Well, you know the answer to that. You just need to like. Practise being less awkward.

It'll be fine.
so i can't believe it's taken 64 chapters to get to this point. that being said, if anyone else has experienced such a moment as the one anna did, you'll be aware of the phenomenon that... it starts as a teeny little ping pong ball, this idea. and it stays like that for a little while and then something big happens and suddenly it's an avalanche and you're questioning everything.

this is anna's ping pong ball. and her avalanche is very much on its way.
The rest of the week passes in a blur until it's finally Friday. You bring a small bag to work with you. It's got all your necessities, mostly because it's really just not worth going back home for them when Hans lives literally on the other side of the city.

He carries you up the stars again and you get changed. He's booked a table at a local restaurant – flashy, but not prohibitively expensive. It means he has to carry you down the stairs again. And you know he's going to do it at least once more so you try to enjoy the feeling. It certainly is nice having him hold you like this, even if you're not a super huge fan of being carried in the first place. You kind of wish he'd get a ramp or something, but it's not fair to ask him to change his whole house for you. This is really only the second time you've been here.

Dinner is a quiet affair. The restaurant is Italian, which means that it's spaghetti and candles. Very romantic. Hans gets a bottle of wine for the table and he seems to be a bit of a connoisseur because he knows exactly what he's asking for. He even offers a few suggestions for food. You don't eat Italian often (because you don't go out often, because you've never had the money to do so before), and the only thing you recognise is the carbonara and anything with the word 'formaggio' in it.

He gets you to try a truffle dish in this kind of creamy garlic sauce. He gets a puttanesca for himself, which is red and tomato-y, and some garlic bread for the table. All of it is absolutely delicious, and the conversation is even better. He's all smiles and charm, and every second it feels like he's trying extra hard to woo you.

"You don't know how beautiful you look in this lighting," he says at some point. Which is really inconvenient timing because your mouth is full of pasta and you feel like a chipmunk. You swallow with some difficulty.

"You mean in almost complete darkness?" you ask, lifting an eyebrow.

Hans laughs. "Yes. Joking!" he corrects when you get a very unimpressed look on your face. "I meant in the candlelight."
Oh. You're actually really flattered by that, and you're glad for the near-darkness-slash-candlelight because it hides your blush.

"Did- did you want dessert?" you ask, trying to deflect.

He grins, almost wolfishly. "Does it start with an A and have a pretty blush? Because if so, then absolutely."

Oh wow. You really have no idea how to deal with all of this. You have to clear your throat before you answer. You're really not good with all this flirting.

"I mean... maybe a taster?" Because that's all you're really willing to give him at the moment. Baby steps. You already know you like kissing him. And you've sort of made out but not really. You want to try that again. And even like. Spending time in the same bed.

You're... not ready for him to see you. Not all of you. Not your small boobs or your undefined stomach or atrophied legs. You don't know when you'll ever be ready, but it's most definitely not now.

It's hard, working up the courage to be that open with someone.

You hope he understands without you having to tell him, but almost as hard as doing it is just admitting it. You can tell Kristoff because he's your brother – or as good as. He'd never laugh at you or make fun of you.

In fact, you'd nearly like. Given it to him when you were younger. When you were both curious and horny. You hadn't, and you're both probably better off, but still.

You make a move not long after. Finish your dinner and the wine. Hans pays, even though you try and pay for your own meal. He just likes doing that sort of thing for you, you suppose. And then he's driving back to his place and you're got excitement and nerves bubbling around with the wine and pasta.

"How about a movie?" he asks. "It's only early, after all."

You are more than happy to do that – anything to distract you. "As long as this isn't one of those 'netflix and chill' type things," you tell him, voice serious. He laughs.

"Hands above the waist. Promise." He could still do more than enough damage above the waist, you think, but you don't say that. You just smile because he probably already knows that too.

But you don't even watch Netflix. He's got it, apparently, but he instead picks out a DVD – not even a blu-ray, but an honest-to-goodness DVD – and puts it on. You're a little excited at what he chose, but he doesn't tell you until the title screen.

"Magnolia? Isn't that the movie that like, works from the ending to the beginning?"

Hans laughs, but it's not cruel or mocking. "Nah, that's Memento. This is a different one."

You don't mind it – it's got lots of big names in it, and the soundtrack seems pretty good right from the first song. That being said, it's a little hard to follow because it jumps around a lot.

Even harder to follow when Hans starts kissing you just below your ear. At first, it just tickles. And then he does something else and you're pretty sure you know how hicckeys are made.
"Mmm... Hans..." you say. Not moaning his name as such, but like. "The m-movie."

"We can always watch it later..." he murmurs against your skin. "I'm a little more interested in this..."

You can tell. And it's not like he doesn't have it on DVD – you can watch it again.

Plus, you're starting to get a little more interested in him, too, so you turn your face so he can kiss your mouth.

And oh God there is definitely a difference in how he kisses at home compared to how he kisses in public. There's a ferocity that you're not prepared for, and certainly not expecting. His tongue moves into your mouth, coaxing yours into his. And it's a weird sensation but also one of the best you've ever felt.

You don't kiss for long – at least, you don't kiss him for long – because he breaks away and starts kissing down your throat again.

"Do you... want to go to the bedroom?" he asks. And you do, but...

"I-" Oh wow you can barely think. "I want..."

This shouldn't be that hard. You want him. But you're not ready for all of him. He pauses – or at least, backs off a little bit – to give you room to speak.

"C-can we just... keep doing this? But in the bedroom?"

"Whatever you want," he says. Then he stands up and pauses again. "Should- do you want me to carry you in?"

"Oh God yes..." you say, almost a sigh. He smirks, and you can't even be ashamed because you really, really want to be close to him. Even if you're not ready for him to be like, inside you yet. So you lift your arms and he bends down to scoop you up. His hands hold you beneath your thighs, wrapping your legs around his waist. And you have almost no feeling at all there, but you have some like. Other sense. It's hard to explain; it's what lets you masturbate and get off while at the same time, not really being able to feel all that much. It's kind of hard.

Either way, you know he's got an erection, and you know he's not trying to hide it. Maybe he doesn't know you can feel it? Not that it matters when he's gotta know you can sense it through other ways; by the way he kisses you, or the way he's bruised your skin with his lips.

He drops you on the bed, almost unceremoniously. You'd complain, but then he pretty much falls on top of you, taking your lips again possessively. You let out a little oomph that is definitely more about the sensation than from any kind of pain. He didn't hurt you – not at all – and the feeling of his body, heavy against yours, more than makes up for it.

At first, you don't even realise that he's literally between your legs. There's no removal of clothing or anything, and you're content to close your eyes and just drink in the sensation of him. You barely notice when his right hand, which had been resting beside your head, starts to venture down.

"Can I... touch?" he asks into your mouth. You whimper. It's just touching, right?

You take his hand and press it on your chest, over the top of your bra and your shirt. At first, it just rests there. And then he starts stroking, massaging the soft flesh. He can probably feel just how hard your nipple is, and it's... not as embarrassing as you thought it would be. Of course, he hasn't
actually seen you yet, but he seems to be fairly into you at the moment regardless.

Plus, even though your boobs aren't huge, you've always been pretty proud of them. Sometimes it felt hard to be feminine when confined to a chair, but your chest was an indisputable part of you.

One that your boyfriend seems to like. Or... "Hey," you pant, breaking the kiss. "We're- this is dating, right?" He pulls back to look at you.

"Uh... I hope so?" he says. "Didn't- haven't we already gone over this?" You nod emphatically, and use your hands to pull him down.

"Definitely from my side," you tell him before you fuse your lips together. You're getting better at this, you think. You hope. Hans is a pretty good kisser – Kristoff had told you some pretty gross stories about saliva when you were younger, but that's not really an issue with Hans.

So you make sure he keeps kissing you, and his hand keeps doing what it's doing, too. He's obviously more comfortable with his body because at some point – whether it's ten minutes, or thirty minutes or whatever – he backs off just to pull his shirt off. The movie is still playing in the background, someone singing about 'wising up', but you've got no room in your mind to focus on that because Hans is fucking hot.

His pants stay on, thank god, because even though you can see his erection as it strains against the material, you're really not ready to see it in the flesh – literally. And maybe he realises that. Maybe he realises that even with the material it's a huge step for you because he resumes his position, hands finding their spot against your chest. And you want to take your shirt off. You want to show him more of you. But... you can't.

But he doesn't push for anything more than what you've given him.

So you just lie there and kiss him, and he kisses you back and it's the best thing you've ever felt. Just having him here, even if if you're not ready for anything more...

It's more than you'd ever really let yourself hope for.
Chapter 66

Chapter Notes

In these chapters we start to see Anna... trying to take more control over herself (with interesting results).

Hanna sex is chapter 70. Elsanna shizz is 75. And then after that I actually only have like one chapter done because doing a thesis is hard and time consuming :_;

But I hope that helps and I hope you enjoy it :)

When you get up the next day, Hans isn't in the bed with you. You give yourself a moment just to think about last night – to ruminate, as it were. You don't regret not doing anything more; and, seriously, falling asleep while making out with someone is kind of awesome.

You finally get up when your nose starts tickling with the smell of something. Something familiar. Your guess is proven accurate when you wheel out into the kitchen. Hans is sitting at the table, coffee steaming and a cigarette in his hand. You try not to turn your nose up at it because it's his house and he can do whatever he wants.

You just... didn't know he smoked.

When he sees you, his eyes light up. "Hey! Good morning, gorgeous." You grin. "Your phone was going off – I think it's your boss?"

"Technically, she's your boss, too," you tell him. He shrugs and passes you your phone.

It seems a little weird that the phone is out – you could have sworn that it had stayed in your bag all night – but you push that from your mind as Elsa's name pops up. She's sent you a few messages, asking if you're still on for the movie. It's – holy hell, it's like eleven in the morning, and suddenly you feel really guilty for sleeping in so long.

"Hey yeah sorry," you type back. "I'm-" you pause. You don't really want to tell her where you are, for some reason, so you just settle on, "I'm out at the moment. Is there a showing for like, early afternoon? Just after lunch?"

Hans is watching you as you type this, and part of you feels like you should invite him because he's right there. But, he doesn't know what you're planning with Elsa, and it's really just like a girl's day out, so that's... not really something you want him to intrude on. You aren't ignoring him - you're allowed to do things with Elsa that are separate.

A response comes not long after when she asks if you want to do a lunch thing as well. And you kind of do, but you're quickly going to run out of money if you keep spending it. And time if you keep fluffing about. Still, a lunch thing doesn't have to be expensive, so you just type back a, "Sure! How about we meet at the theatre at 2? Or 1:30?"

Her response is swift: "1:30 sounds fine." She even adds a little smily face to it.

Hans clears his throat. The cigarette is finished, but when he stands up and comes over to kiss you
on the lips, you still taste it. Gross.

But you try not to let it show because that's not really what you're about and you don't want to make him think that it matters. It doesn't, not really. Just because you don't smoke doesn't mean that he shouldn't.

"Did you want breakfast?" he asks. You're not really hungry, though you are desperate for a shower.

He... doesn't have the sort of facilities that you need for it, though. You shake your head. "I'm good. I don't really eat breakfast," you tell him. Lie to him. There's something about this morning. You had a great evening and you want to hang out with him more, but you're aware of the fact that you have an afternoon booked and that if you don't get a chance to be alone, then you're going to be exhausted – tired of human company. And you don't want to do that with Elsa.

"What did Elsa want?" he asks, returning to his seat and taking a drink of his coffee. It smells pretty good, and you kind of want one.

"Oh, nothing much. We uh, I've gotta meet her later on, so I should probably get going soon. I've gotta feed the cat. Poor Joan."

He nods. "Did you want a lift?"

"O-oh, only if it's not too much trouble." Hans just shrugs.

Once the idea is put out there, it doesn't take too long for you to make a move. He helps you down the stairs, and by the time he's pulling up outside your apartment block, he doesn't quite taste so much like cigarettes when he kisses you.

You get little more into it that time, just because of that, and because you don't know when you're going to get a chance to do it again.

"I'll see you later," he says. You smile and nod.

It gives you some time to get ready for catching up with Elsa. You finally have a shower and make sure you put a little bit of makeup on. You can't even rightly explain why, exactly, you bother. But you do anyway, and you straighten your hair and leave it out. It looks weird, so you try curling the front, which looks even weirder so you just straighten it again. Then you really have to go because you have a bus to catch and it's already half-twelve. You arrive a little before Elsa does, and so you take the chance to Google movies. There's one playing at 2, but you're not sure if she wants to do like, a lunch or something first. Your stomach growls the same moment that you see her car – or, her driver's car – pull up.

"Hey!" she calls out, as soon as she sees you. And you feel a little ridiculous because you've got a nice outfit on – like, you're actually a little too dressed up when she's got a tee-shirt and a pair of jeans on. She's even got a scarf on that screams "casual", which really isn't fair.

How can she be so effortlessly beautiful?

But you smile because she's smiling and you try not to worry about your own state of dress. And you don't, not when she looks at you and her smile, if possible, widens.

"You look nice today," she says. You grin and look away, mumbling a thanks – and returning the compliment.
"So, movie? Or lunch first?" you ask in an attempt to distract her – and yourself – from the redness you can feel sneaking up your neck.

"Have you eaten yet?" You shake your head, and she nods. "Well, how about a light snack? My treat."

That's really nice of her. And you're learning that she's not doing it to make you owe her, or to manipulate you – the opposite of what you feared, all those weeks ago. She does it because she wants to – because she is nice and kind and she has the money to afford it so she may as well spend it.

"Whatever you want, Elsa, I'm happy with."

You end up missing the 2 o'clock showing of the flick, but there's always another session, and you find yourself enjoying lunch much more than you'd first anticipated. Without the looming threat of 'half-hour lunch breaks', you're able to fully relax and enjoy your meal.

Elsa has picked out a Mediterranean restaurant – Greek or something. Something light and flavourful. There are kebabs, but not like, skewer kebabs. More like Turkish kebabs.

So, it's probably Turkish. Elsa gets a glass of wine with hers, again, and this time you can't help but comment.

"I wish I could drink as much wine as you," you say, and it *sounds* bad but they way you say it, but with the inflection and pitch, doesn't make it *seem* as bad. You hope. You remember what Elsa had said about always been on the wrong page, and you hurry to continue. "I got really drunk on red wine with Kristoff when I was nineteen and now the taste of it makes me ill."

Elsa grins from the corner of her mouth. "It can be an acquired taste," she says. "Especially the full-bodied wines. You might be able to drink something a little less rich – and, coincidentally, a little less alcoholic."

You shrug. "I'm fine with the occasional white, or a single glass of some harder liquor. I don't really drink much because it can mess with my medication.

She nods. "Ah, well. That's a shame."

You shrug again. "It's fine. It is what it is. Plus, why would I have alcohol when I can have yummier things, like iced chocolate or a latte or something?"

"Why indeed?" Elsa murmurs.
hi guys! i was quite sick last week, and i had a bunch of uni stuff. hope this chapter (which is three times the length of the first chapter, and the longest one in this whole fic to date!) makes up for it :) 

The movie is better than last week. It's an action flick this time, and you're literally on the edge of your seat during the climax.

There's a sex scene halfway through which is a little weird, but you're pretty sure that the movie Hans had put on was probably worse. It was an 18+ flick. It just happened that you'd been distracted.

"Hey, have you ever seen a movie called Magnolia?" you ask her when you're walking out from the theatre. It's definitely not what she's expecting you to ask, which isn't really all that surprising.

But then she cocks her head. "That's, uh, actually my favourite movie," she admits. And wow what are the odds?

"Oh really? I started watching it this weekend but never finished..."

"Well, maybe you should come over to my place next weekend and we can watch it?"

Your cheeks puff up in a smile. "Well, I have been dying to use your shower again," you tell her, and she laughs.

"Ah, I'm pretty sure you're not supposed to admit that."

She offers to drop you home, which you're pretty grateful for. She even walks you up to the front door. Today hasn't been as tiresome as you'd thought it would be – not in the social way. You are tired, but it's just because you've been out.

"Did you want a coffee?" you ask her as you open the front door. She follows you in and stands awkwardly just inside. "Only if you're getting one," she says. And you're not, but you're making a hot chocolate so you say that instead. "A hot chocolate sounds great."

She takes a seat on the sofa, and when you come out with the drinks, Joan is on her lap and purring.

"She likes you," you tell Elsa, nodding at the cat. "She's normally not great with people."

"Then I'm honoured," she says. "Why did you name her Joan?"

You shrug, putting the mugs on the coffee table. At least your house is much tidier than the last time Elsa came over. "I always liked Joan of Arc as a kid. She was so fearless – even when the whole world was against her, she still did what she believed was right. And that takes a lot of
courage." You smile. "Like this little kitty. She was a rescue, and I don't know what she's been through, but she doesn't have a tail and I don't have legs, so it was kind of fitting."

Elsa sits there silently as you talk, absorbing it all. Her gaze is focused on the cat, and you're happy to let her keep doing it. Happy not to break the silence because it's strangely comfortable. Finally, Elsa does, but it's in this really gentle tone.

"I'm glad you found a friend," she says. It's an odd little thing for her to say, but you can't deny the truth in her words. You're glad you found a friend, too, but it wasn't necessarily in the cat.

"Well, I mean. You're my friend now, so that's two for two," you tell her, a grin pulling at the corner of your mouth. She nods, still string at Joan.

"Thank you, Anna," she tells you. And there's something about her tone that has you biting your tongue. Something genuine and sincere that you hadn't ever really heard from anyone before. Not even Kristoff, and he's basically your brother.

So you just sit there, in a silence almost companionable, and drink your chocolate.

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Much to your surprise, it seems that Elsa's offer of a movie night at her place was completely sincere. You only become aware of it on Wednesday afternoon, just before she leaves for the day.

"Were you still interested in watching this film at my place?" she asks. You're both in the photocopy room, and she's looking at the machine and not you, typing in how many copies she wants of some board meeting minutes. It's completely out of the blue, and it actually takes you a few moments to figure out exactly what she means.

"Magnolia?" you ask, and she nods. "I mean, I'll take any excuse to use your shower again." She looks at you when you say that, and you just smile. "I'm keen. When were you thinking?"

She blinks for a few seconds before shrugging. "It's a rather long film; we could do it during the day, if you wanted? Or the evening if that doesn't suit, but only if you're comfortable staying the night..."

You're actually more than happy to stay the night, but maybe Elsa doesn't really want you to? It's kind of weird, isn't it?

So you do what you do best, and just defer. "Oh, the day is fine, unless you'd rather it be at night. You know the film better than I do..." The corner of Elsa's lips curl up in a small smile.

"I... I would like you to stay," she says, in this small voice that could almost be considered vulnerable. Which is ridiculous because it's Elsa Arendelle you're talking about. You don't like her sounding like that, you decide, so you move past it as best you can with a huge smile.

"Sounds like a plan, then." And that's that.

The thing is, by the time the weekend rolls around, you're not even scared or nervous. You know, just from the one night you spent there, that her home is beautiful. You know it's comfortable and spacious, and most importantly, you know that it's suitable for you.

It's what actually helps you get through Friday night at Hans'. Because his place... is not that suitable for you. You don't want to mention that to him because it's weird; you're not at that stage yet in your relationship. Things like that... aren't comfortable. At least, you're not comfortable enough to mention them. To the point where it's still hard to even bring up the fact that you would
like to spend more time at your place. When you do mention it, he frowns and says something about it being inconvenient. Which. You're not sure how to respond to that so you just back off.

So you make it through another Friday night at Hans'. You share his bed, and it's not as comfortable as yours, but he's there. You usually fall asleep making out with him, which is an incredibly good feeling. You like the way he holds you, the way he kisses you. And the more you do it, the more you can see yourself doing other things; going further. You're almost ready to take that leap, you think.

Though... not yet.

So Friday night comes and goes and you're actually... excited to leave him because while the last time you watched Magnolia, it ended... satisfactorily... you still would actually like to finish a movie without getting distracted.

He drops you home Saturday morning, and even though you know that you're not meeting Elsa until later this afternoon, you still find yourself getting ready super early. You play with the idea of taking a nap, and sort of discard it until you realise that it's only 10am and you didn't get much sleep the night before. So, you pick up Joan and go to bed and actually forget to set an alarm. It means you nap for far longer than you'd planned, which wasn't a problem per se, but you always have weird dreams when you sleep in the middle of the day.

You wake up a few hours later thanking the heavens that it wasn't another weird sex dream with Elsa. The thought has your tummy curling, but in a way that you can't even describe as 'unpleasant' because it isn't. It's just... a little uncomfortable. Somehow, you manage to brush it from your mind as you begin getting ready. You play with the idea of taking a nap, and sort of discard it until you realise that it's only 10am and you didn't get much sleep the night before. So, you pick up Joan and go to bed and actually forget to set an alarm. It means you nap for far longer than you'd planned, which wasn't a problem per se, but you always have weird dreams when you sleep in the middle of the day.

You wake up a few hours later thanking the heavens that it wasn't another weird sex dream with Elsa. The thought has your tummy curling, but in a way that you can't even describe as 'unpleasant' because it isn't. It's just... a little uncomfortable. Somehow, you manage to brush it from your mind as you begin getting ready. You fish out a nice top from the back of your wardrobe and let it steam while you're in the shower to get rid of the wrinkles. Even the hairdryer makes an appearance, just so you can whip up a couple of plaits that won't result in frizz. It doesn't even take long to apply your make-up, either. You're getting better at it. Then it's on to packing a quick overnight bag, just in case, before you're on your way.

You only wish you had your own car so that you didn't have to spend an hour on public transport.

But Elsa meeting you downstairs is worth it. The way she smiles at you is worth it. She takes your bag and punches in the code to take the lift all the way up to the top, and you realise with some small surprise that it's comfortable with her now.

It's comfortable when she asks you about your day, about any plans you've got for the weekend. It's comfortable when she asks if you have any preference for dinner, and then clarifies with any preference for pizza. It's comfortable when she leads you down the hallway again she urges you to make yourself at home.

"So how has your week been?" you ask her. You've moved to the couch and she's gone to the kitchen. When she comes back, she's got this little tray with some glasses and biscuits and stuff and it's really domestic.

It's also cute.

She puts it on the coffee table, which is moved just close enough for you to reach. You know it's been moved because there are little indentations on the carpet of where it used to be.

That's actually really... really thoughtful of her. You notice, as she sits down, how she tucks her feet up under her. One question solved: she doesn't mind feet on the couch. She shoots you a guilty smile when she catches your eye.
"My week was fine," she says, "Though I'm glad for the weekend." She looks at you when she says this, still smiling. It brings one out on your own features.

"Am I allowed to say that, given that you're my boss?" you ask with a grin. Elsa laughs – actually laughs – at the suggestion, before she shakes her head.

"Does it count if you're choosing to spend your Saturday night with your boss and not your boyfriend?"

You pretend to ponder that for a moment. Elsa's eyes widen in mock-horror, and it gets you giggling again. "I'm pretty sure that, on the weekend, you're my friend," you tell her. Her features soften, far more than you'd ever expected them to, and she looks away.

She's still smiling when she starts the film. You remember the beginning quite clearly because you'd actually managed to get through it before Hans had begun distracting you. The rest is a bit... less memorable. Or it was.

In the end, it's very different to what you expected. It's definitely not what you thought Elsa's favourite movie would be like. If pressed, you probably would have suggested something more like a rom-com, like Love Actually or maybe something a bit more sophisticated, like The Great Gatsby. Remembering her bookshelf, you wouldn't be surprised if she owned a well-read copy of it.

"That was pretty good," you say, once she's popped the disk out and is putting it back in the case. "It was a little... different..."

She grins at you. "You can say it's weird. Or silly."

"But it wasn't!" you say. "I mean, I think I'll definitely have to watch it again, but it wasn't a bad film at all."

"Well, if you want, we could order a pizza and watch another flick that's maybe a little easier to digest?"

A quick glance at your watch tells you that it's almost 7, so you bite your lip and wait for Elsa to be looking at you.

"Can I... have a shower? And get into my jammies while we're waiting?"

Elsa smiles at you. "Of course. Sounds nice... I might do the same?"

You actually remembered to bring pyjamas that don't look like they're straight out of the nineties, and you kind of can't wait to show them off.

This evening is going to be nice. You can feel it. By the time you're done with your shower, the pizza's arrived. Supreme with all the trimmings, plus a cheesy garlic bread. Elsa puts on another movie – Shrek, of all things. It's been years since you watched it, and you do love Cameron Diaz.

Dessert is even better, though, because you're not entirely full from dinner and Elsa... Elsa made it. Little apple turnovers with good quality vanilla ice-cream.

"Did you make these?" you ask. The pastry makes a delightful sound when you dig your spoon into it, and it starts melting the ice-cream immediately.

"I told you I like baking," she says with a shrug. She's looking at her own bowl but there's
definitely a smile on her face. You scoop up some of the treat, spoon full of apple and pastry and ice-cream. There's steam coming off it, and it smells divine. You give it a few seconds before shoving the entire thing into your mouth. The ice-cream stops it from burning, and it's the perfect mix of hot and cold.

"Mmmm..." You close your eyes, savouring the taste. Way better than dinner. "Oh my God, Els, this is amazing..." Chewing slowly, you try to enjoy every little aspect about it. The fresh apple, plus the vanilla ice-cream...

You can't honestly remember when you last ate something that tasted this good. You're normally a chocolate-covered everything kind of gal, but Elsa might just have converted you.

She made four total, and while you're pretty keen on eating a second, this time you are actually quite full.

And sleepy. The movie's almost over and when you check the time on your phone, you realise that it's actually almost half nine.

There's a missed call from Hans, and you probably should return it, but... This is a girl's night.

Hans can wait.
hi guys! still sick, existence is pain yadda yadda yadda (but seriously i am in a lot of pain atm). Updates might be a little irregular atm but as i've got up to chapter 77 actually complete, i will definitely still be uploading.

happy easter etc :)

All of a sudden, you realise that your life is so busy and full of things that you didn't know you'd been craving.

Perhaps it's the sense of routine that you've got going on. You catch the same bus-train-bus to work in the morning, do the same sort of things all day, have lunch with Hans, do some more work before it's home time. Then on Friday, you go over to Hans', and then Saturday you go out with Elsa.

There are some small detriments. You kind of wish that Hans would come to your place instead, but when you bring it up, he looks really uncomfortable. You're not sure what that is about, so you don't push it. Later on, he reveals that he doesn't like cats, which seems like a really stupid reason to you, but you don't say it. It must be evident on your face, because he sighs.

"I guess I can come over a few times," he says. Your lips twitch.

"As long as you smoke outside, I'm sure Joan won't bother you," you tell him. It's not like she's overly fond of other people anyway – she'll probably just hide in the linen closet while he's there. He just shrugs at you.

You also spend every Saturday, or nearly every Saturday, with Elsa. It's not just movies, but that does happen sometimes. Sometimes it's just lunch, or window shopping. You haven't had a chance to make her dinner yet; you're working up the courage to ask her over to your home.

But you're more than happy to spend time with her, and more than happy to go to her place. An added bonus is that you don't need to take the bus. The driver's name is Phillip, and he's a really nice guy.

You also spend basically every other moment with Hans. Fridays are what you've dubbed your "movie and make-out" days; he'd laughed at that, when you told him. You still haven't gone all the way with him yet, but you can feel that looming on the horizon. It's going to happen soon, you can tell.

There's only one thing that you're annoyed about, and that's the fact that you still haven't met Kristoff's boyfriend. It's only been like, three weeks since you've been back from Norway, but that's besides the point. You keep mentioning your own relationship with Hans, trying to goad Kristoff into sharing. It doesn't work.

But at least he stops acting so cautious regarding your friendship with Elsa.
"I mean, it was weird at first," he said over the phone one evening. "But like, it seems like she's actually a friend. Which is still a little weird, I guess."

"Why's that?"

You can practically hear him shrug over the phone, and he can probably hear your eye-roll.

"Because," he said. Like that answered anything at all. You scowl, even though he can't see it.

"Because...?"

"Because she's like, über smart and pretty and, oh yeah, the richest person either of us is ever going to meet. She could probably buy half the city if she wanted."

You don't know what to say to that, because he's absolutely, completely correct.

"But she's not creepy anymore, though, is she?"

He grunts. "You can't blame me for being cautious," he defends, and you know that you can't and you're not even going to try, either.

You're just about running out of things to talk about when your phone beeps in your ear. It's an incoming call from Hans, so you wish Kristoff a quick goodnight before changing calls. You hang up before he has a chance to tease you about it.

"Hey! What's up?"

Hans is smiling, you can hear it, when he says, "So, have you got anything on next weekend?"

"Why's that?"

"No questions, just tell me!"

You pause to think about it for a moment. Only your Saturday movie date with Elsa is set in stone. "I was gonna go to the movies on Saturday," you say, not really willing to tell him much more.

"Why is that?"

"Well," he starts. And then stops. You give a little groan of frustration because it's obvious that he's building to something and you want to know what it is.

"Hanssss..." you whine, and he cracks.

"Fine, fine. I uh, might have booked a little getaway for us. I thought it would be nice to get away from life, just for a weekend."

You're instantly flattered, and you want to know all the details. Where is it, what things you'll have to bring, and – importantly – how much do you owe him?

He laughs at that. "It's a present," he tells you. "Just bring your gorgeous self, and maybe a couple of clothes – if you feel like wearing any."

That sends a blush up your cheeks. "Hmm, I guess I'll have to think about that," you say, all coy and shit. Or, you try to be.

When Hans purrs down the line, "Well, I can't wait to find out," you get a giddy little thrill that shoots up your spine.
You talk about stupid shit for another few minutes before Hans interrupts with a yawn. Which, of course, only makes you yawn, and you realise just how late it’s getting.

He promises to come up to get you for lunch at work the next day and you hang up the phone.

You fall asleep imagining all the good things to come; you can't wait to see him tomorrow and thank him properly.

Maybe some making out in your office during lunch. Sometimes he says he'd rather eat you, after all, and this time you can't help but believe him.
Kristoff is more than happy for you when you tell him about the holiday. You're pretty sure it's because you're about two days away from forcing a meeting with his boyfriend – or at least seeing a picture of him – and you're also pretty sure that he's not as upset as you are. Even when you told him that you bought his beau a present from Norway, he doesn't budge.

You didn't really expect him to, but still!

"As soon as I come back from this holiday," you threaten him, "I am expecting an elaborate invitation to dinner where you will impress both me and this guy with your cooking skills."

Kristoff laughs, but he doesn't say no.

"I still haven't met Hans yet," he reminds you, and you can't help but grin to yourself.

"Well, Hans is a very good looking guy and I don't want him to leave me for you," you say simply. A snort sounds through the phone.

"I think you just indirectly implied that I am also good looking. Are you feeling okay? Maybe you need to take a day off."

"Ha-ha," you laugh, sarcasm dripping from your tone. "I'm taking a weekend off, so problem sorted then."

"Oohhh gimme the deets. Actually, on second thought, I want to know nothing about what you and "Mr Handsome" do. Gross."

Once more, you grin, but you don't rise to the bait. Before you even realise you've done it, your smile turns into a bite of your bottom lip, and you feel your body droop.

"Kris..."

"Hmm?"

"What... what if it's no good? What if I'm no good?"

"Good at- oh."

"Yeah."

There's silence as Kristoff, evidently, thinks about what you're asking. And you really, probably, shouldn't be asking him this because it's weird and awkward and shit.

But you need to know. And it's not like you can ask anyone else. Not like you can just casually ring up Elsa and be all "hey, boss, how do I have sex for the first time?"

Not going to happen.

"I'm sure-" he starts, before stopping. "Everyone is shit the first time," he tries again, baldly. "It's weird and uncomfortable coz you don't know each other in that way. Have you like, spoken to him
about this?"

It's your turn to snort. "Not... really. I mean, he knows it's all really new for me, but I haven't like, come right out and said it."

"Do you think that's something that you need to tell him, then?"

"Maybe... How did you do it?" Kristoff blusters for a moment, but this time, you're really not going to let him get away with not talking about it. "I mean, your relationship with this dude was like that. So, how did you get past that?"

"You're assuming I've slept with him," Kris tells you. And yeah, you are, a little, but it's not just that.

"I'm... assuming that dating him is a little outside of your norm and that you're doing things you haven't done before," you respond. And you know that you're right, and you know that Kris knows that you're right, so he really doesn't have much room to argue.

"I don't know. It's different. I don't need to tell him because he already knows. But if Hans doesn't..."

You sigh. You don't really want to talk about this anymore. "Hey, I better go. I'll uh, let you know how it goes, though."

Kris tells you once more that he does not want the details, and you hang up while having a little chuckle to yourself. You're pretty sure that you're not going to want to give him those details.

There's something intimate and private about it; something that you think you're going to want to keep to yourself.

But, you'll just have to wait and find out.

Hans comes over the night before you leave. Your place is closer, and you've been dropping pretty heavy hints that you want to spend more time at your own home.

They must still be pretty subtle because he usually doesn't catch them.

At least here, though, you can have a shower in relative comfort. You try not to take too long, but when you reappear, hair still damp, you can't quite find Hans.

And then you smell the tobacco. When you find him, you note that at least he's gone outside to smoke – even if he did leave the door open. When he leans down to kiss you, you turn your head just enough so it catches your cheek.

You've never actually told him that you don't like cigarettes, but really, he shouldn't be all that surprised. One fortunate thing about being in a wheelchair is that you've learned to take health seriously.

Life is fleeting, so why spend it killing yourself faster?

But of course, you can't really say that to him. He'd probably get upset and you don't want that; not when you're about to spend a great weekend with him. So you make sure to give him a proper kiss after he's brushed his teeth.

It's an early night because you have to be up early, but you don't feel tired. He has this way of
making your whole body feel awake, especially when he's close. Like, he could sleep on the couch, but why would he when your bed is big enough?

When he kisses you, you think that this could be it. Like.

*It.*

It isn't, but now you definitely know what you want. So even as he kisses you – pushes you into the bed and marks your throat with damp hickeys – you smile and whisper, "Hey... if we did something this weekend... would you be ready?"

And you mean that in more ways than one. Is he ready to do that? And, is he ready to do it with you?

If he is... is he like, ready-ready. With protection and shit. Because you haven't had this conversation but you're not on any birth control because you've never needed it, and given how much money you spend on other medication, you've never really wanted to add another one to the list unless it were absolutely necessary.

Hans pulls away slowly and looks at you. He lifts an eyebrow.

"Are you?"

And already you can feel your face heating up in a blush. You look away and mumble a, "Yeah. I mean. I think so?"

He grins, and for some reason, that's the moment you become aware of how he's pressed against you. You have the absurd idea that, once you become a little more comfortable with intimacy, that being on top could be nice.

Which, of course, makes you blush even worse than before.

Yeah, you're probably definitely ready. Like, you could even do it now, except that the moment doesn't feel right? If you did it now, it sort of feels like you'd be doing it because you feel like you should. But, you want to be wooed and shit. Going on a weekend getaway is perfect.

He goes right back to kissing you once you say that, and he's definitely trying to get you worked up (and you definitely are getting worked up). His hand runs over your chest, and it takes all your self control to pull away.

"Hans," you say softly. His lips leave yours, but they don't stray far. He presses his hand harder into your chest, his lips and teeth scraping along the crook of your throat. "Hans... w-wait..."

It takes a few more seconds before he's finally pulling away and you can feel like you can breath again. He looks at you expectantly, and you have this sudden, overwhelming sensation of shame.

"I-" What can you say that doesn't sound stupid? But Hans beats you to it.

"You don't... want to sleep with me?" he asks, eyes wide. You shake your head emphatically.

"It's not that!" you say. "I just... can we not? Tonight?"

The way he slumps, so small it's almost unnoticeable, almost kills you. You do want this, so what's the big deal? Why can't you just get over yourself and do it?

You don't have an answer to those questions, though, and even though he's trying to hide his hurt,
he's not being completely successful. You understand that; if the shoe was on the other foot, you'd probably feel similarly.

So instead you just sigh and run a hand through your hair. "I just... with this weekend thing, I thought... that it would be nice to do it then, y'know? I'm not- I haven't done this before, so I wanted it to be... special..."

Your voice fades on the last word, and you feel so stupid. You can't meet his gaze.

"Hey, that- I wasn't even thinking. That sounds nice." He's got a smile on his face, when you finally work up the courage to look at him.

"That's... okay?"

He nods. "Yeah."

You have to kiss him again, just for being so understanding. You don't let it get out of hand, though: just something light – not a peck, but not a full-on make-out session. Then you fall back onto the bed and let him follow you.

You fall asleep to his lips on your throat, hand at your waist.

Chapter End Notes

jsyk The Sex™ is next chapter. and this was originally two separate chapters but they were small and i also didnt want to continue the pain

and it would have been funny if i made the sex chapter 69 but i didn't.
Chapter 70

Chapter Notes

hanna sex is here. tbh im sick of like. waiting for this moment to come (lol). so here you are. have a chapter early.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The drive is actually really nice. You'd gotten up early to cook a nice breakfast before loading the car. Hans drives because he's actually got a licence, and you spend most of the time looking out the window.

You're too nervous to ask if you can put the radio onto something that isn't country-western.

It takes a few hours, but eventually you arrive at some kind of forest retreat. There are little log cabins and boardwalks. There's even a flying fox through the trees, and you really hope you have a chance to try it out.

"Wow, this place looks amazing," you comment, just as Hans is getting the luggage. There's not a lot – you're only here for two days! – but there's enough. You manage to put yours on your lap, which makes it easy to move at least.

You don't pay much attention as he checks in; you should, you know, but your mind is a little too full of other things. You're taking in the sights and also thinking about... tonight. How that's going to go.

Hans doesn't make any indication that he's thinking about that. After you get the key to your little cabin for the weekend, he immediately suggests lunch at the restaurant, followed by a dip in the pool. The first suggestion is one you can get behind, but it's been literal years since you last went swimming and you're not really sure about your ability.

Also... you don't think you're quite ready for him to see that much of you.

But at least lunch is nice. Hans orders a nice bottle of champagne – as a celebration, he'd said. You're not sure what you're celebrating, but you do admit that it feels pretty nice as it settles in your stomach.

This is what you'd always dreamed about, but never thought you'd get. Not just a boyfriend, but someone thoughtful.

It feels time. It feels time and, more importantly, you feel ready.

So when you go back to the room to change into your swimmers, you don't. Half a bottle of wine isn't enough to dull your senses, and you want.

You want Hans, and you want him to want you.

It's really not hard to get him to kiss you. Not when you don't bother changing into your swimmers
and he wanders into the bedroom. You've got your bra and a pair of track-pants on, and he does this double-take, like he's not expecting you to not be dressed yet.

"So... I kinda thought of something better we could do," you say, and it doesn't take him long to catch on. He grins, and takes a step forward.

"You sure?"

Right now... you can't actually think of anything you want more.

Hans takes a few purposeful strides towards you; doesn't even ask if he can pick you up. He just does. Your hands wrap around his neck and when he puts you down, he follows, too. Starts kissing you like there's no tomorrow, and really, there's not a lot of difference between how he kisses now compared with before, except now you know that you're not going to stop him.

It's the thought of going further that actually turns you on this time. The thought of what he's going to do, of how nice it's going to feel. His hands wander greedily over your body and there's nothing that could make you stop him.

Except... visuals.

He pulls your bra off, and that's okay. But when he tries to tug your pants lower, your stomach does an unpleasant lurch. You bite your lip and try to meet his eyes.

"Hey..." you say, softly. It catches his attention, at least. "Can we... under the covers?"

He tilts his head for a second before he smiles. "Sure we can. I just... wanna be with you."

You can't help but respond with your own small smile. He helps you get under the sheets before he looks at you.

"Uh... this part is easier above the covers," he tells you. Then he focuses his attention very deliberately on his lap, and you let out a chuckle that's part embarrassment and part... something else.

Leaning across you, he grabs his wallet from the bedside table and pulls out a thin foil packet. "Did you wanna-?" he asks. And part of you does. It really does.

But you also don't want to fuck this up, so you shake your head. "M-maybe not this time..."

He nods like he understands, just before he stands up and shucks his pants.

He's still got his underwear on, but there's a very prominent bulge that you kind of can't tear your eyes away from. Your whole face heats up in a terrible blush, but he grins at you like he's pleased with the attention.

If you didn't have... the issues you had... you probably would feel the same way.

Hans doesn't ask if you're ready. He probably just assumes you are, what with the red face and shallow breathing. But instead of asking he kind of just... whips it out. Opens the condom with no shame or anything.

You can't even bring yourself to look at it.

Immediately, the tension starts curling in your gut. You wonder if you've maybe made a mistake, just before he moves forward; leans over you and smiles.
It's enough to calm you, a little. Enough, at least, so that you have some confidence to say, in a small voice, "Hey."

Which is a really pathetic way to start any conversation, and so you cringe and try again. "Are... are you ready?"

Hans laughs, which soothes you a little. "I am more than ready. And I hope you are, too..."

You are. You are.

"I am."

He kisses you, and climbs beneath the covers. You're not sure if he's told you whether he's a virgin or not, but you don't suppose it matters. If he is, you get to learn together; if he isn't, it means he probably knows what he's doing.

It's absurd because you can't feel anything, usually; he's lying on top of you, and you can feel that until you kind of can't. You can't even really feel him enter you, which... as far as things go, is pretty shit. You know he's there. You know he's inside you. And you have this weird tight sensation, but other than that, nada.

Hans doesn't say much as he begins to move. Something about how tight you feel, how good, but that's it. No little sounds of pleasure, though you're not exactly doing that either. You know he's moving because you can see it, and you bite your lip and clench your eyes shut as you concentrate. You can't feel him where you wish you could, but you can still imagine. His hands come up to palm your breasts, and you latch onto that because it's something tangible.

That you can feel.

At some point, and you're not sure when, he just stops moving. His eyes are squeezed shut, and you lift a hand to brush his face. Finally, he looks at you.

"Hey," he says, a little breathless, and you let out a little smile because it seems the most appropriate thing to do.

"Hi..."

And you're not sure why it's taken so long, but you're just glad you've finally done it.

Chapter End Notes

just a little side note but i havent really been getting much feedback lately. ive been getting a couple of reviews, and talking to a few people, but that's about it. if you're enjoying this story (or hating the hans but longing for elsanna!) lemme know :) it makes my day, it really does :)
Chapter 71

Chapter Notes

thanks for the reviews guys! you're right, i am really bad at responding to reviews. I just don't like having massive author's notes? i know that people are tired of the hans, which is why i said that i'd update daily until the elsanna :P

as for the elsanna... they're not going to be together together. but, it definitely will start a shift in their relationship (and that means that anna's relationship with hans is going to change, too ;) )

thank you for all the reviews, though :) there was one about Hans not talking Anna through it and... yeah i definitely want to show the difference between hans and elsa.

there will be a chapter a day until... about chapter 77? give or take :)

Once it was over and Hans had cleaned himself up a bit, he'd come back to the bed and promptly fallen asleep. You'd read about that, too: sex is strenuous and hormones and shit can make people sleepy.

But not you. Maybe because you didn't do anything, or maybe because you hadn't orgasmed; you're not quite sure. Either way, you've gotta get up and move because while Hans had cleaned up himself, you haven't done the same.

So you pull on your panties and grab some fresh clothes and make your way to the bathroom. There's a chair and some pleasant-smelling shampoos all ready and waiting for you.

You lock the bathroom door. Without being able to explain it... you want some privacy.

Running the water as hot as you can stand, it takes a little longer for you to move beneath it. There's something off about your body, something a little... off-kilter that you can't describe. When you pull your underwear down, your stomach lurches at the red you see there.

You'd been warned about blood, but there seems like so much. Running the tap hot, too, you plug it in and let it fill up. Then you ball the underwear up and toss it in. It'll soak while you do.

It at least propels you to move. You sit beneath the shower head and start the routine of cleaning yourself. You don't feel dirty, as such, but... is it normal to not feel as happy as you thought you would? Or as excited?

Maybe it just hasn't hit you yet?

You sit in the shower until your fingers get all pruney, and then you sit in there some more. It's only when you actually feel like your whole body is going to shrink that you finally move from under the stream. The whole bathroom has fogged up, enveloping you in a safe cocoon – at least for the time being.

So you get dressed and brush out your hair; put it in plaits to keep it from getting too frizzy. Then you begin scrubbing your underwear. They're probably ruined, which is a shame because you had
kind of worn them to impress Hans and he hadn't said anything, but it doesn't really matter.

Not really.

Hans is still asleep when you wheel out. He's snoring into the pillow, and as you move around to the other side of the bed, you see a little more blood.

The sight makes you feel a little ill. At least Hans isn't lying in it. You kind of hope he deals with it when he gets up because you're not really sure what to do, and you feel bad enough for making a mess like that.

Maybe you should have just done it at home...

Sucking in a breath, you grab your phone, the camera Kristoff had lent you (again – and you still haven't printed out the pics from Norway yet), and the second key to the room.

You're still too awake to think about sleeping, so you may as well go exploring.

It's late afternoon, you realise with some small surprise. Probably about 3 or 4? Instead of checking your phone, you bring the camera up, flicking it on as you take a picture. It's not even a good one, but with a digital camera, it doesn't matter.

You wheel around, taking snaps of anything that catches your fancy. Birds, trees – even a few of other people. From the back, and they never notice. You like to think it adds some life to the pictures, but they probably just look like terrible tourist shots.

And it's not like that matters much, either.

The pictures keep coming as you move around the... resort, you guess. There's a swimming pool, but you're definitely more invested in the proper nature that you can see around you. Right now... it's just you.

In fact, you lose yourself so much that you hardly recognise the sun getting lower and lower, until it's just scraping the horizon. Even then, you only notice because the camera beeps at you and refuses to take anymore snaps. Frowning, you try and find the source of the trouble.

Battery, perhaps? But no, because the camera is still on. The flash still lights up when you half-press the button, but when you try to take a picture, it just beeps again.

And then you realise that it's because the memory card is full.

There's a little café near you, so you move over there because there's light and there are people and it's very definitely getting dark now. You ask for a hot chocolate and pull the camera out again. If you want to take more pics (and you definitely do), you'll have to clear some space.

You start with the oldest photos. They're the ones of Norway, the morning that you went exploring on your own. Most of them aren't worth keeping – blurry, or over- or under-exposed, or just straight-up boring – but there are a few gems. Maybe you should invest in a travel album when you get home; just somewhere to put pictures of when you go somewhere exciting. Not even overseas, either, because you don't really think that's going to happen again for a while.

It doesn't take long for your chocolate to come out. You didn't bring your purse, but that's okay because they can charge it to the room. You'll just pay Hans back, you suppose.

So you go back to deleting pictures when your heart stutters a little.
It's the picture of you at the zoo, with the kangaroos.

And Elsa.

You're not sure why you're reacting to it the way you are. In the picture, you're smiling widely. Elsa's kneeling down next to you, and as you zoom in, you notice something you hadn't at the time.

She's smiling, that's a given, but it's where she's directed it. You're smiling at the camera: Elsa is smiling... at you...

Her hand is resting on your knee as balance, and though her body is angled towards the camera, her eyes are lifted up, watching you. She probably just wanted to see your reaction.

You don't delete this photo. You actually take the time to lock it, which just means it won't let you delete it (and, hopefully, it won't be accidentally deleted).

Then you put it away because you don't really want to take photos anymore. You've made a bit of space, at least, and there is always your phone.

Speaking of, you pull it out, mostly to check the time. It's almost 6, and you don't have any missed calls. You don't dwell on it as you pull up Kristoff's name.

He answers on the third ring.

"Hey!" he says, voice full of cheer. It lifts your own spirits, hearing him sound so happy.

"Hey yourself," you say. And then falter because you're not even sure why you rang him. Maybe he notices, because he doesn't let the silence grown much longer than a second or two.

"Is everything okay?" he asks, voice serious. "I thought you'd be busy with Hans..."

You let out a dry little laugh. It's not funny. "He's sleeping. I decided to get out and do some sightseeing. Not sure what we're going to have for dinner."

"Uh-huh," Kristoff hums. "What's it like there?"

You look around. Take a sip of your hot chocolate, which actually tastes really mediocre as you contemplate your answer. "It's... fine. Nice. Got some pictures and stuff..." You pause, letting out a breath. A quick glance reminds you that you're alone, and no one is listening to your conversation anyway. The café seems to be emptying out – perhaps everyone is moving over to the restaurant for a proper dinner. "I- we did it."

There's a weird sort of... finality to your words. You're not sure what you want Kristoff to say. You don't even really know why you told him, except for the fact that you feel like you need to talk about it but you can't do that with Hans.

Maybe you can. You don't know. It just kind of feels like you can't.

But Kristoff doesn't say anything and you've never been good with silences so you fill it with your words instead of waiting for his. "Is it strange that I don't... feel much different? Or... didn't feel much even when it happened? I- he didn't say anything about how it was for him..."

"Anna..." Kristoff sighs, but now he's started talking you're content to give him a chance to gather his thoughts. "Do you... you don't seem as... happy as you made it seem you would..."

"I just don't know how to feel." When you say the words, you realise that they're exactly the ones
you need. You don't know how to feel. Maybe you should be feeling happy or elated. But you don't. "I better get back," you say instead. "It's probably time to go and find some food."

"Sure," Kristoff responds. This is probably one of the worst conversations you've had with him. "Try not to overthink it. Just... be you."

The words drag a small smile to your face. "Thanks. I'll see you next week?"

"How about next Friday? Double-date?"

"Really?" That breathes some warmth back into your voice, and Kristoff chuckles.

"You're right. It's time. As long as Sven is free..."

"Oooh, his name is Sven. How exotic," you say. Kristoff takes the ribbing with as much grace as he can.

Which probably would have meant sticking his tongue out or ruffling your hair, had you been conversing in person.

"I'll see you later."

"Byeee..."

You hang up with a smile on your face. You definitely feel a little better now.
Hans is in the shower when you return. You put your phone on to charge and keep looking through the photos on the camera while you wait.

You don't look at the ones from Norway.

Instead, you go through the pics you took today, judging them. Maybe you should buy a photo album. The idea helps when sorting out pictures: which ones are good enough to print out? If they're not, then there's no point in keeping them.

By the time Hans appears, you've deleted well over a hundred snaps. He smiles as soon as he sees you. The towel is wrapped around his waist and he hasn't got a shirt on.

His body looks so... chiseled.

"Hey, babe. Where'd you go?" The smile on his face is easy and open, and some guilt that you hadn't felt earlier rises up in your chest.

"O-Oh, well, I couldn't sleep so I thought I'd go for a walk? See the sights?"

"Anything interesting?" This time, you shrug, and he lets out a laugh. "Okay, anything more interesting than spending the rest of the weekend sequestered away in here, with only each other for company?"

Immediately, you feel your face heat up. You gape for a moment before finally landing on, "H-Hans!" He grins at you, moving over until he can kiss you, which only makes it worse because he's only got a towel on and parts of him are still damp from the shower.

Parts of you are probably a little damp, too, but not for that reason. His tongue prods at your lips and you open them, granting access.

He is a pretty good kisser.

You don't make it to dinner that night.

By the time Monday comes, you're actually exhausted. Travelling in general makes you tired, but this time you'd actually been doing some form of exercise.

Hans is pretty insatiable. It feels kinda nice. You like him wanting you, desiring you. And, you like making him feel good, even if you've never quite climaxed from him. Not that you're surprised. Sometimes it's hard, even with your own fingers – and you've been doing this a long time.

You've made a note to buy some more lube, though.

So you're exhausted and maybe a little frustrated because you've been worked up but haven't had a satisfactory finale yet, but you still notice things around you when you roll into the office. Things like Elsa, who's already at work in her office. You stop outside her door, looking in for a moment. She doesn't notice you.

She's staring out one of the windows, deep in thought. You wonder if it's a happy thought or not,
because with the way she's kind of slouched, legs splayed in front of her, she looks... despondent. It could be relaxation, you know, but you don't think it is.

Except when you knock on the door and she jumps with a start, the first thing on her face is a wide smile, happy to see you.

"How was your weekend?" she asks, straight up. You offer a small smile that – you hope – doesn't look as pained as it feels. It's not like you really want to go into any details, because the actual answer to that question is "full of sex" but that's just... no.

So you clear you throat and try for an unfazed shrug. "It was uh, nice. What about you?"

Elsa look to the side for a second, smile falling a fraction before her gaze is back on you. "Oh, nothing much." And you'd believe her, if not for the fact that it's both the wrong way to answer the question and also because there's definite signs of concealer on her neck. You can tell because some of it has transferred to her blouse.

It seems she spent her weekend doing the same thing you did, except you don't have any marks on your upper body to prove it.

The thought of her doing that has your stomach in knots, a very clear sign that you should not be thinking about your boss's sex life. So you stop.

You want to ask if she's okay, but she's still smiling at you, watching attentively. She seems okay, even if there's a lost little look in her eyes as she watches you. It would be nice if you were approaching the "can talk to each other about problems" phase of your friendship soon. The gaping chasm between 'boss' and 'subordinate' doesn't seem nearly so wide and impossible as it used to be. Now, it's more like a shallow ditch, and you're not entirely sure when it changed, but you're glad.

So you smile back at her and jerk your thumb over your shoulder. "I better get back to work."

Elsa lets you go with a small nod.
Chapter 73

welcome back olaf ;_; i didn't forget about you, buddy.

also i've been getting some really positive reviews :) im glad that anna's first time came across as 'unsexy' as I'd wanted it to; i know i havent gone into much detail, but honestly we're looking at missionary with no foreplay (and no orgasm for anna :( ). She's slowly going to realise her feelings for Elsa soon, obviously. She's moved out of the "I want to be like her" phase and into the "I want to be with her". A user over on AO3 has started a tally for the number of times Anna has an "erotic dream after thinking about Elsa" (it's three so far omfg).

Anyway, enjoy :P

There's a really strange email in your inbox when you finally log in. It has you checking the date because it seems really out of place.

It's about the staff Christmas party. It hasn't been sent to all the staff, just you, because it's from Elsa and she wants you to get together with Olaf to organise it. She's got a few suggestions, but they follow the common thread of looking really expensive. Like... the business is probably going to spend a lot of money on it. Olaf's been CCed into it so you just reply to him, asking when it's going to be a good time to catch up. He responds within minutes, wondering if he could pop up that afternoon to start laying the groundwork.

You've got plenty of other things to keep you distracted, sending emails and fielding phone calls. There's an odd one from some woman asking to speak to Elsa, but that's not the way it works. You tell her that Ms Arendelle is unavailable, but she's welcome to make an appointment. The woman huffs and tells you to forget it before she hangs up.

It's really odd, and even though you did nothing wrong, it does put a damper on your mood.

Fortunately, Olaf is really good at lifting it.

He swings into your office at a quarter-to-three, happy as Larry and with a chocolate muffin. He puts it on your desk with a flourish, grinning.

"Anna! How are you? Wow it's been ages!" There's no malice in his tone, but you still feel a little guilty. You haven't been a very good friend. You should probably actually use Facebook because he bothered to add you in the first place.

Or you can just get his phone number?

"Hey, Olaf! I'm swell," you say because his mood is infectious. "How are you?"

He doesn't respond verbally, though his smile becomes even bigger and he gives you two thumbs up. It makes you laugh a little.
"So, Elsa's got you planning the staff party, huh?" he asks, and your smile turns into a bit of a grimace. It makes him laugh, but it's not unkind. "Don't worry, I'm here to help."

"I haven't ever been to a work Christmas party," you say, "let alone planned one!" Olaf tilts his head sympathetically.

"That's what I'm here for. Do you know the budget?" You shake your head. "Dates?" Again, a shake. His mouth purses, but he's not really frowning.

"How about we check with Elsa? Then we can really begin planning. The party is usually in early December, but it's probably best to just make sure."

You nod. "Elsa's in her office - I'll be right back."

As you wheel down the hallway, you can hear someone talking. Elsa's office door is open and she's on her phone. There's a frown on her face as she speaks, and she's still staring out the window.

"Yes, yes, I'll be here. I'll let the front desk know. Yes, fine. Yes. Okay, bye."

The phone falls from her ear and she lets out a long-suffering sigh. You feel very awkward. You hope Elsa doesn't think you were eavesdropping.

Maybe she'll think you just arrived. Knocking on the door, you move to just inside the room. This time, she doesn't jerk with surprise. She looks at you slowly, blinking, before finally that familiar smile lifts her features.

"Hey, Anna. What's up?"

Forge ahead, don't let her think you were listening. Clearing your throat, you move forward.

"I have Olaf in my office trying to organise the party," you start, "but he thinks it'll be easier if we have a budget and a time frame?"

Elsa purses her lips for a second. "We have about a hundred employees. The cost is never more than $100 per person, though we also often charge for partners. And the dates... probably in early December, or late November if you can't get booked." You nod, mentally taking notes.

"Any preference for location?" you ask, and she just shrugs.

"Somewhere nice, I suppose. We've held them at art galleries and museums in the past. Creates a nice atmosphere."

"Okay, got it."

She smiles at you. "If you have any other questions, I'm more than happy to help."

"I thought that was what Olaf was for?" you laugh, and her smile gets a little wider for a second.

"It is, but... I'm here, too."

Blinking, you level your own soft smile at her. "I'll remember that. Better get back to it, though..."

She nods again, and you realise that you really need to come up with better ways of ending conversation with her.
Once you have that information, though, it becomes much easier. The idea of a museum as the location is a nice one, and now that you know you've got about $10,000 to play with...

Olaf insists that there be an open bar, at least for wine and beer, so there goes about two grand.

"I suppose it depends on where we wanna do it as to when it's going to be?" he suggests, and you shrug. You've got about twenty different tabs open for different locations. There are a couple of mansion-y looking places that catch your eye, but you're not quite sure how formal the event has to be.

"Is there normally a dress code?" you ask. Olaf gives a little hum before answering.

"It's... a more relaxed atmosphere than work but maybe a little dressier? Think... slightly more formal than business formal?"

That... surprisingly makes sense. "There's a Gallery of Modern Art that does functions?" you suggest, and he shrugs and nods at the same time. "I'll send them an email, I guess."

"Is it local? We might be able to squeeze in some transport for those who live too far away or are planning on drinking their weight in alcohol."

"Does that happen often?"

At that, he gives a wry sort of chuckle. "More often than you'd think. Fortunately, the parties are almost always on Friday, so it gives people the weekend to stew in regret and remorse."

You snort, finishing up the email before sending it.

And then you look at the time and it's like, 4:00 and definitely time to leave. Olaf seems to feel much the same way.

"Did you wanna leave it there for today? Not much more we can do until we get a response, I guess, other than message other places."

"Nah, it's fine," you assure him. "If I don't get a response by Wednesday, I'll send out a few more, but I honestly just wanna go home now."

Olaf smiles at that. "Good call. Let me know if you want some more help, but it sort of sounds like you know what you're doing."

"I do now!" you laugh, and he chuckles.

"Alright, well, I'll catch up later. Just shoot me a message."

"Yeah I will! See ya later, Olaf!"

And with that, he's left your office. He actually almost hits someone on the way out – a woman, a tall woman with brown hair who is definitely not someone you've ever seen before. Olaf apologises and turns in the other direction, heading for the lift.

That was odd. You brush it from your mind though because you still have some work to do and you really want to go home now. After your weekend, you just... want some time to yourself.

So you save your work and shut down your computer. When you leave your office, you notice that Elsa's door is still open. She normally shuts it when she leaves for the day, so you're a little puzzled. Did she forget? Or is she still here?
It's worth checking out, so you move down the hall and stop just outside her office.

Elsa's still there, but whatever you were going to say dies on your tongue because, while yes, Elsa's there, she's not alone. The bottom of your stomach drops, and it feels like the air's been knocked from your lungs, just for a second.

Elsa's there. She's not alone.

She's leaning against her desk, one hand held by the wrist and pressed firmly against the polished wood. Only one hand because the woman holding it has her second hand up at Elsa's face, gripping her chin. She doesn't even notice you because in the milliseconds it's taken to absorb all this new information, the brunette has moved.

It happens so fast that you're not the only one surprised. One second she's holding Elsa, and the next second she's kissing her.

And all you hear is this long moan that does things to you that you can't even explain. Something spikes. Elsa's free hand fists in the woman's hair for a moment before it's forced against the table with its twin.

_Elsa? And in her office?_

You shouldn't be here. You shouldn't be witnessing this moment, so you turn to leave...

...in the same moment that Elsa opens her eyes and looks straight at you.
You escape within seconds, going back to your office. You close the door and debate locking it, too, before pushing that idea away. With your heart thumping, you try and calm your breaths. Every nerve is alight and you're hyperaware that something is bubbling in your stomach, but you're not sure what.

Everything you'd ever thought is... not wrong, but not right, either.

You'd wondered what sort of man would have caught her eye, and now you can see how fundamentally flawed that question had been.

It takes more than ten minutes for you to calm down, to reason with yourself that this isn't a big deal, that it isn't really the sleazy office romance that the media loves. She's not fucking her secretary on her desk every other day.

... You're her secretary, oh God.

But you fight down the wave the builds inside you at that idea. Elsa is not like that. Who's to say that the woman isn't her partner? Maybe their relationship is new and they're just testing the boundaries and this is not the big deal that you've made it out to be.

It's not.

You keep telling yourself that until you feel better. Until there's a small knock at your door and Elsa's voice filters in through the wood.

"A-Anna?" she asks, voice so soft that it barely reaches you. "Are you still here?"

It's not a big deal. "Y-yeah, Elsa. I'm-" You pause. You can't say you're working because your computer is off. You don't need to explain yourself, though.

"May I come in?"

You sigh. Some of the tension leaves you with it, but only a little. "Yeah..."

When the door swings open, Elsa looks just as bad as you feel. Her face is drawn, her cheeks a blotchy red like they don't know whether to blush or pale. She opens her mouth but fails to speak.

So you try and rush ahead. Maybe if you just apologise, you can put this whole awkward affair behind you.

"I'm sorry," you rush, now that you've decided to speak. "I didn't mean to walk in on, uh, you and... your girlfriend?" The last word is raised, more a question than a statement. Elsa's eyes widen.
"No-no, I'm sorry, Anna. I'm sorry if I made you... uncomfortable. That was very unprofessional- and she's just a friend- not serious. I mean—" Elsa stops herself there, and in any other situation you would have laughed at her rambling.

But not this time. This time you and your traitorous mind just think, "But I'm a friend," before you can head it off.

Fortunately it was just a thought and not something spoken aloud.

At least the awkwardness is mutual. You try to smile at her because Elsa looks so stressed and apologetic that she's likely to give herself an aneurysm. It seems to help.

"Was... there a reason you came to my office?" she asks, only wincing a little. You stare at her blankly for a moment.

There was, but it seems so inconsequential now.

"I just... noticed your door open and thought you'd maybe forgotten to close it..."

"Ah."

"Yeah... and I was just about to leave so I figured if you were still in then I'd just say 'bye' real quick?"

Elsa nods.

The gap you noticed earlier, the divide between you that you'd thought had lessened... you can feel it widening again and you're not sure why, exactly, and you're not sure how to save it. You look at Elsa for a little longer, trying to think of something to say – the right thing to say.

"Elsa..." She looks at you with big, doleful eyes. There's... she's guarded, too; you've only just noticed that her arms are crossed in front of her body, face directed mostly at the floor. "Don't... This doesn't change anything, right? Just because you're gay or into girls or whatever..." You wince a little because there was definitely a more eloquent way to put this that you've fucked up. But the meaning is there.

You don't want this to change anything. It didn't when Kristoff came out to you, and maybe you're a little hurt that Elsa felt she couldn't share that with you, but at the same time, she's a CEO. She's been on magazines. She needs to be private because everything was so public.

So you sigh. "You're still my friend no matter what and I didn't mean to like... make you freak out or anything by leaving. I just... wanted to give you your privacy."

Elsa looks at you. She's been looking at you for the duration of your whole speech, but she doesn't look as... sad. Not anymore. She tries for a smile and mostly succeeds.

"Thank you, Anna. I... appreciate it. Regardless, it shouldn't have happened, and it won't again."

She gives a nod, and you wonder if it's for you or for her that she does it. "But- I suppose you want to go. It's quite late..."

You know a dismissal when you see one, so you make a show of checking your phone and agreeing with her.

"Are you going home, too?" you ask her. You see her swallow.
"I have a few things to finish up here. But I'll see you tomorrow."

You aren't offended. You want to be alone and she probably does, too. So you just smile and nod at her, collecting your things and making your way to the elevator. You know that Elsa shuts her door behind her, and you really hope that she doesn't let it get to her.

You aren't.

Of course, by the time you arrive home, whatever positive affirmations you had thought up have completely broken down because it has gotten to you and for some reason you feel like this actually is a big deal.

Your boss is gay – of that, you're fairly certain. She didn't refute you when you said it, after all. That's not the big deal.

The big deal is you because you didn't act like this when Kristoff came out to you. When you'd thought about Elsa with a dude, it was really easy to push it to the side. Even in Norway, you hadn't dwelled. But now, it feels like the only thing you can think about.

And then there was that strange sensation you felt as you saw her. As she... made that noise. Only strange because while you've felt it before but never in this context.

Suddenly every interaction you've ever had with her feels different. You shared a bed with her in Norway, and it's not because she's into chicks that you feel uncomfortable.

It's because, when she made that sound, it had made you want to hear it again. Made you want to be the reason she made it in the first place.

But that's preposterous. You swallow and try to go about your evening routine. You feed Joan and make pesto pasta for dinner because it's easy, and every time any thought of Elsa invades your mind, you push it away by thinking about something else.

You try to focus on the dinner with Kristoff on Friday. The one that you're bringing Hans and he's bringing Sven and it'll be a cute double-date. Then you distract yourself by actually messaging Hans and asking if he's free. While you wait for a response, you go and have a shower and try not to think about anything except how the water feels as it hits you.

There's a few bruises on your thighs as testament to the weekend you've just had, so then you try to think of that. Try and think about what you can do to get as much out of the experience as Hans did.

It would be nice to orgasm at his hand instead of your own.

By the time you finish up in the shower, you do feel a little better. There's a message from Hans, telling you he is available. You say it's a double-date and he's gonna meet your brother, and he still seems pretty keen.

That's nice.

There's a trashy show on TV, so you settle in for something mind-numbing and easy to consume. Get a bowl of ice cream for dessert because why not.

You want to stay up a little later, but given the weekend you've just had, by 8 your whole body is
crying out, desperate for bed. You can barely keep your eyes open, so after stretching, you wheel into your room. Joan's already curled up on your pillow, giving a chirp when you poke her. As soon as your head hits the edge, she moves towards the middle of the bed so you can curl into her.

It takes less than a minute for you to fall asleep.
You wake up sometime in the middle of the night. Joan has moved to your feet, curled up at the end. She doesn't stir when you sit up to check the time.

3:38am.

You know exactly why you woke up, and part of you is not keen to go back to sleep and resume that particular dream. At this rate you'll have had more sex dreams about your boss than actual sex moments with Hans.

Jesus.

But then... maybe you just need to... get it out of your system. Your whole relationship – friendship – with Elsa has been a bit different to every other friendship you've ever had. So it's normal to be unsure about certain aspects, right?

And it's not like you're gay. You have a boyfriend. This is just... your brain's way of processing things that are different to what you know. Plus, maybe this is just leftover frustrations from the weekend because you'd gotten riled up but hadn't actually been able to like, finish.

That seems reasonable, right? What was the harm, just this once, to actually let yourself imagine and not have your mind dredge it up when you had no control?

Just once...

Biting your lip, you sit up so you can throw your pyjama top away. The cooling air nips at your skin, but it's not what makes you shiver. You're really doing this. There's a bottle of lube in your bedside drawer, so you grab that, too. It can be hard to start without it.

It's more trepidation than anything that has you tentatively cupping your breasts as you lie back down. Something throbs in your stomach but you don't really want to think about it yet. Baby steps. Closing your eyes, you just focus on the sensation.

Would Elsa like the way they felt?

Eyelids springing open, you're just about to berate yourself for the thought before you manage to just take a moment. This is what this is for. A chance to just get it all out there. And it's a valid question because... you like how they feel, but Hans hasn't shown an interest in them. Not in the way you wished he would.

You have to pause for a second again, just because you don't want to think about him right now. You just had a whole weekend with him, and this plan isn't going to work unless you just think of
Elsa. Only her. Otherwise your brain will learn that it's okay to think about her all the time, which is wrong.

So you close your eyes again and try to pick up the thread from before.

Would... Elsa like your chest? Would she like to touch?

Without being able to see, it lets you properly imagine. You imagine that it's her hands, not yours, gently running across your skin. The slight breeze isn't a breeze, but her breath dancing over you.

By the time your hand works its way into your underwear, you can feel how damp you are. You can smell it. Maybe you don't even need the lube today. It's not hard to imagine it's Elsa's hand and it's even easier to think of the moan she gave today and replay it here.

Oh God maybe she'd even say your name as she touches you. Kisses you.

"Oohhhh..."

How would that feel? You'd want to touch her afterwards. Before. During. If Elsa let you do that, you could die happy. She was so... so beautiful. Heartbreakingly beautiful, which was an idea you'd never really let yourself think about because you're so... not. But she is.

You could kiss every inch of her and it wouldn't be enough. If you could be the reason for her to moan, to cry out as you brought her to a climax...

With one hand sliding, slick, at your core, and the other tugging desperately at your nipple, you somehow know that you're going to come and it's going to feel amazing. Throwing your head back, you keep your eyes shut. It's easier to imagine Elsa like that.

Elsa touching you. Elsa praising you.

Elsa saying your name, telling you that it's okay, that she's here, that she wants you to come...

Your hand speeds up, though you still try to be gentle.

It's gotta be gentle because Elsa would be gentle. She'd leave kisses all over your chest as she touched you before finally moving up.

She's always got hiccrys... so what if she gave you one? Claimed you.

You let out another moan. A finger enters you, and just the idea of Elsa doing it to you– doing it for you is enough to have you writhing. You can't feel it, not really, but that's okay because just imagining Elsa inside you, her lips claiming one sensitive nipple, more than makes up for it.

And then, in your mind, she whispers your name and waits for you to look before leaning forward to kiss you, so gentle, on the lips. It's perfect.

When you orgasm, it isn't a surprise. It isn't even that sudden. Everything seems to rise to a crescendo, and other parts of your body tighten. Your stomach flexes, and you have to drop your hand from your chest because that's where you get sensitive. Not really lower. Even so, you still pull your hand from your pants, and you feel... kind of wrecked.

Maybe when you try again with Hans, you'll have to mention the breast thing. His hands would probably feel nice.

Of course, as soon as you have that thought, you feel the wind just drop from your sails. You'd had
this thought earlier, but it hadn't meant the same thing then.

You have a boyfriend. You have a boyfriend and here you are, masturbating — orgasming — to the thought of another person. A woman. Your boss.

But... it was just once. Just to get it out of your system. Everyone has thoughts about the same sex from time to time, and Elsa is pretty enough to be excused. Who wouldn't want to be with her?

Sighing, you put your top back on. You'll definitely need a shower in the morning, but right now... you kind of just want to sleep and forget everything for a little while.

So, you do.

Chapter End Notes

so this is it. the beginning of the elsanna. it will disappoint some of you, and for that, I am sorry :( but, this chapter marks a change with anna that will very swiftly get out of her control. this is also where the chapters will resume once-weekly — unless i am able to find some time to get ahead of myself again, i am very quickly running out of chapters. i dont want to go on a long hiatus, but my thesis is also taking a lot of my spare time.

this is the point where anna be much more aware of elsa than ever before. as someone once said in a review, "anna's ability to forget hans exists warms my heart", and that's only going to become more true from here on out (i mean, she will have that gay panic thing but i can see it passing fairly quick tbh).

anyway. i hope you liked it and you're not too disappointed :)
Of course, when you wake up the following morning, the reality of what you did last night sucker-punches you right in the gut.

Oh God. How are you supposed to face Elsa after... that?

The very idea makes you feel sick to your stomach, and the feeling doesn't abate. Not while you're in the shower and you have to clean up the aftermath, nor when you're on the train and have nothing else to think about.

Dirty, filthy thoughts. You should feel ashamed – and you do.

At least... at least it worked, right? You did it to stop these horrible thoughts about your boss, about another woman, about Elsa, and it's done the trick.

You hope.

You keep your head down as you ride the elevator up to your floor. Elsa's door is closed, and you find yourself hoping that she's too busy to see you all day. All week, for that matter.

A futile thought

She pops in at one point to ask for something and you can't even look at her. It's ridiculous! The one time you do glance up, your whole throat tightens and your mouth goes dry because you remember your thoughts of the night before. You remember how much you wanted, in that one moment, and it scares you.

Maybe she notices, because you don't cross paths again. She probably assumes it's about what you saw yesterday, and you can't bring yourself to correct her. It's probably partly you; you make sure to go down and see Hans when it's time for lunch, instead of him coming up to see you. It lets you escape the suffocating office, if only for an hour. It's not fair, but it's true.

Hans, fortunately, doesn't seem to notice that anything's wrong. He's probably got his own things going on, too, like the fact that he's basically meeting your family on Friday. It's scary! And exciting!

And... something about it has you less keen than you'd thought you'd be. Oh, you can't wait to meet Kristoff's boyfriend, but now that you're thinking about it, you're a little nervous. Not so much about the "meeting Sven" part as the "Hans meeting Kristoff" part. You've got no actual reason to be scared, but it's there all the same.

You just... you want Kristoff to like Hans as much as you do. And you can't say that because you want Kristoff to make his own mind up without any influence from you.

So you're both excited and nervous for Friday, but without any kind of sign from Elsa during the week, it's just what you need to... stop thinking about her. And you and what you did.

The guilt doesn't really go away, though. It gets worse when she asks, in a really small voice, if you still wanna see a movie that weekend, just like you always do.
And you... decline.

It's not her! It isn't. It's entirely on you, but how do you say that without it sounding like "it's because I don't want to be around a lesbian"? You can't say it was because you touched yourself thinking of her and now everything is super awkward. That would make it even worse!

So you just say that Hans has made plans, even though he hasn't. It's not like he's going to tell her otherwise.

By the time Friday comes, you're actually desperate to get out of the office. You haven't thought of Elsa again. Not like... that. And not on purpose, but sometimes your mind does wander to things that are a little less than platonic. Thinking about her hair, or the colour of her eyes.

Her smile.

It's actually driving you crazy so when Hans comes to your floor at home-time – you're going together, so you're going to get ready at his place before heading to whatever restaurant Kristoff has picked. Something European – you all but throw your things into your bag and escape. You'd shut your computer down half an hour ago. He laughs, and you just tell him it's coz you're excited for him to meet Kristoff. He seems to believe you.

He holds your hand in the car on the way home, and when he carries you up the stairs, he kind of... doesn't let go. He pauses and looks at you, and there's a fire burning in his eyes that's starting to become more and more familiar.

So you let him kiss you because it's obvious that he wants you, and you want him to want you. You want to feel his lips against yours, his hands burning away the thoughts that have plagued you all week.

"B-Bedroom?" you ask, still unable to really be... forward about this sort of thing.

"Great minds do think alike," Hans grins, before carrying you into his room.

You try to encourage him to go a little slower, to maybe use his hands and mouth on you a little more than before. In areas you can actually feel. It's weird though because you need more from him sometimes, but other times – like now – it's too much. He palms your breast and it's so sensitive that you're actually left wincing.

It doesn't take long for him; it's not like you have the time to spare, anyway. You have to wait for him to get your chair because he'd left it outside. While he's doing that, you put your bra on, though you don't bother with your shirt because you're gonna be getting into a nice dress for the evening.

It would be nice to have a shower, but Hans doesn't have a shower chair for you yet. So you get ready and put your makeup on while he's in the bathroom. Fortunately he has like five mirrors strewn around his place – not including the bathroom, there's one in his bedroom, another hanging in the hallway, one in the kitchen, and one more just inside the front door – so you don't have to put it on blind. You're ready a full twenty minutes before he is, so you just make sure you're phone is charge and double-check the reservation.

Table for four people at Olympus at 6:30.

It doesn't take long to get there. The whole drive, your heart is in your throat, stomach doing flips. You haven't told Hans much about Kristoff, just like you haven't told Kristoff much about Hans. You want them to make up their own minds about each other.
Kristoff and Sven are already there by the time you arrive. There's a carafe of water and some breadsticks on the table. Kristoff has already asked the waitstaff to take away one of the chairs so yours can fit in. Hans shakes Kristoff's hand, which is good because it gives you time to meet Sven.

He gives an easy smile, opening his arms for a hug. You're not expecting it, but neither are you against it. Hugs are great. He's got this nice beard, trimmed short and neat, and eyes that crinkle when he smiles.

"Ah, you must be Anna!" he says when he pulls away. "Kris has told me a lot about you." You can't help but smile back, though you narrow your eyes at Kristoff. Both he and Hans seem to be waiting for you.

"Really? Kris hasn't told me anything about you," you say, though your smile is sarcastic enough for both men to realise you're joking. Mostly. Kristoff splutters, and you laugh with Sven. Hans just looks a little uncomfortable, so you indicate the seats.

Sven is actually marvellous company. You're not sure why Kristoff was so hesitant to let you meet him. You think it's got less to do with the 'gay' thing and more to do with the 'I don't know how long he'll be in my life' thing. But you learn that he's a vet and he volunteers at the local animal shelter when he can. Neither he nor Kristoff mentions how they met, which of course only piques your interest. You don't want to push too hard, though, so you leave it.

When food is brought out and the topic turns to you and Hans, you're much less reserved. Hans lets you do most of the talking while he eats. Even during dessert, when you and Sven start having your own conversation about animals – he's very interested in Joan, and you're actually pretty proud to mention that she's a rescue cat – Hans and Kristoff's conversation seems to stall. Kristoff tries a few times, but they don't seem to find any common ground. You can't help but frown a little because Hans is usually so good with his words.

He doesn't even say much when dinner's over. He shakes Kristoff's hand, then Sven's, before grabbing the back of your chair and moving towards the door. You turn back to wave at them.

You liked Sven. You'll probably even text Kristoff to say that you had fun and that he seems great and you'd love to meet him again. When you get to the car, though, you're a little more interested in getting Hans to tell you what he's thinking.

He says nothing.

It feels weird, breaking the silence, so you wait until you're halfway home before leaning forward.

"So...?" you prompt. Hans glances at you from the corner of his eye.

"So?"

"What... do you think? About Kris?"

He frowns for a moment, jaw moving like he's chewing on his words before he says something. You don't know why it's such a problem.

"I feel like a heads up would have been nice," he finally says. This time, you're the one frowning because you... did? It wasn't like you'd sprung this on him half an hour before the reservation. He seems... not angry, as such, but not happy either. With you. A lead weight settles in your stomach and you're not even sure what you've done wrong. "But the food was good," he adds, almost as an afterthought. You nod and settle into your seat.
The food was nice, but the company was better. Hans... doesn't seem to agree.

Chapter End Notes

not gonna lie i actually really like this chapter. any chapter with kristoff, i think. anyway, back to the once-weekly updating schedule :) hopefully. i have three assignments and half a thesis due by the end of the month so i am Struggling™ it's all gonna be worth it in the end (uni, but also this story :P )
Given that you no longer have Saturday plans with Elsa (because you're dirty filthy coward), you text Kristoff and ask if he wants to come around for lunch. He's more than welcome to bring Sven, too, but unfortunately he has work.

"No rest for the wicked," Kristoff jokes, and you grin.

"Then what are you doing here?" That gets him laughing.

Turning the oven on, you prep some chips and chicken nuggets. It's a cheat day today (and they're also Kristoff's favourite food). He makes himself comfortable in the living room.

Given Hans' lacklustre response to you, you're almost scared to ask Kristoff his opinion. You want to know, but... you don't want it to be bad.

Unfortunately, Kristoff brings it up before you're really ready to face it. You're both in the living room, Kristoff looking through a folder of DVDs. You don't have Netflix; maybe you should look into getting it.

"Hans seems... nice," he begins. "Seems to like you."

That's all he says, even as you sit there waiting for something else. When Kristoff doesn't say anything more, you lean forward to prompt him.

"And...? What- anything else?"

Something flickers over Kristoff's face, but he seems a little unwilling to expand on why. Eventually, he settles on a, "He... didn't really say much to me, to be honest. I don't really know anything more about him that you haven't already shared."

"Maybe he was just shy," you respond, even though you don't really believe your own words. Hans has never been shy. Something horrid tickles in the back of your head that you want to ignore, because you don't think you want to face it.

"So... what did you think about Sven?" Kristoff asks eventually. He's picking his fingernails, not looking at you. It makes you smile.

"Uh, I love him? He's great?" It sounds like a question, but it's not. Even to your own ears, it's reminiscent of a teenager. Kristoff's eyes flick up to yours. "Seriously though, he seems really nice. I wish I'd met him sooner, you know."

He nods. "Yeah, I know. It's just... weird."

"Why?"

Finally, he looks up at you. He doesn't answer for a few moments, eyes searching yours. You're not sure what he's looking for, or waiting for, but eventually a little smile appears on his face. "I guess... it isn't. Just my own weird hangups. I just feel... is this true? Was I lying when I was with Esmé? Am I lying now?"
You sigh. Why does he have to be lying? "Can't it just be your... current truth? You weren't lying when you were with Esmé, and you're not lying now. It's just that... what you know about yourself has changed. Which means other parts of your life change, too."

That being said... what does that say about you? With Hans and... Elsa...?

A grimace passes over your face, and Kristoff must notice it because he asks, "Do you actually believe that?". You do, you do believe that.

About him.

What about yourself?

Swallowing, you look away from him, scratching the back of your neck. "Can I- we can tell each other anything, right?"

Kristoff gives a wry laugh. "I might be into a dude, but if you're about to tell me about your boyfriend's dick..."

"Eww! No way!" you laugh. There's a cushion within arm's reach, so you grab it and whack him with it. He's grinning, too, and you feel a little better. Maybe that was his intention. "No, it's... it's not about him. I uh..."

How do you approach this? You've already wussed out of actually spending the day with Elsa – as you always do. Which means you probably definitely should talk to someone. It's probably not a huge deal!

"You...?"

"I... kinda maybe... had a... sex dream? A-about Elsa...?" you say, in a tiny little voice. It's more than that, though, because this is definitely not to first one, either. And then you woke up and actively chose to think about her like that and how much more disgusting can you get? "And... thought about her. Aft- afterwards. Like that. What do I do?"

To his credit, Kristoff doesn't really react. He's looking at you, and his cheeks are maybe a little pinker than before. You suddenly regret telling him – you could have coped with this fine on your own!

... No, you couldn't have.

"Have- have you told her this?" he asks.

"Are you crazy? Of course I haven't! I can't even look at her!"

He grimaces, nodding a little. "I'm sure- I'm sure it's nothing to like, worry about," he says. "And you're... you know..."

"Straight? Dating Hans? I know, I know, but this was really... intense..." You pause for a moment, looking at him. "How am I supposed to face her?"

He shrugs. "Just... don't act weird. It's just a sex dream. It's fine, I'm sure."

Sucking in a breath, you nod. You don't really believe him, but as long as Elsa doesn't notice anything weird (or, doesn't notice anything weirder), then you'll be okay.

It's just a dream.
short chapter, and also the last one that i've written AND edited. hve a few more written but will need to go over them. have three assignments due by the end of next week so the next chapter may be postponed until the weekend. apologies.

i hope you enjoyed it! :)}
You try not to be weird at work the following week. It's easier this time because you haven't had any of... those thoughts about Elsa since, and the discussion with Kristoff had helped. Reflecting on it, you realise he hadn't really been that useful, but it was nice being able to talk about it.

It wasn't like you could tell Hans. You couldn't see that ending well.

There's a small hiccup on Wednesday that has you entering Elsa's office as quietly and unobtrusively as possible. She's got a pair of reading glasses on, and is looking at what seems to be very serious documents. You can see tables and graphs and giant paragraphs of text.

Still, she looks up as soon as you enter, and a smile appears on her face. She looks nice, but that word has a different meaning now. You can't just appreciate her looks, or her hair, or her fashion sense. It's different.

Clearing your throat, you approach her desk.

"Anna," she says, voice all warm and shit. You wilt a little on the inside. You almost ruined this. "How can I help you?"

Swallowing, you put a folder on her desk. "J-just for you to look at. It's the uh, the Christmas party planning? A nice art gallery has gotten back to us, but it might mean there's a slightly lower alcohol tab. They want a- well, it's all in there, the deposit and fee and stuff. I haven't actually booked anything yet. Want- wanted you to sign off."

She tilts her head at you before picking up the folder. You watch her eyes skim over it. Every now and then, her lips purse, or her nose crinkles, or she hides a little smile. You hate that you notice it.

"That seems agreeable, though when you ring, double check about their catering service. We may be able to provide our own for a lower sum. And don't worry about the tab – we'll just increase the budget. One-fifty per person seems agreeable. This party is just for our employees in this building, plus the board members. Appearances are, unfortunately, everything."

"Oh? So it's... formal?"

Elsa nods. "Very. Do you- I mean, as my assistant, you're expected to be there, but if- I mean, Olaf has told me-" She cuts herself off, frowning. It doesn't seem to be directed at you. Her jaw clenches, and she huffs out a breath before looking at you more directly. "Forgive my lack of tact," she says. "Olaf has told me that you admitted to never having been to a work party of this type before. If you don't wish to attend, that will be fine. If you need an advance on your pay for a dress – or whatever formalwear you wish to be in – please let me know. There are also companies that allow the renting of outfits, if you don't want to purchase one."

She's all stiff and formal, and it's so obvious that she's trying not to be rude but doesn't really know any other way to say it...

It makes you smile, just a little one, to yourself.

"I think I'll be okay. Maybe I'll uh get your advice before I make any firm decisions, though?"
Elsa smiles. "Of course. I look forward to it. Was there anything else?"

You shake your head. "Not at the moment. Thank you, Elsa."

As you begin wheeling out the door, you have a sudden idea. It's been a while, but you did find your brace not that long ago. It would be nice to walk, if only for a night. And that thought leads you to another.

Just before you enter the corridor, you turn to look at Elsa.

"I was going to watch another movie this weekend, but I'm not sure what. Would you... like to watch one with me?"

She's sitting stiff, but as soon as you finish your thought, she smiles. You can't deny that you do want to have another movie night with her. And it's not fair to deny her when it's your own hangup.

So, swallowing your trepidation, you wait for her response.

"I'd love to."

Swallowing, you nod and try for a smile. "I was thinking a comedy, or something light?" you tell her. "And... I mean, I have a TV. Did you wanna come over to mine instead...?"

An insidious little voice inside your head tells you that you really shouldn't like spending this much time with her, but you ignore it. Or you try to. You don't want to listen to it at all, not when Elsa's talking to you – and perhaps that's half the problem.

"It sounds wonderful."

"And... if you want to stay the night, you can, I d-don't have a guest bed, but the sofa pulls out... Might be easier than going home?"

"I'll bring a bag just in case."

"Great!"

Finally, you take your leave. You don't get much more work done; you're too busy thinking – not stressing, you're not! – about the weekend. If you just think about the fun you're going to have with your friend, then it's going to be fine.

It is.

Chapter End Notes

sorry about the wait guys. some personal stuff came up, and also some work stuff. I'm going to try to get back into the once-weekly updates, but I have school stuff that takes priority. just want you to know that I haven't disappeared and that i still wanna see this through to the end :(
By the time the weekend rolls around, your positive affirmations aren't quite doing it. Hans doesn't notice you fretting, and even when you go over his place Friday night and end up spending the whole evening in bed, it doesn't help.

You'd really wanted it to help, too. And this time, it's not him (or rather, not just him) that has you failing to find pleasure even while he does.

You're just scared you're going to have another dream about Elsa if he riles you up. He even comments on it afterwards, when you're both lying there and you have the sheets covering everything. His chest is bare, but he hadn't taken off your shirt. Something feels weird about not wearing pants, but it's not like it feels like much of anything. Maybe it's just a brain thing.

When he looks at you and says, slightly out of breath but also sounding a little miffed, "I've never not made a girl cum before," your whole face heats up. You can't look at him.

"I guess it's... I don't have much feeling there..." you defend softly. Hans nods and makes a little noise.

"That explains it."

You nod, even as something heavy sits on your chest. There's no reason for you to feel bad, but you do. "M-maybe you could try like. Hands? My uh, I'm kind of sensitive in my chest?"

He shrugs. "We can try that, I guess. But not right now."

No, not right now. You're not really in the mood anymore, and you know by now that Hans is definitely the 'one and done' kind of guy. There's no reason why he couldn't try again, though. He's got hands, and a mouth, and he could use both on you...

But he doesn't, and you don't have the courage to ask him. Not now. Maybe next time.

By Saturday afternoon, you're in a much better mood. Hans had dropped you home just before lunch, which gives you a chance to have a shower and feed Joan and stress about spending the night with Elsa.

No, not with her. Well, yes, with her, at your house, as a friend. Spending the night in her company-

It all sounds terrible, so you give up trying to justify it to yourself.

You try and concentrate on literally anything else, and it works, for a time. You go through every comedy movie you can think of in your head, weighing up the pros and cons. Nothing with sex scenes, because you're pretty sure you can't handle that at the moment in Elsa's company.

And it's really stupid because you're definitely way overthinking things. When you find your mind drifting too often to Elsa, you instead grab out your brace. It's been a while since you'd last used it, and it's a bit of an art getting into it. Probably should wait for Kristoff or Hans to help you, but you've always been rather proud of your independence.

You walk around for about ten minutes, and it absolutely exhausts you. Your depth perception is skewed the whole time because it's not your norm, and your centre of gravity is completely off.
Definitely need more practice if you’re going to go to a formal event. The crutches could probably do with replacement rubber pads on the bottom – at least they’re elbow crutches. A bit more pricey, but well worth it for how comfortable they are.

By the time Elsa’s messaging you, letting you know she’s on her way, your heart is a little lighter. You can’t wait to impress her—Hans. You can’t wait to impress Hans.

It doesn’t take Elsa long to arrive. She knocks on the door and when you open it, she’s waiting patiently with a bag on her shoulders. In her hand is a box, and you think you can guess what’s in it because accompanying her is the overwhelming aroma of chocolate chip cookies. It kind of smells like she rolled in it.

"Have you... been baking?" you ask. Elsa gives a shy little shrug. "Well, it smells amazing."

And suddenly, it doesn’t seem as daunting. She’s baked and you’ve had sleepovers before and there’s no reason to wig out on her. Nothing’s changed.

You can enjoy a nice film with her, and everything is going to be okay.

"So, what movie did you have in mind?" Elsa asks, once her bag is put away in your room you’re both getting comfy on the couch. There’s a giant cookie in your hand, the chocolate still soft and melted on the inside. She’d put it in the microwave while you put her bag away, and it’s the perfect combination of warm and chewy. She’s got her own biscuit, but she’s looking at you instead.

Shaking your head, you take a bite. "No id- oh my God, Els, this is amazing." And it was, it really was. Hints of cinnamon and nutmeg, in between the dizzying sweetness of the chocolate. Plus, was that... caramel?

She gives a little smile, obviously proud. "I’m glad you like them. I uh... wanted to do something nice?" She sounds a little unsure of herself.

"It’s fantastic," you assure her. "I usually just get supermarket biscuits – this is a real treat!"

It makes her smile, and take her own small bite.

"I don’t uh, I don’t have Netflix, but there’s a whole folder of movies in the TV cabinet."

Elsa moves to get up, but she’s intercepted by the cat. Joan mews at her, scrounging for a scratch; when Elsa acquiesces, she decides that the most comfortable seat in the whole place is Elsa’s lap.

"Uh..."

Having a little chuckle, you say, "Hold on," as you move back to your chair. Swinging around, you grab the folder and move, not back to your original seat, but to Elsa. It doesn’t take long to reposition on the lounge next to her.

You just want to show her the folder. You know what movies you own. And you need to sit there because you’ll have to be the one to put it on.

Swallowing, without looking at her, you open the folder on your lap.

"Unfortunately, it isn’t sorted by genre. It’s just alphabetised."

From the corner of your eye, you can see Elsa smiling at you. You can also see that Joan’s closed her eyes and you’re pretty sure she’s purring.
"I'm sure we can find something. Any recommendations?"

Mind suddenly drawing a blank, you shake your head. It makes Elsa laugh a little.

"Guess we'll have to go through all of them."

No matter how hard you try, you can't help the little leap your heart gives when Elsa leans over to turn the page.

Maybe you just didn't try hard enough.
Eventually, Elsa settles on *Devil Wears Prada*. You haven't seen it in years. It's kind of weird because it's about a woman and her boss. And you're a woman. With your boss. Especially when Joan moves to sit on your lap, so Elsa gets up to put the DVD in. When she comes back, she sits down next to you. At least you have Joan, who you can scratch behind the ears and generally distract yourself.

You've never sat so close to Elsa for such a long period of time. Not unless you count sleeping with—next! — to her in Norway.

Despite your hesitation regarding the leading women of the film, you realise that Elsa isn't like Miranda at all. She's warm and kind and friendly. And you might be a little clumsy, but you're not as bad as Andy.

You have to look away when she takes her shirt off to show her boyfriend her bra, though. It seems you're also not as confident as her. Your mind drifts to Hans, wondering that maybe if you had some nice lingerie he'd touch your chest like you want him to.

Maybe it would make you more confident. It's hard—a wheelchair isn't exactly a sexy accessory.

Elsa asks halfway through the movie where the bathroom is, and you realise that despite the number of times she's been over, you haven't ever given her a tour. Pausing the movie, you point down the hallway.

"Second door on the right," you say. She smiles, and is gone just long enough to second-guess your home and all its features. You don't have a fancy shower or soft towels or 8-ply toilet paper. You've got an old plastic chair and $3 towels from Walmart, and even though you've been making enough money to start maybe replacing some of the older stuff, you haven't felt like spending another $100 on a shower chair that you don't technically need. Even if the one you've got is really old.

Enough time passes for you to really start feeling... inadequate... when Elsa returns. She pauses at the end of the hallway, looking at you.

"Anna?" she says. Her voice is always so soft. It's obvious that she's noticed, because you haven't made any attempt to hide it. Stupid.

"Hey, sorry, just thinking."

"Good things, I hope," she says, taking a step forward. It brings a small smile to your face.

"Sure. A-anyway, ready?"

She takes her seat next to you again. Maybe it's your imagination, but it feels like she's sitting even closer than before. Probably your imagination.
It's only late afternoon by the time the film finishes. You've eaten your way through three or four of the cookies Elsa brought, and while they're the greatest thing you've ever tasted, eventually you find yourself craving some real food. And now Elsa's brought a treat... and now Elsa's here...

Maybe you could finally make that tuna bake?

While you pack away the DVD folder, Elsa's gone to the kitchen to make coffee. You warn her that it's just instant stuff, but she assures you that it's fine. By the time you wheel into the kitchen, the kettle's mostly boiled and she's already found the sugar.

"Did you have anything in mind for dinner?" she asks when you wheel in. And the answer is no, you hadn't thought about it yet today. But the longer and more accurate answer is that you had an idea, months and months ago, about making her a tuna bake. And now you really want to do it.

"Do you eat seafood?" you ask.

She gives you a look, softened with a smile after a few seconds. "Anna, I'm Norwegian. I'm pretty sure it's a prerequisite. Seafood and Pepsi Max."

You grin. "Well, I was thinking of doing a tuna casserole? I promise it's nicer than it sounds."

Elsa's eyebrows raise, and she tilts her head. "I don't think I've ever had it. I'm sure that it's delicious, though. Maybe you can teach me how to make it?"

You feel your cheeks grow red, but you're actually feeling more proud at having suggested it than nervous at the results.

After all, Elsa's never been anything less than supportive – and you have wanted to make this for her for ages. Now's the perfect opportunity.

It's not time for dinner yet, but the recipe requires cooking on a stovetop, and then baking in an oven. You have all the ingredients, which makes it easier.

With the two of you working, it takes virtually no time at all to do all the chopping and adding and stirring. It's got a cheese sauce in it, and Elsa suggests adding a little nutmeg to it so it's not quite so... cheesy. You've never tried that, but you trust her with this.

Honestly... you'd probably trust her with a lot more, too.

That thought sends shivers up your spine, but not in the bad way.

You wonder if she feels the same way.

Chapter End Notes

thanks for the reviews, guys! I'm having a lot of fun reading your reviews and getting back into the flow writing has been great :)

it's funny that everyone is taking about the cat xD
Monday arrives far earlier than you want it to. Elsa ended up staying most of Sunday – you watched *Rocky Horror Picture Show*, and Elsa had shyly told you that she actually loved musicals. You tell her that you've never seen one (not on stage, at least), though you do like watching them. Except *Mamma Mia*. That one's pretty terrible. Elsa laughs.

So you'd spent the weekend watching movies and Elsa definitely did like your tuna – she'd even gone back for seconds. The nutmeg made a difference, but if asked, you wouldn't have been able to describe how. It just... cut through the cheese a bit. Either way, it was delicious, just as Elsa had thought it would be. She even helps wash up afterwards because you don't have a dishwasher (or a maid, you'd joked. Elsa had given you a playful shove at that).

It was nice. It was friendly and relaxing and *friendly*. Perfect.

The whole weekend is great, and you kind of hope the week will continue in that vein. After all, you've had confirmation about the location of the Christmas party, so you get to work crafting an email to send to Olaf. He'll do the invitation designs and stuff to send to everyone – especially the board members. Apparently they like getting a personalised invitation. You ask Elsa about it, and she crinkles her nose.

Seems she doesn't think very highly of her board, and you have to ask her about *that*. You're curious like that.

"All board members are rich white men who consider themselves 'philanthropists' while at the same time doing the best to line their own pockets. The chairman of the board, Johannes Van Zuideiland, is desperate to oust me so he can nominate his own pawn."

"Oh..."

She gives a glum nod. "Yep. Fortunately for me, I was nominated ahead of his candidate, and I've done nothing to warrant my removal."

You nod slowly. There's a thought, niggling at the back of your head, but you're not so sure if you should ask it. Elsa's pretty good at reading you now, though, because she asks if you have a question.

"No, no, not really. I was just... I-is... the gay thing something they might remove you for?"

It makes sense. There are lots of businesses that try to avoid taking a political stance, and it's not like Elsa's been very liberal with her sexuality. Maybe there's a reason for it – like the fact that...
she'd lose her job over it.

Or maybe she just feels like it's no one's business but her own. That's fair enough.

Even so, it feels absurd that the literal boss of a company might lose her job.

"Perhaps," she says eventually, after a few moments of silence. "Unlikely, given the current climate; they know they'd lose money if it were for that reason."

You nod. "I haven't... I haven't told anyone. I just. It's your business. I was just curious. I'm sorry."

She looks at you and smiles. You like it when she smiles at you. "It's quite all right, Anna. I appreciate that, anyway."

She genuinely looks like she does, but you want to move away from that topic. It always feels... strange... talking about sexuality. Maybe because you're straight. It's not something you ever talked about it. And now, for whatever reason, your life is filled with gay people.

You hope Hans isn't gay. That would be awkward.

"So, the Christmas party..." you start, pushing through that thought. Elsa tilts her head. "You um. You mentioned the dress code and I was wondering if... you'd help me?"

"Help you choose a dress?" she asks. You give a little shrug.

"Maybe go shopping with me? On- only if you want. I've just never shopped online before and I like trying on the outfits because sometimes they don't always fit everywhere?"

Elsa waits for you to stop talking before she smiles at you again. "How about, instead of a movie this weekend, we go dress shopping instead? Maybe you can help me find a good one, too?"

There's absolutely no reason why it has to be this weekend – the Christmas party isn't for another two months! But if you decide to get a more expensive dress, then you might need to lay-by it or something.

Also, you haven't been shopping in ages. It sounds like it'll be fun.
huge thanks to Turwen for betaing this one! also exciting news, the elsanna interactive fiction project i've been working on is nearing completion. very excited to share it with you all :) if you're interested in playing a demo, just google 'philome.la pristeaqq' and it'll be the first (and only) entry :)

On Thursday, Hans asks you over, as per usual. Thinking about it, and knowing that you'll probably be out all day on Saturday, you decline.

Eating lunch in your office, you notice his face falls when you refuse. His brow furrows, and his jaw clenches briefly. And yeah, you do normally go over there, but honestly it always makes you a little tired the next day, and if you're going to be shopping with Elsa, you'll need your energy.

Everything's harder in a chair.

That, and you've got your period and you don't want to deal with that while you're with Hans. Not while you're at his place and you can't have a shower or close the bathroom door. Not while you're stuck.

He doesn't seem to get that, which is... becoming a little sticking point. You've brought it up, or tried to, but he doesn't ever really seem to notice your discomfit. Perhaps you need to be more obvious about it. It's just... you really don't want to rock the boat. It's obvious that he's annoyed that the sex isn't as fulfilling (which is a little irritating, too, because he comes like. Every time. You never do). But he's weirdly sensitive about that, so you just don't mention it. It's not like you'd thought about sex much before dating him, but when you had, it had always been either a wild fantasy about the best sex ever, or the (more likely) mediocrity of the act.

With your limited sensation, it's not like you expected anything else...

By the end of lunch, it's almost like he's forgotten that you said no, and forgotten his reaction, because he says, "How about Saturday night, then? I hate that we barely have any time to spend with each other..."

Your heart sinks. Hans does seem quite lonely in comparison. He hasn't ever really spoken of his friends, or even his family.

So you just say, "I'll see how I'm feeling," and try not to let it bother you. He doesn't seem to like that answer either, but thankfully he doesn't say anything.

When he's gone, you just put your head in your hands. You don't seem to be very good at this 'dating' thing.

By the time Saturday rolls around, however, you've managed to at least contemplate the fact that you're allowed your own friends, and your own time and space, and that Hans needs to be able to
do the same things. It's not like you never see him – you have lunch with him every day! And sometimes – and it's becoming more frequent, too – you'll hang out after work with him. Not everyday, but a few times a week.

Elsa comes to collect you from your place because it's easier than you going to hers, and easier (for you) than just meeting up in the city. It's not like you're going to the local Sears.

Because you're going to be getting in and out of clothes, you try to wear your easiest outfit. Black ballet flats, because no matter what, you're not going to wear heels – after all, you're already going to be taller than usual. You wear some black leggings and a cute blue shirt and do your hair up so it's out of the way.

Phillip's driving again, so you give him a wave. He smiles back and helps to load your wheelchair into the trunk. Then you're off, heading... somewhere.

The further you go, the more expensive the buildings and shops look. When you pass a Tiffany's, you know it's going to be expensive. And probably out of your price range.

"Uh, Els?" you say. She turns away from the window, cheeks pink – for whatever reason – and you shoot her a half-smile. "I'm pretty sure this is going to be wayyyy out of my price range."

She smirks, the redness fading as she quirks an eyebrow. "What makes you think you're going to be spending any money?" she says. When you imitate her expression, devoid of humour, she puffs out a breath. "Okay, so, I do remember what happened last time, but that is definitely not the case this time. I just... happen to know someone. So I figured that we could do some window shopping and try on some clothes, but I wasn't going to purchase any outfits today..."

"Oh...?"

"If... you were comfortable with that. I figured we could still have a nice day shopping, and... I realise that I do much of the leading, but if there is a place you'd rather go, or something you'd rather do, please speak up. Even if just to tell me you find my company terribly boring and you'd rather hang out with Phillip."

She smiles, and your eyes glance up to look at Phillip briefly. "Nah, let's see how this plays out, first."

Her smile widens. Your eyes flicker from that smile to her eyes, and almost immediately, you feel your heart pick up. With a dry mouth, you look away and out the window.

Still, you can't help the way the corners of your lips turn up, and you refuse to squash down the tiny little thought that... you really like Elsa's smile, and you really like when it's directed at you.
Phillip drops the both of you off along a main street. The first thing you see is a bridal shop, though thankfully it's not the first place you go. Elsa's happy to let you lead, wandering up the street. It's full of other things, not just dress shops. There are cafés and bookstores and hairdressers, though they all seem far too classy for what they actually are.

Glancing over, you look at Elsa. It's not cold, but she has a stylish jacket on, complete with a scarf more fashionable than functional. Coupled with a pair of skinny jeans that do her every favour, you're once again struck by just how goddamned gorgeous she is.

She turns to you, probably sensing your stare, and you can't quite blame the cool breeze for the redness you're positive is on your cheeks. She smiles at you, and you feel your stomach flip. The wind ruffles Elsa's hair, just the slightest amount, and the wisps from her braid frame her face.

"Look good?"

"Huh?" Your voice catches at the end, eyes wide at the question. She couldn't possibly— could she?

Smile widening, she nods her head towards a shop window. "The dresses? Do they look good, or do you want to keep browsing?"

Oh. Moron. Cheeks red for an entirely different reason, heart hammering in your chest, you give a little cough. "Uh, th-there's no harm in trying them on, right?"

Another smile. Your heartbeat slows, finally, and you make a concerted effort not to stare at her back as she heads through the door, turning only at the end in order to hold it open for you.

The dresses are actually gorgeous, and you go around the shop in a wide circle before even getting close to one. A shop assistant asks if you need any help, but you shake your head. You're just looking at the moment.

Actually, you're kind of terrified you might roll over a dress, or a loose end might get caught in your wheels. They don't, of course, but you have had things like coat hangers caught in the spokes of your chair.

By the time you're done, you notice that Elsa hasn't copied you. She's gone to one rack and started going through the dresses. There's such an intense look of concentration that even the assistants haven't approached her.

You spend some time browsing the dresses, and while you try on a few that take your fancy, there's nothing that really calls to you. Elsa takes it all in stride, helping you find the right sizes and
putting away dresses in the 'nope' pile.

It's no issue, though, because there's literally a dozen other shops. A few, Elsa doesn't seem very impressed with; you notice she doesn't seem to be looking for herself, though at your behest she begins to at least try a few on. She doesn't model them for you, which means she probably isn't a fan.

By the time lunch rolls around, you still haven't found anything you're super happy with. Your stomach gives a growl, and Elsa smirks.

"Maybe one more dress, and then lunch?" you suggest. There's a twinkle of laughter in her eyes when she agrees.

"Let's make it the best dress, then. Were you thinking of a particular colour, or style, or fabric?" she asks. You shrug. You've kind of just been trying on whatever looks nice. You know by now that there are definite dresses to avoid (braless, deep-necked dresses being one), but you're not sure exactly what you do want.

"Maybe not something with loads of ruffles..."

She grins at you. "Something slinky?" There's a tone in her voice, something light and teasing, and it makes her words sound like a challenge.

Narrowing your eyes, you bite back a smile. "I don't think I've ever worn anything slinky. You might have to choose it for me."

Elsa hums, moving around the store. You follow her, and she pauses every so often to pull dresses out to show you. Each time, you take a look, appraising them. Wrong colour, or size, or too much lace or too thin straps. You're not completely happy, and given the difficulty you have with trying on clothes, it's just not worth it unless you are. Especially if this is your last dress before lunch.

It almost seems like you're not going to find anything when Elsa, halfway down a rack, pauses. She looks at you, looks back at whatever dress she has her eye on, and then looks at you again.

"What about this one?" she asks, drawing it out slowly.

It's dark green, with off-the-shoulder sleeves. It's long, too, and while Elsa had asked about form-fitted dresses, it's really only the top of this one; it'll hug your chest in the best way possible, you hope, while billowing out just enough to cover your brace.

It looks... kind of perfect. You move closer, holding out a hand to feel the fabric. It's impossibly soft, slipping through your fingers like vapour.

"Well, it feels really comfortable..." you say.

"Do you want to try it on?"

Looking away from the dress and towards Elsa, you smile. "Why not?"

It doesn't take long to sequester yourself in a change room. The place is up-market enough to have a lounge for Elsa to sit on while you get changed, but not enough for there to be an actual disabled change room. At least there's still a seat. You move to it, and Elsa takes your chair out so you have room to wiggle.
It takes a lot longer than usual to change because of that. You're scared of tearing the dress, but it's fairly solidly sewn. Finally, once you get the sleeves up and the back half-zipped, you call out to Elsa.

"Hey, Elsa? Can you finish zipping me up?"

There's no response for a few seconds before the curtain rustles. "I can come in?" Elsa checks. It makes you smile.

"Yeah, I'm decent."

Elsa pulls the curtain back, coming in to finish with the zip. Once she's done, you turn to look at yourself in the mirror. It's really hard to gauge how it looks because you're all twisted and still sitting. Elsa must notice.

"Do you want to have a look in your chair?" she asks. And you don't want to give the game away, the brace is supposed to be a bit of a surprise, but you still want to see what you'll look like standing up.

"Can... can we try something else first?" you ask. "Can we see what it looks like while standing?" Elsa's eyes widen in surprise, but it seems to be directed more at the unexpectedness, as opposed to the question itself. "M-maybe one of the sales assistants can help?"

Blinking slowly, Elsa nods. "That might be good; good for balancing?"

It doesn't take long for her to get a shop assistant; there were only two, and one was occupied with the phone. Elsa comes around to your right side, ducking down just enough so you can put your arm around her shoulders. The assistant, a young man with a name-tag that reads 'Jason', is on your left.

They stand in unison, bringing you in front of the mirror, and you can't hold back the little gasp you make at the sight.

You're actually... beautiful.
You don't bother looking at any more dresses. After all, you've already got the perfect one. They have to take it in a little bit at the waist, so while you're off eating lunch, they're going to do that.

Elsa looks just as giddy as you feel.

The rest of the day is a bit of a blur. You pop into a jeweller's after lunch, and are persuaded to get a pair of earrings to go with the dress – these gorgeous tear-drop rubies that are on sale. Once you're finished in there it's just about time to try your dress on again, now that the adjustments have been made. Elsa ducks out of the store, needing to do... something... while you wriggle back into the dress.

You probably shouldn't have had lunch yet, but with a bit of sucking in, it comes good. It probably just feels a little tighter because you're sitting down, too. Once you're up and moving, it'll be fine.

About the time you finish, Elsa returns. She pulls out the little box with the earrings in it to try them on with the outfit, and while you wouldn't normally wear such things – and, with the colour of your hair, rubies aren't really your gem anyway – they actually go really well with the deep green of the dress.

But then, Elsa leans down and pulls out something else. It's a similar box – same colour, same ribbon. But, it's thinner and longer. She passes it to you, and you just look at it a moment before looking up at her.

She's blushing, and not looking at you. Curious, you open it, and feel your heart expand until you're almost choking on it.

It's a necklace, one with a little teardrop ruby and very definitely supposed to be part of the set your earrings came from.

"Elsa...?"

She still isn't looking at you when she says, "I thought it might go with your dress..." and you actually kind of want to cry because how is she so awkward and yet so kind, and adorable, and
So, letting it rest in your lap, you hold your arms out. Elsa sees the hug for what it is, and leans down.

"Thank you, Elsa. This is great."

It's more than great, but you're not sure how you're supposed to really express that. So you just hug her extra tight, feeling her do the same.

She feels so nice against you.

You go back to Elsa's afterwards. The dress fits, though you'll have to try not to gain (or lose) any weight between now and the party. The shop even has the new after-pay thing, too. You wouldn't normally bother, but they don't offer regular lay-by and you don't really wanna spend all your money at once. Four easy payments of $56.37 works much better for you.

Plus, you get to bring it home.

You hang it up in the spare bedroom (well, Elsa hangs it up) before returning to the lounge-room. She has an impish smile on her face as she sits down. You move to the couch when she asks if you want to watch something, and then she flicks over to Netflix.

"I'm pretty sure we've graduated to proper television now," she says. You send a sly grin her way.

"Does Netflix count as 'proper' television?"

It makes her laugh, which makes you smile. "Perhaps not," she concedes. "We can still watch a movie if you want – or, if you're sick of that, I think I have a Uno deck floating around here somewhere?" She makes a show of looking around, and now instead of a smile, you're properly laughing.

"This is fine, Elsa," you tell her, and she ends up handing you the remote.

"I'm gonna duck to the bathroom. Why don't you have a look and see what catches your eye?"

It seems as though there's plenty to choose from; you've heard of a few of the shows, but most are new. You flick over to the *The Good Place* because it's already on Elsa's list, and wait patiently for her to return.

When she comes back and sits next to you, you feel your whole body warm up.

"So," she says, grinning. "Got a date for the party yet?"

Once more, you feel yourself heating up in a blush. "Maybe..." Elsa just looks at you expectantly, and you crumble. "I'm pretty sure I'm going with Hans..."

You're not entirely sure why, but the idea doesn't excite you as much as you thought it would. You're nervous, mostly – what happens at a work Christmas party?

Instead of stressing about that, though, you just ask Elsa. She tilts her head and looks at you for a moment.

"It's... well, there's alcohol. And music. I think most people just sit around and talk; some go outside and smoke. Last year there was a photo booth with some props. It's mostly just an excuse
to hang around and have fun and drink on the company dime." She lets out a laugh at that, and you follow suit.

"It sounds like fun," you tell her. Elsa shrugs.

"Some years are better than others. I think this year is going to be really good."

For some reason... so do you.

"So, what about you?" you ask. "Have you got a date?"

She gives a deprecating sort of laugh and says, "No, not this year, I'm afraid." It makes you pout a little.

"Well, I guess going stag could be fun, too – or does that only apply to high school dances?"

"I'm sure there are plenty of people who are 'going stag' and are going to end up hooking up anyway," she says, all blasé. It makes you blush furiously when you think about it. No way would you have the confidence to try and pick up someone during that. You can't imagine ever having a one-night stand, especially with someone you work with. "Plus, I'm sure I'll have plenty to do, making sure board members are happy and that we don't hit the alcohol tab limit."

Apparently that's a thing that happens at almost every single work function Elsa's ever been to. You'll probably be too nervous to drink much – or too nervous to refrain, you're not sure yet.

Slowly, the conversation drifts to other topics, and then you start watching The Good Place. You get through the entire first season, and Elsa seems to take great pleasure in your reaction. You help make dinner, and dessert, and then halfway through season two before it's bedtime.

You weren't tired earlier, but it doesn't take long to fall asleep once your head hits the pillow. It never does while you're over here.
Chapter 85

You ride the waves of your good weekend all the way to Monday. A message from Kristoff, asking if you're free in a couple of weeks, comes through on Sunday night. There's a musical Sven wants to see, and he's asked if you and Hans want to come, too. The idea is exciting, and you resolve to ask Hans when you next see him.

However... Hans doesn't really seem to be in a good mood to ask. He doesn't come up to your office for lunch, and he doesn't respond to your message asking him about it later. It isn't until you go down to see him towards the end of the day that you actually get something out of him.

It's close to four in the afternoon, and almost everyone on the ground floor is leaving. Elsa's still in her office, but she'd urged you to go home when you had asked if it were okay to clock out a little early. The thoughtfulness made you smile all the way down to the foyer.

"Hey, Hans," you say as you wheel up to the counter. He's typing something up, and barely spares you a glance. After a few moments, he finally looks up.

"Hey."

You bite your lip, not sure what to say or do. Maybe... he's just really busy?

What do you say? Or do? You don't know, and so you find yourself sitting there awkwardly, trying to think of something to say. Just when you find the courage, the phone rings. He answers it straight away.

"I... guess I'll come back later," you say softly. He doesn't hear you.

By the time you get back to your desk, ready to grab your bag, you've got a message. It just reads, "it's not a good time babe," and... at least he's sent you something?

It successfully ruins your mood, though – not that it was particularly high in the first place – as you make your way towards the bus stop. You're halfway home before your phone buzzes, and you grapple for it immediately. Your heart sinks momentarily when you realise it isn't Hans with an apology. Only momentarily, though, because instead of Hans' name popping up... it's Elsa's.

Hi Anna. I forgot to ask today, but I was wondering if you could send me the recipe for the tuna dish we had last weekend? I'm curious about trying it again. Thank you! -Elsa :)

You blink, eyebrows furrowed with the surprise of the unexpected message.

Then you relax into your chair, beginning to type out how you made the tuna bake with Elsa. You have to pause briefly as you move from the bus to your train, and then it takes most of the train ride to type out the recipe, but by the end of it, you end up copying and deleting the recipe just so you can type out something a little different.

Did you wanna come over this weekend and I'll show you? :P

As soon as you send it, you have a moment of doubt. Maybe she just wants to make it on her own? So you quickly type out another message before she has a chance to respond to that one.

But if you were thinking of making it tonight, here you go :)
Just below it, you paste the recipe you'd spent so long typing up in the first place. Elsa doesn't respond for a few minutes, but when she does, it alleviates all your worries about your first message.

*Maybe I can teach you how to make krumkake this weekend if you wanted to come over instead? I promise: no norwegian pickled fish heads :)*

You let out a snort, grin uncomfortably wide as you read her message

*I'm pretty sure that would actually kill me, you type, but the krumkake sounds delicious.* Then, in a brief moment of pettiness, your frustration at Hans still present, you say, *How about Friday night this week?*

*That sounds wonderful, Anna. I can't wait!*

With a smile that stays on your face all the way home, you find yourself looking forward to this weekend, more than you've looked forward to one in recent memory. You even let yourself think about why, and the answer is perhaps simpler than you'd like.

It's Elsa.

Specifically, it's that you just feel more comfortable with her. You haven't really had girlfriends before, but the friendship you're fostering with her just feels so good. She makes you happy, and while it hasn't always been easy communicating with her, it's something you've both been working on.

Having a friend that you can talk to, and rely on...

It's nice.
You spend most of your time at work finalising the Christmas party. It includes things like drafting up the invitations and making sure maintenance sticks them in all the kitchens and lounge rooms. There's also lots of meetings that seem to be coming up for Elsa that you need to schedule. She's got like, some kind of quarterly report to present to the board, so she's been arriving earlier and leaving later than usual. By the time Friday arrives, the both of you are more than ready for the weekend. You've brought a bag with your things, and Hans hasn't texted you or even come up to see you at all. You're still pretty peeved, which is why you haven't tried to see him, either. He said it was a bad time. He'll tell you when it isn't. And hopefully apologise.

That's not the way it goes, though.

He comes up just before the end of the work day. You're on the phone, trying to reschedule a meeting for Elsa because it's with the Norwegians and going to be at like, 3am local time next Tuesday. If they can just bring it forward (or push it back) by about four hours, that would be much better.

So you're trying to find a workaround when Hans saunters into your office. He's wearing his usual suit, hair slicked back. There's a chair in the corner, and he makes himself comfortable while he waits for you.

It isn't comfortable. Not for you. It's distracting, but not really in the good way because you're still irritated at him. He doesn't seem particularly penitent, either – in fact, impatient seems to be the right word, because he's tapping his foot and sighs every few moments or so.

Finally, the Norwegians agree to a meeting at about 7am the following Wednesday, and you quickly pencil it in before they hang up. Then you're stuck in your office with Hans. He's sitting in the chair, legs and arms crossed. As soon as you're finished on the phone, he stands up.

"Hey," he says.

"Hi, Hans."

"Are you ready to go?"

Oh. Oh...

Eyes widening, you don't answer him. This is kind of awkward. You could say 'it's not a good time right now', echo his words back at him, but you're not that petty. Or brave.

So swallowing, you look at him. You can't quite look him in the eyes, but from a distance, he probably can't tell that you're actually focussing on his chin.

"I uh... I wasn't sure if you still had a thing. So I made other plans..."

Immediately, his face clouds over with a scowl. "You... made other plans?"

You have to swallow again, but there's a twisting feeling in your stomach that you don't like. When he stands up and moves closer, you actually feel yourself shrink down.
"You always come over on Fridays. That's our night. Why would you purposefully do something that you know would hurt me?"

Opening your mouth, you try to say something to fix the situation. How were you supposed to know that he'd react like this?

"I'm sorry," you finally manage to say. "I... you didn't seem in the mood earlier this week, so I didn't want to impose. We can do something on Saturday night instead? My treat?"

"Like what?"

Thinking quickly, you go for the easy option. "We can go out to dinner? Or if you don't want to, we can stay in and get take-out instead? It's up to you – what do you feel like?"

"I feel like we should be doing something tonight because it's Friday," he says blandly. His gaze is hard, and for some reason you feel a little like crying. This is so stupid! You'd so been looking forward to this weekend, too.

He begins to leave, and you just watch him. When he reaches the door, he turns around. "I guess we can do something on Saturday night, then."

And then he's gone, and you just let out a breath you hadn't realised you'd been holding.

What was that about?

You try and perk up when proper home time comes. You've got one more phone call to make, and you're halfway through when Elsa arrives. She normally finishes up before you, and so she sits in the chair that Hans had vacated, barely ten minutes prior. She leans back, all relaxed and pulls out her phone. You're talking to the catering company for the Christmas party, just trying to get a quote. It all seems fairly reasonable, and well within the budget that Elsa has set, so you're happy to book them in now. When you're done, Elsa smiles at you, but doesn't immediately stand up.

"Sorry- I'm almost done," you tell her. She waves it off.

"Take your time. I should probably be doing some actual work, but I'm a bit too excited about tonight." She smiles again, so guileless, and you have no problem agreeing with her.

"I can't wait, either."

It's not like you have much left to do anyway. Everything else can wait.

So you pack up your things as fast as you can, and when you leave, you don't even look towards the front desk. You're ready to have a nice girls night and you don't even want to think about Hans or how shitty your conversation was with him today.

By the time you're in Elsa's car, you've already forgotten.

Chapter End Notes

hi guys! thanks again for the feedback I've had on this story :) i really hope you've been enjoying reading it as much as I've enjoyed writing it. I'm getting really busy, and
will stay busy until after october. I do have enough chapters queued up, but you might have to be a little more patient through november because of that.

and as always, a huge thanks to turwen for betaing. all mistakes remain my own :)}
haha i love your comments about hans being pushed out. he absolutely definitely is, and tbh it's kind of nice just writing him as an inconsiderate jerk as opposed to completely evil. anna doesn't deserve that.

and thanks for the well-wishes regarding my schedule! have another pre-prepared chapter :)

You manage to have such a good Friday night with Elsa that when you get the text from Hans on Saturday afternoon, telling you that he's not coming over, you have to let out a sigh of relief because you'd completely forgotten that you'd invited him over in the first place. You don't really feel like entertaining him. You've got a headache and you keep sneezing and just generally feel like shit.

You're not quite sure what to text back, so you just shoot for a simple, "ok! see you on monday!" instead.

He doesn't respond.

On Sunday morning, you feel even worse. The only saving grace is an odd message from Kristoff. It just says, "u free in a couple weeks? sven wants to do a thing". Your interest is piqued, enough that you give him a ring.

Turns out, Sven wants to see a show, and he wants to see you again. That's a nice thought, and you say that. Kristoff laughs.

"Feel free to invite Hans," he says. "We never got to finish our conversation."

Didn't seem like they ever got to start it, either, but you keep that to yourself. "I'll ask him." And you will. Just, maybe next week when he's in a better mood. And when you're feeling better. As soon as you hang up, you end up crawling back into bed and succeed in sleeping away your entire Sunday.

When your alarm rings on Monday morning, you have to almost literally drag yourself out of bed. It's absolutely freezing, which is absurd because it's only like, October. It feels like the train has the AC cranked to 11 and you can barely stop your teeth from chattering.

Everything hurts.

You roll into the lift and almost miss your stop because you're so zoned out. You don't bother going into Elsa's office to say good morning, but that's okay because she stops by yours at about morning-tea time.

Literal stops. She's got one foot through the threshold when she pauses, just looking at you.
"Hi, Elsa," you say. Or, try to. Halfway through you start coughing, and you only stop when you sneeze. You just barely have time to grab a tissue, which is really gross. When you finally finish, Elsa isn't at the door anymore. She's standing next to your desk, holding out the box of tissues for you.

"Anna, why did you come in today? You're sick!"

Immediately, you feel bad. She's right – you should have stayed home. You're probably going to get everyone else sick now, too, including her.

"I'm sorry..." you say, voice small. Her face softens.

"It's okay. Just- this is what sick leave is for. Go home, and don't come back until you're better. Rest."

You nod. "Okay. But my train leaves on the hour and I've missed it. I may as well-"

"Get my driver to take you home," Elsa finishes for you. You look up at her, and she offers a sympathetic smile. "It's fine, Anna. I can survive without you for a couple of days until you're feeling better."

"Are you sure?" you say. It's not that you don't think she can, it's just... you want to be here in case she can't. It's your job! But Elsa just keeps smiling that same gentle smile.

"I'm sure. I'll go and ring Phillip while you get your things."

And with that, she's off, pulling her phone out as she heads towards her office. You can't help but watch her as she leaves; it takes a few moments to even remember you're supposed to be doing something.

Phillip is great; he cranks the heat up because you still can't get warm, and he helps you get inside before leaving. You kind of want to hug him.

But that's weird, and you're already sick, so you just settle for a wave. Joan runs up to the door as soon as she hears the lock click, and you pick her up as you move to your bedroom. You dump her on the bed so you can get dressed into your pyjamas, making sure you've got socks and an extra layer. Probably, you'll wake up boiling, but that's something to deal with later.

When you do wake up a few hours later, it's not the heat that's woken you. You look blearily into the darkness, though there's still a little bit of light coming in through the curtains. Your phone says it's almost 5pm, and you sit there, confused, wondering why you woke up.

And then someone knocks on the front door again and your whole heart falls because you don't want to deal with Hans right now, even if it means he wants to apologise or something. You move to your chair, not making any particular effort to hurry. Maybe it wasn't Hans; maybe it was one of the neighbours or something?

But then you open the door and it isn't Hans, or a neighbour, or even a salesperson.

It's Elsa.
You just look at her for a moment, trying to process what you're seeing.

"El...sa?"

She swallows and looks at you. "May I come in?"

Nodding, you move back to let her in. Joan's come to investigate, and even though Elsa's carrying a bag in each hand, plus her purse, she still bends down to scratch behind Joan's ears.

"What's uh... is everything okay?"

She turns to you before hefting one of the bags. "I uh. I brought some soup." Then, she lifts the other bag. "And some movies." You just look at her for a moment; your silence spurs her to continue speaking. "I just know that all I want to do is curl up with a good rom-com and something nice and warm when I'm sick. I thought... maybe you'd be the same."

You send her a small smile, moving forward as you do so. "Honestly, nothing sounds better right now. What movies did you bring?"

"Oh, pretty much every Adam Sandler/Drew Barrymore flick I own," she admitted. "I always loved The Wedding Singer."

"Did you want to stay and watch it?"

You get comfortable on the couch. Elsa grabs more blankets from the linen closet and heats up the soup. You're not very hungry, but it smells amazing. It's all thick and gloopy and exactly what you need. When you finish, you make a move to go and put it in the kitchen when she moves forwards, taking it off you.

"Just rest, Anna. It's fine."

And then she's off and into the kitchen. You hear the sound of running water, but it doesn't take her very long to return. Then she sits down next to you.

"You're gonna get sick," you warn her. She smiles.

"I've had my shot."

After that, you don't talk much. Elsa gets up every so often to get another cup of tea, or go to the bathroom, or to turn the lights on once the sun properly sets. You alternate between being freezing cold and boiling hot. She sits near you, helps you warm up, and goes to get a cool towel when it becomes too much. Your whole body is exhausted, and everything hurts.

Sometime around 2am you wake up absolutely melting. Everything's blurry – you can't even remember falling asleep. Maybe Elsa didn't notice either because she's still on the couch next to you, fast asleep herself. She wakes with a start when you throw the blankets off, desperate for some reprieve from the heat.
"Sorry," you say – or rather, rasp. Your throat is dry and now even it hurts. Elsa shakes herself and sends you a sympathetic smile.

"It's fine. I shouldn't have fallen asleep anyway..."

Then she gets up to get a glass of water, and brings one out for you, too. You don't even have to ask! With a grateful smile, you end up downing the entire thing. It makes you feel a little more human.

Elsa helps you move to your chair, the aches and fatigue making it harder. She doesn't carry you; she just makes sure your chair is close enough, that the breaks are on. That she's there to lend a hand if your strength fails.

You hate being sick.

But nothing bad happens. You go to the bathroom and take your medicine, and by the time you get to your room, there's another glass of water on the side table and a packet of paracetamol.

"I should go..." Elsa says softly. And yeah, she should because you're sick and she has work tomorrow, but at the same time...

"It's two in the morning, Elsa. You should stay here. Is Phillip even on the clock at the moment?"

She gives a wry chuckle. "No, he isn't. But I can't impose any longer."

You're too tired and sick to fight her on this. With your eyelids heavy, you open up one side of the quilt.

"'S okay, Els. C'mon..."

"Promise you won't make me sick?"

You give a little smile, giving up the fight against keeping your eyes open. "No promises..."

The last thing you feel before finally drifting off is Elsa sliding in next to you.

Chapter End Notes

sorry for the short chapter! i actually only have one more prepared chapter ready to go, so i better do some serious writing this week if i wanna stick to my schedule. which i do.

elsanna's coming up close guyssss get hypeeee~
Chapter 89

Chapter Notes

a/n: building up up up~ next chapter, we get to meet elsa's mother (properly this time). also the proper elsanna should happen before new year's. and turwen – the amazing beta for this fic – and i have been full-on writing and planning and get hyped yall :)

It takes a full week and a half to recover from the flu. Elsa doesn't let you return any earlier. Amazingly, she managed to not get sick, so you don't feel bad about her spending so much time with you while you were.

She was over almost every day with some food, or movies, or company.

Hans had only messaged you once, asking about your usual Friday-night romp. When you said you were sick, he'd responded with the customary 'I hope you feel better soon!' You had to wonder if he'd only said that because... the sooner you weren't sick anymore, the sooner you could spend time with him. And most of your time with him was spent doing one thing in particular.

You miss going on dates with him – proper ones, where you went out and had some dinner, and he wooed you. Not that you can blame him for it – it wasn't like you'd been inviting him to any. The most you do is lunch in your office. So, when Kristoff reminds you about the show that coming Saturday, you figure it's the perfect thing for your relationship.

Or it would be.

"Why would I want to go and see a musical?"

"It's fun! All dressed up for a nice night out. We can do dinner!"

But Hans puts his salad down and sighs like you're the one putting him out and not the other way around. "I'm sorry, Anna, but I just... don't feel comfortable doing that."

Your entire heart sinks, and you can't even imagine what the issue is. Does he hate showtunes that much? Or... another thought strikes you, and something in your stomach turns. You don't think it's the ham-and-mango-chutney sandwich you're eating.

"It's because of Kristoff, isn't it? Him and Sven."

It's a question, but not really because you already know the answer. Good thing too, because Hans doesn't speak. You kind of want to cry, which is kind of ridiculous because it's not even about you.

Taking a breath to calm your nerves, you're only a little proud that your voice doesn't shake. "Fine. But I'm going to go and have a nice night, with or without you."

"Anna, babe-"

"I have a lot of work to do, Hans. I should probably get back to it."
He sighs in one great huge exhale and stands up. He dumps his salad in the trash can next to your desk and doesn't look back as he leaves. You suddenly feel really cold. And not very hungry.

Olaf shows up a little before the end of the day. He's got one of the invitations – the ones made specially for the board – and just wants to tell you how nice they look. The praise is nice, and especially welcome after your horrible lunch with Hans earlier. Before he leaves, he says something that strikes your attention.

"Hey, say 'Happy Birthday' to Elsa for me tomorrow. I'm off on a PD thing so won't be here."

He's got one foot out the door before you call him back in. "Wait! Olaf! It's Elsa's birthday tomorrow?"

Turning back to you, he nods. "Yep. Her... 25th? 26th? I'm not entirely sure."

"Thanks. I'll uh, I'll be sure to pass on the message."

With a genial smile and a wave, he's off. Not that you really notice, because you're too busy thinking about the fact that it's her birthday and she didn't tell you!

Fortunately, it doesn't take long to order some flowers to be delivered tomorrow. You know she likes snowglobes, and books, but you're really short on time. Still, better to get her something – even if it's just a box of chocolates. Which you do end up getting her but you also walk past a gift shop with snowglobes, and there's one in particular that catches your eye.

It's a photo snowglobe.

Purchasing it, you resolve to ask Elsa if she wants to go to dinner – a friendly thing! – because that gives you more time to actually print out the photo you want to use. And also because you'd like to take her out to dinner for her birthday. She's already told you her family lives in Norway, and she doesn't have a partner. Might just be a nice thing to do.

When you come into work the next day, the flowers have already been delivered. You know because they're in your office already. Grabbing the little box they came in, you put it on your lap and wheel down towards Elsa's office. You didn't bring the chocolates yet – you want to wait until you have the rest of her present sorted. She absolutely beams when she sees the flowers.

"Olaf says happy birthday," you tell her as you place them on her desk. She gives a little frown.

"Olaf got me flowers?"

It makes you laugh. "Nah, not him. This is a happy birthday from me. And... I was wondering..."

"Hmm?"

"Did you wanna go out to dinner on Friday? Like a birthday treat from me?" She doesn't say anything for a moment, and you remember that you've also got Saturday plans that no longer include Hans. "And... I'm going to a show on Saturday with Kristoff and Sven. Did you—we've got an extra ticket now and it might be nice to go together, if you're free?"

"Oh, Anna, I'd love to! It's just..." she sighs. "My mother's in town and wants to meet up for dinner tomorrow."

"Oh, well, that's okay—"
"But..." she interrupts. "It would be nice not having to entertain her on my own. Would you like to come? We can do the birthday dinner at the same time."

"Are—are you sure?" you ask, eyes wide. "I don't—it's your mom, I mean. She probably just wants to see you."

Elsa smiles. "I saw her only a few months ago. I'd love for you to come. And then we can do your thing on Saturday? It sounds like fun."

You grin back at her. It really does.
Mrs Arendelle is... not what you expected.

You expected someone maybe a little derisive. There's gotta be a reason Elsa seems so nervous, tapping on her thigh and looking paler than usual on the drive there. She has a glass of what smells like bourbon on the drive over. Maybe she's actually Elsa's step-mom and is a little bit evil. Maybe she's super glamorous, and Elsa thinks she'll never reach the standards set out for her.

But that isn't the case at all.

Mrs Arendelle is a mousey-haired middle-aged woman, only very slightly shorter than Elsa herself. She's wearing a nice outfit, a little more conservative than either yourself or Elsa, but not pointedly so. She notices you first, and you think that perhaps her eyebrows furrow just for a second before she's turning to Elsa. Probably you just imagined it.

"Happy birthday, darling," she says, smiling softly. She moves close to give Elsa a small hug, kissing her on the cheek. Then, she glances at you again.

They speak in Norwegian for a moment, and you definitely hear your name. Elsa's probably just introducing you, right? Still, you can't push aside the butterflies in your stomach. There's no reason to be as nervous as you are, and yet... you are.

Finally, they stop talking. Elsa closes her eyes, sighs, and indicates the table.

"Shall we sit?"

And so you do.

You feel underdressed. Unsuitable. Mrs Arendelle keeps looking at you, and while it's impossible for you to have spilled any food yet, you can't help but feel like she's judging you. Or appraising you. She leaves to go to the bathroom once the waiter's dropped off some menus, and both you and Elsa kind of just slump. It makes you smile, because it's very obvious she's not really enjoying being here either.

"I should have dressed up more," you say. "Should have worn that necklace."

Elsa chokes for a second before shaking her head. "You look gorgeous, Anna. It's just my mom..." You shoot her a look, and she relents. "I know she's not the warmest person, but honestly, you look wonderful."
You smile again, and rest your hand on hers. "Is everything okay with you? What was that about earlier?"

Elsa's looking at your hands when she answers. "Oh, nothing..." she says, flipping her hand so that you can properly entwine them. "Just... parents getting all up in my business."

The way she says that makes you snort. "'Up in your business'? God Elsa, what are you, thirteen?"

It brings a smile to her face, and you squeeze her hand gently. "It's fine. Only a few hours, right? Just imagine how much fun we're going to have at this show tomorrow."

It gets you thinking about it, so much so that you don't even notice Mrs Arendelle return until she's sliding back into her chair. Elsa extricates her hand and picks up the menu, prompting you to do the same.

"I think I'll have the salmon," Elsa says. "And perhaps some wine for the table. Anna, what are you feeling tonight?"

You can still see Mrs Arendelle's eyes on you, but you open up your menu anyway.

And almost have a heart attack because the salmon Elsa's ordering is well over $40 and that's not even the most expensive item on the menu. Swallowing, you glance up.

"O-oh, any recommendations?"

When you'd asked Elsa to dinner for her birthday, you'd been prepared to pay for her. It was a treat! But you were definitely not going to go to a restaurant this expensive.

But as always, Elsa seems to pick up on both your discomfort, and the reason for it. "It depends on what you feel like eating. Pick the thing that sounds the best, and don't worry about the price. This is my treat."

You still don't want to order the most expensive dish, so you just go for a mushroom risotto. Elsa gets a white wine for the table, and Mrs Arendelle orders another seafood dish. Elsa really wasn't kidding when she said liking seafood was a prerequisite for being Norwegian.

But then Mrs Arendelle leans forward. "Anna, tell me about yourself. How long have you and Elsa known each other?"

You notice Elsa's eyes narrow, but she stays silent as you start to answer.

"Oh, um. I've worked for her for a while now – since the beginning of the year."

"Ah. How are you finding it?"

You look over at Elsa, whose gaze is somewhere between you and her mother. For the first time since meeting her, you can't decipher her expression.

Maybe you shouldn't have come. But you're here now, so you just need to make the best of it. Smiling towards Elsa, you shrug your shoulders.

"It's really good, actually. Elsa's a great boss – and actually, it doesn't even really feel like she is my boss anymore. Just a friend."

Mrs Arendelle lifts an eyebrow. "Oh really?" And then she's smiling, and you can really see the family resemblance.
"Yeah! And – hold on."

Picking up your bag, you rifle through it for a moment before pulling out a small box. You're not great at gift wrapping, but at least there's no holes. Elsa's eyes get progressively wider as the box gets closer to her.

"A-Anna?"

"It's your birthday, Elsa. So, happy birthday."

You put the little box on the table, next to her glass. Mrs Arendelle is just watching the exchange. The waiter returns with a bottle of wine and some breadsticks, but Elsa doesn't even seem to notice. She's just looking at the present, blinking rapidly.

"You... you didn't have to get me anything, Anna," she says, very softly.

"I know, I just... wanted to. I hope you like it."

She finally looks up, and gives a watery smile. It only gets bigger when she begins to carefully remove the wrapping paper. You've put the snowglobe in a box to keep it safe, and filled up the empty spaces with crepe paper. The result is a lot of paper for what is actually a very small present. Hopefully the waiter will take it away for you.

"Oh, Anna..." she says when she pulls it out, holding it like it's the most precious thing she's ever seen. "Oh! You put the photo..."

You look at her, smiling. "The kangaroo picture is my favourite..." you admit softly. And it really is. You can't describe why, but it's just a really nice photo.

"I love it. Thank you," she says earnestly.

"What is it?"

Mrs Arendelle's voice makes you start – just a tiny little jump because you'd forgotten she was even here with you. Elsa blinks and holds up the snowglobe.

"Another to add to the collection," she says. Mrs Arendelle looks at it before she turns to you, smiling.

"A very good gift, Anna. You seem to be quite close to Elsa. It seems a shame I'm only now meeting you."

The comment is a little odd, and you shrug. "I mean, we haven't always been. It's really only since coming back from Norway that we started hanging out."

"Do you have family there, too?" She's got a tilt to her head – genuinely curious. The question is even less expected than the previous comment, and it takes a moment for you to find your voice.

"Uh, no. My parents... They uh, they passed away. But she is meeting my brother tomorrow. Again."

"Oh, I'm sorry," she says. "Tell me more about your brother, though."

You do. Mrs Arendelle is the picture of a perfect listener, nodding along as you tell her about your life; you talk about Kristoff and Joan, and Hans and work. And you tell her about your friendship with Elsa because you don't want the focus to all be on you, and it seems like every time you talk
about her daughter, Mrs Arendelle gets a soft look on her face.

Elsa looks so much like her.

The only bad part out of the whole dinner (and really, it's not that bad) comes at the end, when you've eaten the – frankly, amazing – food and finished the wine and are getting ready to leave. Elsa's put the snowglobe back in the box, and is holding it with both hands as she waits patiently for her mother to sign the cheque. She's been very quiet all dinner, and you've definitely noticed. You wonder if being here made the dinner better or worse for her.

You're just gonna have to make tomorrow night the greatest.

So anyway, you're waiting patiently for Mrs Arendelle to finish, and Elsa's all quiet so you just put your hand on hers, just because she looks like she needs some creature comfort. She looks at you and smiles, squeezing your hand softly.

"Elsa."

Wrenching your eyes from her, you can see Mrs Arendelle's finished, and she's looking between you both. It feels like you've been caught with your hand in the cookie jar, doing something you shouldn't be; evidently, Elsa feels the same as she pulls her hand out from under yours.

"Mom—"

Mrs Arendelle cuts her off, speaking in rapid Norwegian. You look back at Elsa, watching as her gaze falls and she sinks low in her chair. Mrs Arendelle isn't yelling – her voice isn't even that strong, less a reprimand or a lecture, and more a one-sided conversation. Finally, she stops, giving Elsa a chance to respond.

"I know, Mom..." she says, before glancing at you. She moves to Norwegian herself, and you don't like feeling out of the loop, but you also know that you weren't even really supposed to be here in the first place.

Then Mrs Arendelle stands up, moving around to Elsa. Given the way Elsa shrinks, you wonder – briefly – if Mrs Arendelle is going to strike her.

She does nothing of the sort.

Instead, she places a hand on Elsa's back, leaning in to give her a soft kiss on the cheek. "Happy birthday, my darling," she says gently.

Elsa nods. "Takk, mor."

Mrs Arendelle says one more thing, and Elsa's head jerks up. Even though she's not looking at you, you can still see enough of her profile to realise she's got a small smile on her face.
"I'm sorry about my mother."

Elsa's first words in the car are an apology, and it's *so*... like her to do that. To apologise for any perceived issue before thinking of something happy. And truthfully, you're not even entirely sure why she's apologising.

Before you have a chance to ask, she's sighing and continuing. "She sometimes doesn't know when to leave well enough alone."

Oh. She's talking about *that*. The family thing.

"It's fine, Elsa," you tell her. It's obvious she doesn't believe you, and you look away. It *is* fine, it's just... "No one's ever really asked about them before. At least, not like that. I've never really talked about it."

"You don't have to," she says gently. You glance out through the window and sigh. It's too dark to see anything properly.

"It took me ages to be able to get in a car again," you say gently, not looking at her. It's something you don't have to share, and usually you wouldn't... but you want to tell Elsa. Not even Kristoff really knows everything. "I was thirteen. We were driving somewhere – I think I had a dance lesson. Mom and Dad were arguing about something when the other car came out of nowhere."

You pause to take a breath. There's a hand, squeezing yours, and it gives you the courage to look at Elsa.

"I was in a coma for three weeks. When I woke up, I realised that- that they were gone... an-and that I didn't have anyone. My first foster home was... terrible... but I met Kristoff at the second one. That was a good one. I got lucky – I didn't move around a lot because of... the obvious."

"You didn't have any family to take you in?"

You shake your head. "No. Mom didn't have any siblings, and Dad's live in Wales. He never really talked about them."

"I'm... I'm sorry, Anna," she says. She looks so intense when she says it; this isn't a pity apology, you know what they look like. This feels too personal. Maybe because she actually knows you... because she's actually your friend.

So you swallow thickly and squeeze her hand back. "It still hurts sometimes..." you admit softly.
"But I guess I wouldn't have met you if I wasn't in this position. So maybe some good came out of it after all?"

But when you look at her, she mustn't agree because there are tears shining in her eyes. She blinks them away rapidly, or tries to, but it just makes them spill over her cheeks.

"Hey, it's okay," you try to assure her. "Elsa..."

She sucks in a breath. "You're so good, Anna," she says. "So optimistic."

The way she says it... it isn't condescending. It isn't being used to make fun of you, to point out some innocence or naïvety. She says it like she's jealous, like she wishes she could see the silver lining. You give a tentative chuckle.

"Well... I guess I had to. I saw so many people fall to despair. Other foster kids, mostly, who just kind of gave up. I didn't want to give up. So now I'm here."

Elsa nods before she looks up and gives a hesitant smile. "Yeah, you are. And I'm glad you are, Anna. Thank you."

You reach over to hug her. She doesn't respond at first, but then she's got her arms wrapped around your middle and is squeezing, harder than you expect.

"Happy birthday, Elsa," you say. You hope it was a good one.
Kristoff comes to pick you up a few hours before the start of the show. You're going to meet Elsa and Sven there, maybe have a light dinner before it starts. You had to text him to let him know that Hans wasn't able to make it. He doesn't seem particularly upset about that, and honestly... neither are you.

This time, you actually have remembered to wear the pretty jewellery you bought during your most recent shopping excursion. Kristoff even notices it, complimenting the colour.

"Thanks," you tell him with a smile. "Elsa got the necklace for me..."

He lifts an eyebrow, but doesn't say anything other than, "She has good taste. It suits you."

You chat about meaningless stuff for the rest of the drive – Kristoff's work, and your own. Thanksgiving and Christmas plans, which still feel so far away even though it's maybe a month at most. You'd never really celebrated Thanksgiving growing up, and it seems silly to start now. Especially because it's only a couple of weeks before the Christmas party, and while Elsa will definitely encourage you to take some time off, it's a really busy time of the year.

You don't see Elsa or Sven when you arrive, though you are a little early. Your stomach rumbles a little, and Kristoff smirks. Meeting Sven again will be nice, you think, because Kristoff isn't nearly as nervous, and you're actually not worried about what your brother thinks of Elsa. They've already met (once, what feels like ages ago), and you have little doubt that she'll get along with both men better than Hans did.

Sven arrives first, and you watch unabashedly as he and Kristoff give each other a little peck. It's cute, especially when Kristoff blushes because you've been watching. He still has a smile on his face, and it's really nice seeing it. He was always so serious, even with Esmé, that watching him be a little more confident, a little more open...

It's really fulfilling.

And then Elsa arrives, and you're pretty sure about a dozen guys – and some girls – get whiplash just from turning around as she walks past.

She's in a black dress with delicate straps. It's sort of slinky, but not trashy, coming to just past her knees. She doesn't look overdressed, or too formal. She just looks fucking gorgeous, and you're momentarily blown away.

"I'm sorry I'm late," she says when she reaches you. Her hair's up, plaited into some kind of bun and held together with little snowflake clips. Her shoes and clutch are a similar blue, and you notice she's painted her toenails.
Then she bends down to give you a hug, and you definitely notice some people looking at her. Not that you're surprised. What you are surprised about is the way her lips very gently tap your cheek. She's never done that before, but you can't say you hate it. You wonder, briefly, if it's a Norwegian thing or a rich person thing. It doesn't matter.

"It's fine," you say, once she's pulled back and you've found your voice. "Elsa, this is Kristoff, and his boyfriend, Sven."

Elsa smiles genially and holds out her hand. "Kristoff, hi! Anna's spoken a lot about you," she says. Kristoff takes it, shaking gently.

"I think we met briefly a while ago, but it's nice to see you again. You look great."

She looks better than 'great', but you keep that thought to yourself as she turns to Sven.

"Hi, Sven. I'm Elsa, Anna's..." she looks at you for a moment, then shrugs. "Her boss? Co-worker? Friend?" There's a warm smile on her face. "It keeps changing."

You let out a laugh because she's not wrong. Sven finishes shaking her hand while Kristoff looks at his watch. "We have just over an hour before the doors open. Any thoughts on food? Elsa?"

"Oh, I'm pretty easy," she says. "Do you have any recommendations?"

They talk, briefly, about the best restaurants to go to that aren't too far away. You don't contribute much, spending your time thinking about how different Elsa interacts with Kristoff and Sven compared with how Hans did. She's so relaxed about the whole thing.

She is gay herself, so maybe that's it. Or it could just be that she's an awesome and open person. Either way, you're not really concentrating when they start moving off, though her voice pulls you from your thoughts pretty quick when she asks if you're coming.

Elsa walks beside you as you head out the doors. It seems they've decided on an Italian restaurant a few blocks away, and even though it's getting late in the year, it's actually still reasonably nice out. A bit crisp. You've got a cardigan on, but Elsa doesn't and she isn't even shivering. It's not that warm!

At least the restaurant is cozy.

Much like last time, you take the chance to get to know Sven. You ask him about the animals he's been treating, and the rescue shelter, and he tells you all about how he had to save a squirrel last week because it had been attacked by a cat. Which of course you're absolutely aghast about because Joan never goes outside and what sort of responsible pet owner does that? (The answer of course being no responsible pet owner does that.)

But all the while, you're aware of Kristoff and Elsa having their own discussion, too. And it's definitely not like last time, with Hans, because Kristoff is laughing and Elsa's smiling and even though you've all ordered a glass of wine while you wait for your meals, or a beer, Elsa's barely touched hers.

It's so different from how she looked yesterday. Actually relaxed here.

You have to take a moment to smile a little private smile. This Elsa is so different to the one you first met. Even the one in Norway.
This one is your favourite, this version. Happy, laughing, smiling Elsa.

Once dinner's over, you take a stroll back to the theatre. Elsa had paid for dinner – a thank-you for inviting her – and you notice Kristoff's expression. He definitely seems impressed.

When you get back to the theatre, Sven and Kristoff move off to get another drink. You ask Elsa if she wants one, but she shakes her head. "I think I'm good for tonight. Would you like one?"

You shake your head. "Absolutely not. I know what they charge here, and it's definitely not worth it." She grins, just as the little bell goes off to let you know that the doors are open. It doesn't take long to find your seats – the benefit of being in a wheelchair is that, at least here, it's very accessible.

Kristoff and Sven join not long after, beers in hand. You're on the end because that's where the accessible seat is. Elsa's next to you, and then Kristoff, and then Sven. It feels really cozy, and you spend the next ten minutes passing time with light conversation. You end up getting stuck in a conversation with Kristoff and Elsa about refrigeration, of all things, and you're pretty sure it's a leftover conversation from dinner. They don't tell you how they even got onto the topic in the first place. But then the lights dim and the orchestra starts and there's no more time for talking.

At least, not until intermission.

While Sven and Elsa go off to the bathrooms, you and Kristoff remain in your seats. It's too hard to move, and Kristoff is comfortable.

"Wow, Elsa's nice," he says, entirely unexpectedly about two seconds after they leave. "I remember when you had that issue with her buying you stuff, but catching up with her again, she just seems really friendly."

"Yeah?"

"Yeah. Way better than Hans."

"Hey! That's my boyfriend!"

He shrugs. "I don't have to like everyone," he says, and he's right, but still. Sven returns after that, but it takes Elsa almost the entire intermission to return.

"Sorry," she says. "Long line." And then, once again, you don't have time for conversation.

By the time it's over, it's almost 9:30. Elsa, as always, is incredibly gracious.

"Thank you for inviting me. It's been an absolute pleasure meeting you, Kristoff, and you, Sven." She shakes their hands, smiling. It seems like she genuinely did have a good time, and you can't even blame Kristoff for liking Elsa more than Hans because she definitely likes him more than Hans did. He does give her a funny look as you're leaving to use the bathroom. You only notice because you look back so you don't forget where they're standing, and Elsa's watching you leave with a soft smile.

You even find them swapping numbers when you return probably to do with the fridge-thing but you're not even sure. Sven gives you his number, too, just in case, and then leans down to ask you what your Thanksgiving plans are.

"Uh, we don't really do Thanksgiving," you say. He nods.
"Does that mean Kristoff will be free?"

You beam. "Aww, you wanna do a Thanksgiving with him?"

"Shhh!"

Glancing over at Kristoff, he's still engrossed in a conversation with Elsa.

"I think he'd love that."

You really, really do.
Chapter 93

Chapter Notes

A/N: This chapter has some Hanna dubcon (believe me, I did not enjoy writing it), so if you're not up for that, feel free to skip to the A/N at the end, which has the plot point you'll miss. Anna would not consider it dubcon, but I do.

As with chapter 64 (the beginning of the beginning of Elsanna), this is the beginning of the end of Hanna.

And, as always, huge thank you to Turwen, who is basically like another mother to this fic at this point. It is our baby. Please don't hate it ;_;

See the end of the chapter for more notes

After Hans bails on the show, he invites you over one night after work to "make up for it". If he really wanted to make up, you think, he'd ask Kristoff and Sven over, too.

But that's a fight you really don't want to have, so you accept his invitation as graciously as possible. It feels like it's been ages since you last spent any quality time with him. You want to get some Chinese takeout and curl up on the sofa and watch a movie.

He has other ideas.

As soon as you arrive and he's carried you up the stairs (which is... actually getting really tiresome), and puts you on the couch. Then he brings your chair up and leaves it in the kitchen and sits next to you. He's really close, and his breath smells like mint.

"Hey, babe," he says. He's looking at your lips, your chest, and you try to smile because you do like it when he looks at you like that. It's just... you kind of wanted to do something with him that wasn't sex.

"Hans..." you start. He leans in anyway and starts kissing your throat. It's a little scratchy. "Hans, w-wait—"

"C'mon, babe. It's been ages," he says. And you know and you don't want to disappoint him but at the same time...

"I know, it's just... I'm- I'm on my period..."

You're not. It's a complete fabrication. It has the desired effect, and he pulls away.

"Gross. I don't need to know that," he says, and you try not to let your heart sink because... well, he did need to know!

So you clear your throat and say, in a small voice, "There's other things we can do..."

An eyebrow lifts, and he smiles. It's kind of wolfish. "Oh yeah?" he says, sitting back even further.
"I didn't think you'd be interested in that kind of thing, but hey, I'm not complaining."

And then he takes his shirt off and you have no idea what you've just signed up for but it's made him happy, and that's what you wanted, right? And now he's standing up and you need to know what he's thinking.

"H-Hans?"

He pauses, belt already undone. "You're talking about a blowjob, right?"

Oh God. You choke a little, and he probably thinks it's just coz you're a prude and he's used the word 'blowjob', but it's more like you'd never imagined doing that and the thought is actually a little gross.

When you'd said there was something else you could do, you'd meant cuddling on the couch, maybe order a pizza or something. But it's what he wants and you don't know if you like it unless you try, right?

And maybe you can get him to pay you back with him touching your chest. You've already said he can't actually get into your pants tonight, but that's really not a bad thing. Not to you.

"Sure... And then you could... I dunno... like my chest is sensitive..."

"Sure, sure. After."

And then he's finally shucking his trousers and he's wearing briefs, not boxers, and the bulge is already pretty prominent. He's standing right in front of you and you have absolutely no idea what to do. Your face must be a tomato by now – and it only gets worse when he pulls down the rest of his underwear.

"What... what do I do?" you ask softly. You're looking at his face because you don't want to look anywhere else at the moment. He grins.

"I mean, whatever you want. Just don't bite it off."

Oh shit, now you're going to be worried about that. Dammit. Swallowing, you reach out a hand. He's thick and fleshy and you were absolutely right, this is kind of gross. He's also really hot, and it kind of reminds you of when you went on a field trip to a farm in the fifth grade and got a chance to milk cows.

Except he's way harder than that.

You know the concept behind masturbating with penis – you have a brother, and you grew up in foster homes without a lot of privacy.

So you squeeze gently and start moving your hand. Maybe if you can get him off quick enough, you won't have to put it in your mouth? He sucks in a breath, but otherwise doesn't respond to the motion. You glance up at him, and he's already looking down at you.

"God, Anna, use your mouth, please?"

It's kind of funny, but it doesn't actually sound like he's asking a question. There's a droplet of something on the head and you're really not keen on finding out how it tastes, but he really wants you to do this, and you're his girlfriend and he did say he'd get you back afterward, right?
So, opening your mouth, you take him partway. Only really the head because you're really not sure what you're doing and you don't wanna throw up. At least he makes a noise at that, moaning out a little, "fuck yeah" that you're not sure you like.

"Suck on it, Anna. Keep your hand moving."

You try to follow his instructions. You're not sure how well you do, but if you're shit, at least he's not telling you. That being said, you're pretty sure it doesn't take much for him to finish. It can take anywhere from a couple of minutes to maybe ten maximum whenever he's inside you. And those times you're not even trying because there's really not a lot you can do.

So you're moving your hand and sucking a little and he's actually moving now, thrusting into your mouth. Which is about as unpleasant as the rest of it, so you can only hope it means he's going to finish soon.

"Fuck yeah, you feel so good, your tight little mouth... ugh you should have done this months ago, you're a natural."

The praise is unexpected, and you're not entirely sure how to feel about it. You just redouble your efforts, trying to breath through it. Honestly, you're not even sure what you're doing at this point, only that Hans seems to like it, and that's kind of all you care about.

You can tell when he's getting close because his movements become erratic and his hands tighten in your hair. Other than that, though, there's not much. It's not like he's making much noise, except maybe swearing under his breath.

And so when he does come, holding your head in place while he empties into your mouth, it's an unexpected – and kind of unwelcome – surprise. He tastes like aioli and you know you'll never be able to eat it again. Finally he pulls himself from your mouth. He's a lot smaller now, and you can't do anything but swallow it because there's nowhere to spit it out and your chair is still in the kitchen.

"Fuck, Anna. That was amazing," he says, kind of breathless. "Lemme go... get cleaned up."

He leaves, and you wipe your mouth. You don't feel very good, and you don't think it's because of what you just swallowed. There's still remnants in your mouth, and it both feels and tastes absolutely disgusting. You want to throw up.

While he's gone, the landline rings. Not for long – he must pick it up – which only means you're left sitting on his couch for even longer because he's having a heated discussion with whoever's on the other end of the line. All you want is to be able to have a drink of water, or brush your teeth. It takes him about ten minutes to return.

"Who was that?" you ask when he finally reappears. There's a dark scowl on his face, and he basically throws himself on the couch.

Picking up the remote, he grunts out a, "My brother," before flicking through to a sports channel. Whatever it was obviously has him upset.

"Oh. Did you want to talk about it?"

"Do I look like I want to talk about my family?" he snaps. And... he's right, he doesn't. But that doesn't mean he can just have a go at you. This whole evening feels like you've made a massive mistake.
There's no way he's in the mood to return the favour, and the thought actually makes you really angry. Mad, even.

But you fight it down. Bury it because there's not a lot else you can do. Now you just need to wait.

Chapter End Notes

tl;dr: Hans "convinces" Anna to give him a blowjob. She hates it. She asks him to touch her chest and he casually agrees, but instead takes a call from his brother after he finishes and comes back angry, snapping at her when she asks if he wants to talk about it.
Two weeks before the Christmas party, Kristoff comes around to make sure you've got everything. He helps you with your hair and make-up – it's mostly the hair, if you're honest. You can do your own makeup, sort of. You've got a couple of YouTube tutorials up for some elegant buns, and he spends about an hour figuring out how one works. It looks a little messy, but you actually like it. It gets rid of some of the 'formality'. Then you put your makeup on, even though you probably should have done it before the hair, and your dress, and... your brace.

You're not wearing heels, but Kristoff still has to help you put your shoes on. Then you put on your necklace and the earrings and Kristoff gives a low whistle.

"Wow, Anna. You clean up nice."

You shoot him a look, and he grins. He's right, though – you look... fucking amazing. You spend a bit of time figuring out the best way to move in the dress, and while you're slower than a sloth and you won't be able to dance or anything, at least you'll be able to look people in the eyes properly.

You can't wait.

The tricky part is getting in and out of his car. It's not a massive car, which is good because you don't have to climb into the seat, but it's missing the little handle on the ceiling. You have to wait for him to help you in and out. Other than that, though, it's relatively smooth sailing. The dress doesn't tear and you don't spill anything on it. You've got a little clutch which has a strap long enough to cross over your body, so you don't have to worry about losing your phone or your purse.

Then it's getting out of the dress and wiping off all the makeup and undoing your hair. Kristoff makes a coffee while you put the brace and crutches away.

"So," he starts, when you come back. "Spoken to Elsa lately?"

That is... a really odd question. You frown at him. "Uh, sure? I see her everyday at work..."

He nods. "Just checking." Then he takes a sip of his drink and completely changes topic. "Guess what Sven asked me."

The frown is still on your face. "Nu-uh. I will guess after you tell me why you asked about Elsa."

He shrugs, and you point a finger at him. "Are you chatting up my boss?"

It's absurd, and he laughs. "Wow, I guess the fact I have a boyfriend means nothing, huh?" He shakes his head, still chuckling. "No, I've just been regular chatting with her. I told her I know some stuff about electrical work and she asked if I could install a dimmer in her living room for 'movie night'."
It sounds like an odd request, but the more you think about it, the more it makes sense. Well, the dimmer part, not so much the 'Elsa remaining in contact with Kristoff' part.

But at least she seems to care about him, more so than Hans. And Kristoff obviously likes Elsa, too.

So you sigh with a smile because you did say you'd guess. "Okay, fine. Did Sven... ask you to marry him?"

Kristoff chokes.

You smirk at him while he tries to catch his breath. His eyes water and he turns a bit red, but soon enough he's back to breathing normally. Sort of. He still seems a little breathless. It makes you wonder... had he thought about that before?

And then it stops to make you wonder... because if Hans asked... you have a feeling you know the answer and you don't really want to think about what that might mean right now.

"No, he didn't ask that," Kristoff said. "He did ask a question, but not that one. He wants to do something for Thanksgiving."

You nod as though Sven hadn't already floated that idea to you. "That sounds nice."

But Kristoff doesn't answer at first. He looks at you, a little incredulous. "You're okay with that?" You shrug. "But- we always go to Ma's for Thanksgiving. Are you sure you'd be okay with me not going this year?"

You smile at him. "I mean... yeah, dude. And honestly, I don't know if I'll make it to Ma's Thanksgiving this year, either. I don't know what my plans are, actually."

"Hans hasn't asked you?" Kristoff has an eyebrow raised, surprised. You nod a little and purse your lips.

"He... doesn't like talking about his family. So maybe we'll do something but... I don't think that's going to happen."

He sighs. "That- I'm sorry. I'm sure Ma would love to see you, though?"

"She's getting old, Kris," you tell him sadly. "I haven't spoken to her since... well, probably last Thanksgiving, and she wasn't looking so good then. She'll probably just want to do a family thing."

"What about Elsa?" You glance up, and he's completely serious. He even shrugs a little, as though the idea isn't as ridiculous as it first sounded. "Friendsgiving is totally a thing."

You just shrug. "Tell me more about this Thanksgiving he has planned. Sequestering you up in some mountain cabin, all alone?"

That gets a laugh out of him, which was the point. Thanksgiving... is a very particular time of year. You know it, and Kristoff knows it, even if you haven't always celebrated it yourself.

"He... wants me to meet his family. They live in Minnesota. Thinks we could roadtrip it."

"Aww, that sounds really nice. Tell me all the details. When are you leaving? And how long does it take to drive to Minnesota from here?"

"Long enough. I... didn't say yes."
You gasp, eyes wide as you look at him. "You what? Why not?"

"I mean, I didn't say no," he defends. Barely. "I just... don't know if I'm ready for this..."

You look at him, expression serious when you ask, "Have you, I dunno. Told him this?"

"No. I don't want him to think I don't want to, but I just know that when he introduces me to his family, I'll disappoint. I'm going to ruin this thing we have. He's a vet who does pro bono pet stuff. I'm an electrician, Anna, who didn't even graduate high school."

You lean over and just wrap him in the tightest hug you can. He's... been thinking all this stuff? But it's all so ridiculous! At least he returns the hug, and maybe you hear him sniffle a little, but that's okay.

"Sven doesn't care about that stuff, does he?" you ask gently. Kristoff shakes his head. "So who cares what his family thinks. They live in fucking Minnesota, man. I think you need to share some of this with him, though, because he probably definitely thinks you don't want to go. I think he just wants to spend the holiday with you."

Finally, you stop holding so tight, though it takes a little longer for Kristoff to fully pull away.

"I'll go," he starts. You grin, squealing a little. He holds a finger up. "I'll go as long as you also have plans. I'm not gonna leave my best pal alone on the Thanksgivigest day of the year, okay? Okay?"

You smile and nod. "Okay!

Chapter End Notes

Hi all, I just wanted to address a few things I've noticed popping up in reviews. This story has Elsanna endgame, but the story isn't about Elsanna. It's not even really about Elsa. It's about Anna. I know that the previous chapter was not what many of you wanted to read, but because that moment was significant to Anna, it was therefore significant (and important) to include. Every single action Hans takes is another nail in his coffin, but until Anna is ready to leave him, she won't. She had a shitty experience with him in the last chapter but that's no excuse to just dump him, at least not in her mind.

That being said, I don't have any other similar chapters written. Any other future Hanna content is non-graphic, imprecise, and barely there :P
Given that Thanksgiving is literally a week away, you don't have long to plan anything. Of course, you're going to try as hard as you can – worst comes to worst, you'll lie to Kristoff and say you're spending it with Olaf or something, because there's no way you're letting him get away with not meeting his boyfriend's family.

Naturally, the first thing you do is ask Hans what his plans are.

You're at his place, and he's lying next to you panting when you bring it up. You didn't lie and say you had your period this time, because you absolutely do not want to go down on him again. He still hasn't made good on his promise to touch you, yet. It means that while he's acting like you've drained the life force from him, you're actually feeling pretty wired. All those endorphins you haven't been able to release.

When you bring it up, you try for a faux-casual kind of thing. Turning on your side, you look at him. He's on his back, the sheets haphazardly thrown over him. "Thanksgiving's coming up really soon."

His expression twitches, just a little bit. You continue, undeterred.

"I usually see Ma, but won't be able to make it this year. What... do you normally do?"

"I'm going skiing in Canada with my family. We'd usually go to Switzerland, but the long weekend isn't really enough time."

While you're processing that, he looks at you. "I would have invited you, but it'll just be really boring."

"It will?"

He nods. "I mean, we spend a lot of time skiing. There won't be anything for you to do."

"But I'd get to hang out with you," you say, and you can't help how needy that comes across as. When was the last time you actually... had fun with Hans? "And I'm sure that there would be something for me to do."

He doesn't say anything. You don't want to nag him about it – don't want to be one of those women – but at the same time... is expressing your disappointment that your boyfriend is flying off to another country to ski, without telling you, nagging?

"Maybe we can do something after I get back," he finally says, once the silence has dragged on for too long.

"Maybe..." you echo, though you're not really feeling it. It won't be the same.
Once he's asleep, which really doesn't take very long, you get up. Slide your underwear on, and your shirt, and move out into the living room. You kind of want to move to the lounge, but the leather makes a terrible noise when you move on it, and you don't want to wake Hans up.

Your bag is still on the kitchen table, so you move to one of the chairs and pull out your phone. Guess you better tell Kristoff that Hans is busy – but, that you're not out of the race yet. A thought scratches at the side of your head, though, and instead of texting Kristoff, you open a new message to Elsa.

hey! jw if you had thanksgiving plans? :)

You're not expecting any kind of response soon – it's an odd question, and it's also like, ten at night. By the time you'd arrived at Hans', it had already been nearing on six, and he'd skipped dinner in pursuit of other things; you're tempted to order a pizza.

What you really want is a shower, actually. You want to snuggle in with Joan and put a flick on. But being at Hans' makes that impossible.

You make yourself a sandwich – he's got some wholemeal bread and cheese in the fridge – and munch on it slowly. You're used to being alone, but you never feel lonely at your place. Hans'... is very different.

And then you check your phone and, unexpectedly, Elsa has already responded.

I don't normally do Thanksgiving. Why do you ask? :-)

You pause to think about that for a second. Why are you asking? To find out if you could tag along to whatever her plans were? To start your own?

Kristoff did mention a 'friendsgiving'...

kris has abandoned me this year and i was wondering if you wanted to do something? 

Hopefully she wants to. If not, you'll just enjoy the long weekend with Joan. There's probably a movie out that you can go and see if not. But her reply comes through within a few minutes.

I'd love to :-) Would you like to come over to mine the day before and we can do a proper Thanksgiving? Though, you may have to show me what that is...

You grin to yourself. It's not like you've celebrated all that many Thanksgivings, but at least you have a better understanding of what the holiday entails than Elsa seems to. Though, she has lived here for years – she probably should have a better grasp of it.

I can't wait!

You really can't.
You'll have like three days after Thanksgiving with which to recover before going back to work. You're not sure what that is going to feel like, if you're honest. Kristoff leaves for Minnesota on Wednesday morning, really early. You get a text of him when he's leaving, and you ask him to send some pictures.

His first one is a selfie of him looking very unimpressed, eyes half-shut. Sven has his arms thrown up and is grinning madly in the background as he drives. It makes you giggle.

Hans, notably, does not send you a message when he leaves. Left. He'd said it was just for the weekend, but he takes the whole week off work to pack or get ready or something before flying out Wednesday night. Not that you care, or so you tell yourself. You're going to stay at Elsa's because her kitchen is definitely better outfitted for cooking than yours, even if you do only buy a really tiny turkey.

You want to bring over something nice, so you just make your classic microwave fudge. Four ingredients and it tastes like heaven.

She's been cooking too, it seems. The kitchen is an organised mess of cups and flour and bakeware. She's got white powder all up her arms and is smiling as you enter the apartment. She can override the controls from up here, and you know the passcode anyway.

"Anna! You made it," she says. You lean forward, already expecting the kiss to your cheek. You try to return it this time, too, and it feels strange, but not bad.

"I did. And I brought some chocolate fudge for us to nibble on while we make all the other food."

She smiles, and shows you properly in. You drop your stuff in the guest room and have a little private smile as you see your snowglobe on the shelf. Front and centre, just like she'd said.

And then you spend most of the rest of the afternoon in the kitchen. Not because you have a lot of food to prepare, but because Elsa takes her time showing you how to prepare krumkake, and serinakake.

Lots of 'kake', you mention somewhere between the mixing and portioning. Elsa laughs.

"It literally means 'cake'. It's used in a lot of names for baked goods. I hadn't ever really thought
about it..." She's got a thoughtful look on her face, like she's mentally cataloguing every other word she can think of. Then she laughs, slightly unexpectedly. "Huh."

Once the cookies are baking in the oven, you settle into her sofa. Glancing at the coffee table, you notice something you hadn't seen before: it's got drawers. Like, hidden secret drawers. Elsa's in the bathroom washing her hands, so you lean forward to open it, just to take a peek.

When she returns, you've got a grin on your face and your hands are hidden behind your back. "Guess what I found?" you ask, sing-song. Elsa lifts a meticulous eyebrow.

"What did you find?"

Whipping your hands out, you hold up a little box.

"Uno!"

Three rounds later and you realise that you're absolutely terrible at Uno. Elsa trumps you each time, but she always looks so guilty about it. It makes you laugh.

"We should have a game with Kristoff and Sven one day," you comment.

"Would they be interested in doing something small for Christmas with us?"

Hmm, possibly. You hadn't thought about that, but neither of them had mentioned anything about Christmas yet. They've gotta make it through Thanksgiving first. He hasn't sent you a message, and you remind yourself of the old adage that 'no news is good news'. Hopefully he's having so much fun, like you are, with Sven.

You only stop playing Uno when the oven bell dings. After that, you spend the rest of the afternoon mostly just eating and watching stuff. Elsa puts on *Pirates of the Caribbean* and makes like a little antipasto platter because it's light and delicious and the perfect lunch before your Thanksgiving dinner. She also gets out a bottle of white wine, and you're not even surprised that it tastes amazing, too – not too dry, not too sweet – because she's just got good taste with everything she does.

It isn't really a proper Thanksgiving, you think, but you don't tell Elsa that because you know she'll think she's done something wrong. She hasn't. In fact, this isn't a proper Thanksgiving but it's still amazing. A friendsgiving, and you love it because you're spending time with the one person you actually want to see. The one person you never get sick of.

Thanksgiving is about family, and you have no doubt you've found yours in Elsa.
Chapter 97

Chapter Notes

frozen 2 was great i loved it more than the first (mostly because the songs are mmm *chef kisses* perfect).

massive shoutout to turwen, who has worked tirelessly with me to make sure these chapters are the best. i gotta say, next chapter is one of my faves. i think it'll be some of yours, too :) elsanna will happen before the end of the year :P

You're going with Hans to the Christmas party, but Kristoff still comes around to help you with your hair. There's a brief moment of panic when you forget where you put your bobby pins, but in short order, you're all dressed up and ready to go. The dress hides your brace really well, so it's just the crutches. You're pretty okay with them if it means you can walk for a day.

...you still pack your wheelchair, just in case. There's a reason you don't walk around much, and it mostly boils down to just how exhausting it is.

You don't get much of a chance to talk about a dual-Christmas with Sven and Elsa, but in the few minutes you have before Hans arrives, he seems pretty keen to do something.

"Is Hans unavailable?" he asks, and you shrug.

"Don't know, and after the way he snubbed me on Thanksgiving, I don't care. I would have been a blast!"

Kristoff chuckles. "It probably wouldn't have been as fun, though," he says. You still need to ask him about how his Thanksgiving went, but you assume it was a success because he's just leaving when Hans comes to pick you up. Your heart thumps in your chest as he walks through the door and you're standing there, smiling, but he doesn't say anything. His hair is slicked back and he's got a semi-formal suit on. He looks nice.

"I uh, like your suit," you tell him. He nods.

"Thanks. I've lost some weight recently, so it's been with the tailor for a few weeks while they made adjustments. I was concerned they wouldn't have it done in time, but fortunately some money came through recently so I could pay for them to speed up a little." He pauses. "Shall we?"

"O-oh... y-yeah. Just... can you grab my chair? Just in case I need it."

"Why don't you just use it tonight?"

This isn't going the way you wanted it to. Fortunately, you're saved from answering as Hans sighs and shakes his head. "Whatever, Anna. Yeah, I'll grab it, but I don't want to leave it in my car in case it leaves marks. Do you have a towel we could wrap around it?"

He hadn't cared so much last time you were in his car. Still, you nod towards the linen closet. "Yeah, in there..."
The drive is fairly silent. He's got some classical music playing on the radio and you hate it because you really want him to say... something about how you look. Your hair, your dress, the makeup. Your jewellery, even!

But he doesn't.

When you arrive, he takes your wheelchair out and puts it near the door. You really wanted to walk in, but you'll be way faster if you use the chair. Sighing, you hand him the crutches before moving across. There's a ramp, thank god. He takes the stairs.

"Hey, I'm gonna go and have a smoke," he says when you've finally caught up with him. He hands you back the crutches. "Johnny in accounting's brought cigars."

At least he waits for you to nod before moving away. You kind of sit there at a loss for what to do. This is just a Christmas party, but it's a Christmas party and maybe you were using this as a placeholder for the prom you never went to, but you wish you could have walked in there with a date on your arm.

Blinking back tears, you shake out your limbs. It's a bit hard to move around with your crutches balanced on your lap, but you finally make it inside. Then, you put the breaks on and stand up.

It takes a few minutes to pull yourself up, but it's totally worth it. There are dozens of people you've never seen, let alone met, all milling around. You see Olaf in the corner, doing card tricks for some unknown reason. Looking around, you try to find the platinum hair of your boss, but fail.

Perhaps she's not here yet.

Moving forward, you're glad there's another little ramp in here, too. While you'd specifically chosen a venue that was accessible, experience tells you that they didn't all conform to the same definition of the word.

You aren't using your chair, but you absolutely can't walk up – or down – any stairs.

There looks to be well over a hundred people here. There's some music coming from the speakers around the venue, and all along the sides there are tables laden with food. The bar is at one end, hosted by a chipper young woman.

You're probably not going to be drinking tonight, but it's actually nice seeing all the little things you'd planned come to fruition.

After a few minutes of intense searching, you finally see Elsa. She's wearing a dress, too, floor-length and light blue. It looks like she's talking with some bigwigs – they're old men in suits, each with a glass of alcohol in their hands. Not mixed, either, you note as you approach.

You're coming from in front of Elsa; you watch her face, heartbeat thrumming in your chest the closer you get. She hasn't noticed you yet; she's probably not expecting you to be so tall, you think to yourself wryly.

And then she does see you, and she just stops. Her eyes go wide, and you pause in your steps to smile at her. You're still about twenty feet away, but it doesn't matter. Suddenly, she moves, Downing her drink before forcing it into the hand of one of the men she's with.

"Excuse me," she says, and it's actually really rude, which of course only makes you smile harder because it's kind of funny.
She's smiling all the way as she approaches you; when she finally arrives, she puts her hands delicately on your shoulders, obviously trying not to overburden you as she leans forward to kiss your cheeks. If this is a new habit of hers, you can't say you have a problem with it.

"Hey, Els," you say. With her right in front of you, you realise that she's actually got flecks of green in her bright blue eyes.

"A-Anna? Wow, I... You're beautiful..."

Smiling so wide it aches, you kind of can't believe she's said that about you when she's so... Elsa.

"You're beautifuller- or not fuller, just more beautiful."

It was a poor place to flub, and you're still trying to get over it when Elsa says something under her breath, so soft you almost miss it.

"Impossible..."

But then she's shaking herself and stepping closer. "Would you like a drink? Or some food? There's a table in the corner that looks unoccupied?" She points behind you, and you don't even have to turn to look before you're nodding.

"That sounds good."

Elsa leans forward, holding your elbow briefly. Her lips come to press against your cheek, as per usual, but there's nothing typical about this kiss. About the way you're more aware than ever of her lips on your skin, the way it presses closer to the corner of your lips than the centre of her cheeks. "I'll go and get some drinks and meet you there, okay?"

And then she's off and you're swaying a little because wow, it's actually really warm in here? Which is ridiculous, but when you sit down, you'll definitely have to take off your cardigan.

You begin making your way to the table she probably meant – empty, in the corner – but it's made harder because there are so many people around now. It seems busier than when you first walked through, and several times you have to pause just to ensure that you're going to stay upright.

But you make it, without any actual trouble. Elsa's already waiting with two glasses of wine; she gets up as you arrive, pulling the chair out so you can easily slide in. Then she pushes it in for you so that you're close enough to the table not to make a huge mess.

"What would you like to eat?" she asks. You lift your shoulders amicably.

"I'm pretty easy. Whatever you think I'll like, I guess."

Elsa smiles before she leaves to rustle up some food. You can't even remember what you'd ordered through the catering company, but it was definitely all food that sounded delicious. Things like cocktail shrimp and cauliflower sausage rolls. Arancini and beetroot tarts. Fancy stuff.

When Elsa returns, she's got a plate laden with different foodstuffs. She puts it in the middle of the table, but actually holds up her glass of wine before diving into the food.

"To us," she says. "Happy Christmas, Anna."

"Cheers!" You clink your glass against hers, and wow she's definitely got good taste because this is like a sweet wine with a little effervescence. It bubbles pleasantly on your tongue, that's for sure.
It definitely feels like Elsa should be off mingling, but she ends up spending the entire night with you. Olaf pops over briefly to say 'hi' before he's whisked away by someone you don't recognise. Which isn't saying much, if you're honest – you don't recognise anyone. But that's okay because Elsa's with you and you're talking about everything and nothing. She spends all night smiling, and it's at you! She spends all night with you, only leaving to grab more food, or drinks, or once to go to the bathroom. An old guy comes up halfway through a conversation you're having about other musicals performing at the theatre in January (Elsa would love to go and see Rent, and you've never seen it, but you do know that one song about minutes in a year...). He gets right up close to your table and taps Elsa on the shoulder.

"Ms Arendelle, might I discuss the Pirtek merger with you?" he says in this snooty British accent and you're actually really put off. That, and it makes you remember that this is a work party and Elsa's a very busy, very important woman and she's wasting her evening entertaining you because your boyfriend is an ass.

You pick up your glass to give Elsa room to respond, and you down the whole thing to maybe give her a reason to stand up and go and deal with whatever the dude wants to talk about.

But she doesn't.

Her lips twitch at the corners, almost smiling for a second before her face is schooled into one of mild politeness.

"Please, Reginald. This is a party, go and enjoy yourself. I am. We can discuss business on Monday. I'll book you in for a meeting first thing."

His face twitches, but not for the same reason hers did.

"Now, Elsa—"

"Reginald," she interrupts, and suddenly everything feels really frosty. He's still standing above her, but it's clear who has the power. "You aren't going to make me be rude in front of my friend here, are you?" When he doesn't answer, she takes a sip of her own drink. "I will talk to you on Monday."

He grumbles a little under his breath, but there's an obvious acquiescence as he tilts his head before finally leaving.

"Children," she mutters under her breath, and it's so unexpected you end up letting our a rather loud snort. She jumps back, eyes wide before they narrow and she grins. "What?"

"Nothing, nothing," you say, trying (and failing spectacularly) to push down the grin that's overtaking your face. "Does that usually happen?"

She takes another sip of her drink, eyebrows raised. "Absolutely," she says once she's swallowed. "So thank you for saving me, Anna. Otherwise I'd be stuck talking to them for hours about dividends and other bullshit."

You let out another laugh – it's always so rare to hear her swear. It's nice, and it's definitely funny.

And then, the conversation turns a little sour.

"I thought you were coming with Hans?" Elsa asks lightly, after she's gone to refill the plate and get you another drink. You can't help the way your face darkens a little; Elsa actually grimaces. "Sorry..."
"No, no, it's fine. He's here, somewhere. He wanted to go and have a fancy cigar with... I dunno. Someone." You unlock your phone and holy heck it's already past nine. Looking out over the crowd, it definitely looks like it's thinned out. You don't have any messages from Hans.

"I was thinking of heading off soon," she says, looking at you. "I don't really like to stay late. That's when all the sober people go home and we're left with the drunks." Her face scrunches up in some sort of smile.

And then you sigh. "I don't know when Hans will be ready to leave," you say, and she offers a sympathetic smile.

"You can always ring him and find out. If you wanted to come home with me, I'll probably be making a move within the next ten minutes or so. I just need to go to the bathroom and find Olaf..."

You nod, and she gets up with a small smile. It gives you an opportunity to call Hans, and you're kind of hoping he doesn't pick up but he does.

"Hey," he says, and suddenly you feel angry. You've had a lovely night with Elsa, it's true, but he was supposed to be here with you. Wasn't he? Instead he fucked off to hang with some guys in accounting, smoking cigars like it's a 1950s gentleman's club.

You've got no time for niceties, because, at the moment, you've got no time for him.

"I'm leaving shortly," you say. He doesn't respond for a moment, and when he does, the anger only intensifies.

"Okay."

Okay? Okay? Everything about this isn't okay. You bite your tongue because you don't want to yell at him, and you don't want to cry.

"Was there... anything else?" he asks, a few seconds later once you've been silent too long.

You sigh. "No, that's all."

"... Bye, Anna."

Elsa comes back a few seconds after you've hung up. You're staring despondently at the tablecloth, and she puts her hand on your shoulders. She's so tactile.

"Is everything okay?" she asks. You look up at her, and you can't answer for a moment because her eyebrows are knitted with concern – concern for you – and there's a light behind her head, lighting up her hair like a halo. Your eyes trace the outline of her face, her cheekbones.

And then you smile. "Yeah," you tell her. "Everything's great. Ready to get this show on the road?"

She lets out a little laugh at that. "Ready. Phillip will be outside in a few minutes."

That's good, because it takes a few minutes to get to the door. Elsa notices your chair and grabs it, moving it close. She asks if you want to use it, and you don't really but it's late and you're absolutely exhausted. She carries your crutches, following as you roll down the ramp. The night air is cold and you turn back to Elsa to comment and- oh, it's pretty obvious she's not wearing a bra.

You inhale. Try to think of something to distract yourself because you were absolutely not expecting that. "Hey, what are your plans for Christmas?"
She tilts her head. "Why do you ask?" she says, eyes narrowed playfully. You give a shrug.

"Oh, no reason..."

"Anna..."

"Fine, fine. I *might* have bought you a little present."

Elsa looks surprised at that, eyes wide for a moment before her face scrunches in a mischievous smile. The car pulls up.

"Well, that's fortunate, because I might have done the same for you."

She helps you into the car; takes your crutches and puts your chair in the boot. And then she slides in and you don't have any of your things – no spare clothes or toothbrush or anything.

But you know it's still going to be more comfortable than at Hans' place. It always is.
Chapter 98

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

After your 'Christmas Party for Two' at Elsa's – after your actual Christmas party – something changes. Not with her – God, Elsa's great. But with Hans. And maybe it changed before then and you hadn't noticed, but you're actually really fucking sick of Hans not listening to you. He still hasn't touched your chest, which is getting ridiculous because aren't boys supposed to be obsessed with boobs? It's like he's not even trying!

And then you realise... that he's not.

So you bring it up – not in those words, of course – but you bring up the fact that you'd really like him to make you finish, and that you're definitely able to do it with your chest on your own. His mouth twitches.

"I guess I could try," he says, and he makes it sound like he's doing you a favour. "But I mean, if this doesn't work, then I don't know what the point is in trying again."

Oh great. So if you don't get off, he's not even going to try? It's super shitty of him, but you just want him to help you get to that point as much as you help him. You'd had him in your mouth! Maybe you should ask for the same.

You don't, because you don't have the courage for that. Instead you just lie back and try not to feel silly when he slides a condom on before entering you. Of course he's not going to focus 100% on you. Why would he?

He doesn't remove your bra; instead, he covers the material with his hands, squeezing. It isn't rough, but it's not gentle. You can see his hips move and so you close your eyes because you want to focus on what you can feel.

It doesn't make it better, and you realise... you're not enjoying yourself. Have you ever enjoyed sex with him? Even the first time...

You suck in a breath because you kind of want to cry now, and Hans mistakes it for pleasure because you can feel the bed move faster as he picks up speed. He squeezes your chest hard, and it hurts, and a ridiculous thought sprouts into your head. One you'd thought a long time ago, but had successfully moved on from.

Elsa wouldn't be this rough.

The thought makes you want to laugh, and cry, and you want someone to hold you and kiss you, but you don't want that person to be Hans. You can't even fake any pleasure because you don't want him to do this again. He obviously didn't want to do it to begin with.

He's grunting, and it takes a few moments to realise he's speaking. Asking questions about how it feels, if you're close, how close he is.

You want him to finish because you want him to be finished. Suddenly you're desperate for solitude.

So you close your eyes and let out the most seductive moan you can muster. It sounds ridiculously
fake, at least to you, but you feel Hans' hands pinch harder. It causes you to inhale sharply, a reaction he once again mistakes for pleasure.

"Please, Hans," you say. It's not like it comes off especially begging, because you can't bring yourself to do that, but it's enough. He stops moving, still inside of you, and he doesn't speak. He's panting, and his fingernails dig into your flesh.

And then he's pulling out of you. The condom goes in the bin and he flops gracelessly next to you onto his stomach. He's not looking at you. He never looks at you.

You don't want to be here.

It doesn't take long for his snores to reach you, and maybe you're angry about that, too, because he didn't say a word and...

And is this even a relationship? It doesn't... it doesn't feel like love. It doesn't even feel like friendship.

So you go and pack up your things. Get dressed and do your hair up before taking out your phone. You could call Kristoff to complain to him, or ask him for some advice. But there's really only one voice you want to hear right now, one face you want to see, and so without hesitating you go into your favourites and select the top name.

Elsa answers on the second ring.

"Anna? Hey, is everything okay?"

You open your mouth to speak when, unexpectedly, you choke. There's a lump in your throat that hadn't been there before, and the tears from earlier fall over your eyelids like water over a cliff.

"Anna? What's wrong?!" The alarm in Elsa's voice is palpable, and you want a hug. You want her to hold you so bad it hurts.

You try to speak but nothing comes out. A sharp sob rips from your throat, and you can hear Elsa on the other end of the line, asking what's wrong, asking you to talk. You can't.

You hang up, and open your messages instead.

can i come over tonight?

She responds immediately. Of course. I'll send Phillip to get you now.

You have to blink away tears just so you can type out a response. i'm at hans's place

It takes a little longer, but you manage to type off his address and send it to Elsa. Then you move to the front door and the tears come in fresh waves because Phillip's old and nice and he's going to have to help you down the stairs. He does, without complaining, but you can tell you're too heavy for him.

You feel like shit.

Elsa's waiting for you at the front entrance. You've stopped crying, and you already feel better for seeing her. Her hair is down and she's wearing a bathrobe and she just looks so concerned. For you. Her bottom lip is between her teeth and she steps forward just as you open the door. Phillip gets out to get your chair and Elsa bends over a little so she can look you directly in your eyes. Her left hand
comes to cup your cheek, and it feels like she's searching for something.

"Anna..." she says gently, and it's so nice to hear her voice. It's a cool balm for your frazzled emotions, and you open your arms wide. She sees the request for what it is, and leans close to scoop you into a crushing hug.

She helps you get upstairs and finds some wet wipes for your face. Makes you a mug of hot chocolate, and you don't talk about why you called her, or why you were crying. You don't want to think about it.

But, it seems that you will.

"Anna," she starts, once you're seated at the kitchen bench and nursing your drink. "Are you- did Hans-?"

You shake your head. "I'm okay. I just... I really wanted to see you."

Her face softens. She hugs you again, and you bury your face into the crook of her neck. "What would you like to do?" she asks gently. You swallow.

You want to stay here, right here, forever. But that's not possible, so you clear your throat and move away enough to answer.

"Can we watch a movie?"

She smiles. "We can."

Chapter End Notes

sorry that i didn't show their personal xmas party. i hope this makes up for it :) a huge thank-you, as always, to Turwen for her fantastic betaing, and her insights in general
You go and have a shower while she sets up Netflix. You're not sure what she's going to put on, but it doesn't really matter. You scrub away all your horrible feelings and emotions, and maybe you cry a little, but that's okay. It's different. It's refreshing. Then you take your medication and go to the toilet because you don't want to have to get up for anything later. Your stuff goes in the spare room, as usual, but some part of you wants to just fall asleep next to Elsa on the lounge.

So you brush your teeth and dry your hair before braiding it, because wet braided hair feels gross, and it's maybe an hour after you'd first gone to have a shower but you know Elsa won't care. And then you're rolling back out into the living room, and she's got some blankets out and has put the heater on and she looks ridiculously comfortable already. The light is definitely not as bright as it should be, and you spy a little dial on the switch. It seems Kristoff's already come over to install the dimmer, just like he said he would.

Elsa's flipping through different movies when you move to the seat next to her. You haven't forgotten about earlier, but it's easier to ignore now. Being here, with Elsa, is easy. It's fun and relaxed and you make a promise to yourself that you're not going to think about Hans all night. You even turn off your phone.

"C'mon, Els. Just pick something," you say eventually, after a few minutes and she still hasn't found the right flick. You're not really irritated, though; you're too busy grinning, an expression that only widens when she sends you a dirty look. It makes you laugh, and you lean across her to steal the remote.

She catches you before you can fully reach her hand, holding the remote as far away from you as possible.

"Anna!" she laughs. You poke her in the stomach and she squeals, throwing her head back as your fingers tickle her. It gives you the chance to surge forward again as she laughs, and you finally manage to grasp the remote.

Elsa's panting, and it's only when her arm goes limp and you draw it close that you realise the position you're in. Maybe she's already noticed, because you're half-lying across her and she's just looking at you, blue eyes staring at yours.

And then... they shift. Just for a moment, but you're so close that it doesn't take much.

She looks at your lips.

It feels like your heart is going to beat out of your chest, and you can't hear anything but the blood as it rushes through your ears. Something thrums low in your stomach, and unbidden, your eyes drop to her chest as it rises and falls with her breath.

As soon as you realise, you wrench your gaze back to her eyes. The self-admonishment is at the front of your head, the apology on the tip of your tongue, when they both die because Elsa's eyes are wide and soft and warm, and her face is blushed red, and... the smallest, gentlest, most hopeful smile is on her lips.
You can't stop her name is it tumbles from your own.

"Elsa..." you say softly, no more than a whisper of breath between you. You don't want to break the spell. Her smile still drops a fraction and her eyes dart between your own. It doesn't take a genius to know what she's thinking, how she's already berating herself. That's not what you want. You want... you want...

"I want to kiss you..."

It takes a second for you to realise that it wasn't Elsa who spoke. She's just looking at you, eyes wide with surprise. Your heart skips a beat, and it vaguely feels like you should be upset because Elsa hasn't said a word and that's not really something you drop on your friend. But you're not upset – a little anxious, perhaps, because she still hasn't moved – but not upset.

It takes a little longer to figure out why you're not upset, and it should definitely have been obvious. You know Elsa. You know her and she knows you and even though the surprise in her eyes is still the most dominant thing about them at the moment, it's not the only thing.

That hope... it's still there. And you feel so stupid because you've been wrestling with this feeling for maybe a couple of months, and Elsa...

With the way she's looking at you, you know she's been feeling the same way.

"Anna..." Her voice trembles, and it makes you smile because you love smiling at Elsa and it's obvious how conflicted she is at your declaration. Lifting your hand – the one not holding the remote – you brush the side of her face. She lets out a little noise, almost a whimper, and the longer you're in this position – above her, half-lying on her – the truer your earlier statement becomes.

You want to kiss her.

And it's not like Elsa doesn't want that. You can tell she wants you to be where you are.

"Elsa... do you want to kiss me?"

Checking – always good to check. The last thing you want to do is make her uncomfortable.

She doesn't look uncomfortable. Elsa's eyes get wider, impossibly wide, and she doesn't look like she's breathing at all now. She sucks in a gasp, shivering as you gaze into her eyes. In your peripheral vision, you can see her hands tremble.

"Elsa..." you repeat softly. "Elsa, answer the question, please."

Your hand is still cupping her cheek, and she lets out a small squeak that could be a yes. And she's answered the question already, just not with words, and something curls below your stomach at just how wrecked she looks. She's staring at you like you're the only thing standing between her and complete annihilation.

She can't answer the question and at this point she doesn't need to, so you just lean a little closer. The remote drops, and you move your hand to her waist so you don't topple right over.

"Kiss me, Elsa. Please, kiss me?"

"Ngnggg." The sound she makes is like nothing you've ever heard before. It goes straight through you, for no reason in particular. It's not an erotic moan, or groan, or sound. Though maybe because it isn't – maybe because it sounds like she's fighting against making such a sound – it has that
She wants to. She wants to kiss you, and you want her to kiss you, so why hasn't she yet? Her hands land on your waist, not your hips, and you can feel how she shakes. How she holds on like a lifeline.

So, you lean closer and murmur, less than an inch from her lips, "Kiss me, now."

With the way she's looking at you, the way you've told her to kiss you... you expect something forceful. Something desperate.

Elsa is none of that.

She closes her eyes and leans forward, and when her lips finally touch yours, she lets out a muffled little noise like something has just broken inside her.

But maybe... hopefully... you're also the one putting it back together again.

She kisses so soft and so sweet, lips barely nudging yours. Her hands have stopped shaking, and both of yours are now cupping her face. You tilt your head, just a little, and her tongue plays against your bottom lip. It's so slow, but that's exactly what you want right now. You don't think you could handle anything more.

You sit there for God only knows how long, kissing her. There's no rush, nothing demanding. She kisses you languidly, like there's nothing more she wants to do, and that's not really something you're familiar with. And then you finally lose your balance, ripping your lips from hers as you tip, stuck halfway across her lap. Her hands lift to her mouth, hiding her expression. You can still see the mirth in her eyes, the way her cheeks bunch up, and you smile at her because you want her to smile, too. You want to see it. So you correct your position, with a little bit of help from her, and it actually just results in you sitting on her lap, legs splayed out across the part of the sofa you'd just vacated. Her hands drop away from her face, but so does her smile. Her eyes widen, like she's just realised what's happening, like she's making a mistake of some kind, and no no no that's not what you want right now.

"A-Anna—" she starts, just as the colour begins to drain from her face. Her eyes dart between your own, and whatever she wants to say, she can't seem to say it.

And so you do the only reasonable thing, and scoop her into a crushing hug.

"Elsa..." you say, voice soft and warm and you can feel her relax against you.

This isn't reluctance, but it's hesitation. Hesitation to touch and feel and your heart breaks because Elsa's not- she hasn't- you've noticed that she has a fair amount of sex. And that's fine!

But with the way she's responding to you, to your touch and your kisses and your voice, you have to wonder how long it's been since she had sex like this – if ever. It's not like you have.

How long has it been since she felt that pull, that magnetic attraction? How long since she was with someone who clearly wanted her in the way you want her? More than just sex, more than just raw desire...

You want every aspect of Elsa. You want to see her laugh and cry and you want to see her every day for the rest of your life.

This is something more than friendship, and the very idea has you blinking back tears because it feels so pure. Untouched and unsullied. You need to tell her before you lose your nerve.
So you pull away, and Elsa's already opening her mouth to say something when you gently lift a finger to her lips. She doesn't fight you. Whatever she wants to say, she wants to let you go first. Maybe she doesn't even want to speak; wants you to convince her otherwise.

"Elsa," you start again. You could say something about how beautiful she is, or kind, or perfect, but for some reason, those words don't feel right. Not now. So instead you lean forward, forehead resting against hers as you smile. "Elsa you are... my best friend. We've done so much together, gotten so close over these last few months, and I... I want to get closer."

"Anna—"


She blinks for a moment, trembling. There's something in her eyes, something hopeful and beautiful, like for the first time ever she's letting herself want. Letting herself imagine a future where she can.

It's only natural that you'd kiss again after that declaration, but this time when your lips meet, it's not quite as gentle. It's not rough, not by any stretch of the word. It's just... different. She's smiling, you can feel it, and it makes you smile, too. This is what kissing should be, and suddenly, you can't imagine it any other way. Her hands are around you in a hug, as opposed to just resting on your hips, and your own arms are loosely around her neck. She's so warm. Maybe if you'd been normal in high school, you would have made out with someone on their couch and realised this ages ago.

Better late than never, you suppose, and then reign in your wandering mind because Elsa's got wandering lips and they're currently nuzzling into the side of your neck.

That same curling in your stomach, the one that you felt before, is still there. It's harder to ignore now, and you think you know exactly what it is. What it means.

It's a surprise, because nothing but your own mind and hand have ever made you feel this way before. It's ridiculous because Elsa hasn't done anything but kiss you.

But... she kisses so sweetly. Suddenly, you remember how she sounded that day. When that lady had come into her office and you'd wheeled in unexpectedly and heard her.

You shudder, gasping for breath. Elsa backs off immediately.

"A-Anna...?" She's looking at you with wide eyes – concerned eyes – and you take the chance to just regain some control. Not a lot, but enough.

"S-sorry," you say, "I just--"

"No, no! It's- I'm sorry, Anna. Too much, and--"

You cut her off when your hands move back around to cup her cheeks. She apologises so much, for things she shouldn't ever apologise for. This is one of them.

"I... am going to kiss you again," you say softly. "Unless you don't want me to. I--" You cut yourself off. Everything about her is so warm and welcoming, and you don't ever have to fear her reactions. Never have to be afraid of her.

So you sigh, letting your thumbs rub against her cheeks. Her eyes are shut, mouth slightly parted as
she tries to catch her breath back. You don't even know the last time you breathed, but you must be because you're not reaching for air the same way she is.

"I want to kiss you again, and again, and again. I've imagined you, and I've heard you, but now I want to see you. And... and I know that's weird and whatever, and I didn't mean to like..." Your voice gets smaller, and now that you think about it, you actually feel a little lightheaded. "I didn't mean for it to happen but it has...

Finally, Elsa opens her eyes. Her mouth is slightly ajar, and you can't look at her. Cards on the table. Your hands drop from her cheeks to rest on her shoulders, and from where your forearms lie, you can feel her chest as it rises and falls with each breath.

"You... want to see me?" she finally utters.

That... wasn't what you were expecting her to say, and you finally look at her. She's got a pink blush painted across her cheeks, and her eyes are shining. Biting your bottom lip, you nod. She tenses for a second, her whole body seizing before she relaxes. She lifts a hand to rest it against your cheek, and when she kisses you, it's with the passion you'd expected earlier.

You're holding each other's faces, keeping the distance as minimal as possible. Where before her tongue merely danced along your lips, it now begins to explore inside. She moans into your mouth, and every good feeling you've ever had about her comes pouring out as you kiss her. Her hair spills between your fingers, and she tugs yours from their plaits so she can do the same.

"I want you, Anna," she says, during a desperate pause for breath. She nuzzles against your throat again. "All of you, everything. Anything you want to give me, please..."

She can have everything. You want to give her everything, at least in this moment. She already has your heart, after all.

So you pull away, just enough to have her looking at you like she's maybe said something wrong. Except she hasn't, she's very definitely said something right, and you don't even have to tell her because you're moving to your chair and tugging her to her feet.

"Okay," you say simply. She just looks at you for a moment, as though unbelieving you could say such a thing.

"R-really?" she asks. Her eyes are wide, like she expects you to say something stupid like 'jinx!' or 'April fools!'.

You don't.

Still holding her hand, you kiss her fingertips. "Take me. I'm all yours." You look at her, making sure your eyes meet before continuing. "Elsa, take me to bed, please."

Either the words or the kisses, one of them, does something to her, and she has to close her eyes like she's trying to regain a little bit of control. Then she's nodding and swallowing thickly.

You have to let go of her hand so you can move, but she doesn't stray far, keeping it on your shoulder. When you're halfway down the hallway, you glance up at her.

She's already looking at you.

A smile curls the corners of your lips, one that's reflected on hers. You try not to think about what may come, but it makes little difference. You know what's going to happen, and your heart speeds
up. You're doing this. You're doing this, with Elsa, and she's doing it with you.

It doesn't even matter what 'it' is, not really.

Whatever it is, you're doing it together.

Chapter End Notes

notes: ahhhh it's here it's done but it's really only just getting started. I strongly urge you all to read the Elsa side-fic, A Night to Forget, in order to... prepare you for the next chapter. So you have a better understanding of Elsa and her thoughts and feelings and desires going into this with Anna. It's ElsaxOC, which I know probably isn't the cup of tea for most people reading this, but at the same time... you've stuck with me for 100 chapters of Hanna xD

Thanks, everyone :)}
You've never been in Elsa's bedroom before. It's similar to her guest room, except the bed is enormous and – actually, that's the only thing you notice because as soon as you've put the brakes on she's leaning down and taking your mouth again. It's so easy to lose yourself in her, in the way she tastes and smells.

The way she sighs into your mouth before slowly pulling away.

"You wanted to see me?" she asks, and you can't even really think of anything else, so you just nod. Your heart is thumping out of your chest, and your mouth is completely dry.

And then it's not, because Elsa's stepped back, grabbing the hem of her shirt and pulling it slowly over her head. She's so pale, and you watch taut muscles moving beneath her skin as she rids herself of the material. You think you whimper as she tosses it to the side, and she shoots you a bashful grin.

"You're so beautiful," you tell her, and the smile turns just a little softer. She's *devastatingly* beautiful, and you wonder briefly what it is about you that she likes, too. You're on such a different level to her. But there's no denying that she wants you, regardless of if you feel you're worthy of her. "Show me more?"

She nods, hands coming to the hem of her pants. They're shaking, but she still manages to get them off without much fuss. And then you're looking at her – all of her, save for what's being hidden by her bra and underwear. A hand comes to cover herself, just enough to indicate that she's just as nervous as you are.

You drink her in, cataloguing every freckle. She's got a birthmark on her stomach, just to the left and below her belly button. You kind of want to kiss it. And then you're looking at her legs, and your heart stutters for a moment because on her thighs... those are scars. Raised lines crossing her legs that you'd only ever notice if you were lucky enough to be in this position with her.

That's what she's hiding with her hands. She can't cover all of them, and you're not some scar fetishist but you kind of want to kiss them, too, because it's obvious she's unsure about showing them.

So swallowing, you give her another smile, lifting your hands to beckon her forward. "Come here, Els," you say softly, and you take her hands as soon as she gets close enough. You kiss the backs of her fingers before speaking again. "Can you help me?" You know she likes helping you with little things like this, and you want her to touch you again, even if it's just her fingertips grazing your skin as she removes your shirt. That, and she seems to like you telling her what to do. At least in this, she's giving you the chance to direct her, to tell her what you want and, should it come to it, what you don't want, without fear.

It's still enough to make you pause, make you pull back for a second. Elsa notices. Of course she does.

"Anna...?"
You take a breath. "I—" what do you say? You get stuck, the words freezing in your throat. You can see her. She's beautiful. How can you ask her for something that you're not willing to give yourself?

Not- you are willing to show her. Aren't you?

"Can... I leave my pants on?"

Elsa's entire face falls, and you look away. You've already upset her.

But then she does something unexpected. She gets down on the ground, sitting up on her knees so she's just a little shorter than you. You suck in a breath and it catches in your chest. Elsa leans forward, and she's got this tiny little encouraging smile on her face. She takes your hands in hers, threading your fingers together.

"Yeah," she says, kind of breathy. "As long as you're comfortable, Anna."

And then she leans down and places a kiss on your kneecap, over the fabric.

You choke.

It doesn't sway her. You can see her eyes flutter shut, hands squeezing just a little tighter as she gently moves up the top of your thigh. She gets about halfway before switching to your other leg.

And then she stops and looks up. "Anna, I—"

You cut her off, smashing your lips together. It's not soft or gentle or kind, but she moans into your mouth anyway, and you can hear yourself responding. She takes your bottom lip between your teeth, tugging gently before delving back into the kiss proper. You lean back, pulling her up with you. Elsa clambers to her feet slowly, and it doesn't even feel like you're in your chair even as she uses it to help push herself up, lips still interlocked.

Sometimes it's like she doesn't even notice it, and that's so fucking validating that it makes your heart ache a little. She makes you feel so... so normal.

And it's normal to want to look, and be looked at, in this moment. It's normal and, for you, right now... it's true.

So pulling away, you reach a hand up to cup her cheek as you try to maintain eye contact. "I w- want you to look at me, Elsa. All of me."

She chokes, nodding her head as she moves forward again. Her hands fall to your waist, and her mouth meets yours as she kisses you. It's almost too much to handle. When you break the kiss to take a breath, she uses the opportunity to rid you of your shirt, and vaguely you know that you have to move to the bed at some point, but it's kind of taken a backseat in the face of... this. Of Elsa, and of how much she just wants you.

"Tell me what to do," she says once the shirt's ripped away and her lips are meeting yours again and again. "Tell me what you want."

Your entire head is fuzzy and light. It feels like you're going to explode, or implode, if you have to wait any longer. You manage to stutter out a, "You, on the bed, now," during a brief respite between her assault on your lips. She moans, and almost makes to move when you stop her because even though you said 'now', you're actually not done kissing her. It takes a few more minutes before you smile and push her back, laughing because she looks completely trashed and is
still the most beautiful person you've ever seen.

"Get on the bed, Els," you repeat, only half-surprised at how rough your voice is. She bites her lip and moves, leaving you enough space to get up. You only notice now that she's in her underthings and yet you've only managed to get rid of your shirt. Normally you'd do anything to keep your pants on – or at least, keep your legs hidden – and yet at the moment they're the most uncomfortable, stifling thing you could possibly have worn.

She sits there expectantly when you finally make it up, though her fingers clench like she's itching to touch you again. And you absolutely want that, but first...

"Help me with this, hey?"

You're in your pyjamas, so it's not like the pants are especially hard to take off. Just undo the drawstring and pull them down, right?

And Elsa reaches over to help before pausing. Your mind stutters to a stop when she looks at you, eyes half-lidded, and says, "Let me kiss you, Anna."

She couldn't mean...? But maybe she does. Or will. You nod, and she bends down. Her hands rest on the hem of your pants, but her lips start just below your bra. She kisses down your stomach, sighing when your hands rest on her head. She's got so much hair, and you let out a little snort. She looks up straight away, and you shake your head, still grinning.

"Gonna need a hair-tie," you tell her. It makes her smile, too, but she just says "later", a simple word but full of such promise that you can't help but shiver.

She gets back to work, dipping her tongue into your belly button with an impish grin. You blink a little with surprise because yeah, it's not like it's a dirty thing, but that's still kind of weird. Like, her tongue in your belly button shouldn't feel anything other than weird, but actually it kind of tickles and it's kind of hot, and it's kind of completely Elsa. She takes a moment just to trail her teeth gently over your skin down to the hem of your pants and suck a bruise into the freckled flesh while you still recover.

Then she pauses again, just looking up at you as though expecting you to change your mind. You can't meet her gaze.

"Anna—" she starts. Her thumbs rub little circles, about level with your belly button, and it gives you the courage you need to look at her. She's so open.

She leans down to kiss your skin again, before asking, "Anna, may I see you?"

You have to take a moment just to make sure your answer is actually what you want. It's a big enough step to be taking your pants off; with the way Elsa's looking at you, you know she wants to go further, explore deeper. She wants to look at you – all of you – and that thought is terrifying. Would Elsa... would she still like you? It had been so easy earlier to want to get rid of them, but now you have had a chance to think about it – or rather, overthink it.

But Elsa's not kissing you anymore. She's still rubbing her thumbs on your skin, looking directly at your face. You know that if you refuse her, she'll accept it. That she'll smile and probably kiss back up your body again and she won't make a big deal of it. That she just wants you to be comfortable, and she's letting you choose what that is for yourself.

But if you accept... if you say yes... you don't know what she'll do. You don't know what she'll do, but you know it's going to be amazing no matter what.
So, sucking in a breath, you nod.

There's a little bit of shuffling as she drags the material of your pants from under you, but her lips never leave your skin for longer than a few seconds. You can't feel it, but you can see it. She kisses your hips, the skin of your thighs, your knees. She kisses it all with the same devotion she's kissed the rest of you.

You wish you could feel it.

"You smell amazing," she says at some point, even though your underwear is still on. You can feel the way your face practically burns at the comment. When the pants are lost over the side of the bed, she begins kissing her way back up, pausing when she hits your navel. "You smell so fucking good."

The swear word, such a strange sound from her lips, makes you choke, and even though you've just told her what you want, you find yourself changing your mind. "I want to kiss you. Elsa, come here."

She doesn't even hesitate. She crawls up immediately, kissing you on the lips. Her breasts move against yours, and you let out a sharp gasp at the sensation. You want more. Anything she's willing to give. One of her hands rests at your side, and it takes a concerted effort to grab it and move it up to your chest. You're so sensitive there, and she's so gentle. Perhaps it helps that you're still wearing your bra, because it takes the edge off the intensity. She can press her hands into your chest, squeeze gently, and it doesn't make you wince.

"Elsa..." you sigh as you break the kiss. Her lips seem magnetically drawn to you, because they immediately latch to the side of your throat. You can feel her sucking softly, bringing the blood to the surface, and remembering her own love-bites and how she'd hidden them...

You want to do the same to her.

But first...

"Els-" you start to say, before being cut off with a moan as her hand slips below the bra. She's touching you, and you know by now it's because she's so fucking gentle that it feels so good. "Elsa..." you try again. "F-forgetting something?"

She pauses, lifting her head to look at you. Her expression is so wide and open – so vulnerable.

"A... con...dom...?" she asks as her brow furrows in confusion. You snort, though it's cut off pretty quick when she extricates her hand.

"No, goose. But wow, what a guess."

"A dental dam?" She shakes her head at herself as she says it, and you slide your fingers through her hair. "A hair tie?"

"Bingo. I- I've always been safe, though, if that makes a difference."

"We can skip that tonight, then," she says. And then she mumbles something that you miss, and you cock your head.

"Hmm?"

"I just said... I like it when you pull my hair."
You just blink at her for a second before reaching down and gathering her hair into a high ponytail. It's so smooth in your hands, and when you finally have it all, you notice Elsa's breathing change.

"Like this?" you murmur, enraptured by her. And then you tug it, just a little, but it's more than enough. Elsa closes her eyes, moaning as she inhales. Her own hand clenches around nothing, and you want to see it again. Hear her again.

So you wrap the hair around your hand, ensuring it won't slip out before pulling it, harder than before. The noise Elsa makes is obscene, and now she's all arched above you, her chest mere inches away with her hands firmly planted on either side of your shoulders.

She's already kissed you, so why not return the favour?

Your lips land on her chest, above her bra, and she sobs out a sound that might have been a moan. The dual sensations of the pain and pleasure seem to be exactly what she wants, and you want to give it to her. Her head's thrown back, which gives you more room to pull, and her throat is on complete display.

There's no hesitation when your lips latch onto the pale skin, tongue and teeth working to mark her the same way it felt she marked you. The same way you've seen her be marked before. You seem to be doing everything right, and she doesn't even have to tell you what she wants.

You're in control, and it's that realisation that has your own head spinning. That she's given you control, and all the power that comes with that. It makes you kiss her harder, and when you finally pull back, there's already a reddish-blue mark forming. Something hot curls in your stomach, and you glance down because even though you can't feel it, you're leaking and Elsa has to know you are.

Not once in your life have you ever been this turned on.

But then your head empties; your grip tightens, and Elsa moans, and your gaze is planted firmly on your upper thigh because it's currently in between Elsa's and you hadn't even noticed her starting to grind into it.

Rude.

She makes up for it almost instantly when she gives a particularly loud moan, your name spilling from her lips. She sounds like she's almost about to break, and you absolutely want that to happen. Maybe you'd typically feel uncomfortable because it's your leg she's riding, but you don't because it's Elsa and she's seeking out pleasure from you and getting it.

And then she moans out your name again and you can't help pulling her hair, or the way your free hand darts down to rest on her hips, encouraging her to move harder, faster.

She doesn't hesitate.

"Fuck, Anna," she hisses – before groaning again because she had thrown her head forward, but your hand is still holding her hair back. Her eyes are clenched shut, hips moving faster and faster, and it gives you the opportunity to just watch as she comes completely undone. This is what you wanted – you wanted to see her – but it's so much more because you're feeling her, and smelling her, and experiencing her.

Her stomach tenses, her arms shaking as she presses into you further. You can see her hips are
tilted forward, putting all the pressure where you know it's supposed to feel the best – but for whatever reason, she's still holding on. All you want to see is for her to come – to hit that peak because she deserves every bit of pleasure she can find, and you want to give her all the pleasure you can.

Your hand in her hair tightens, enough that her head is pulled completely back. You can see the bright bruise on her throat, and unbidden, your fingers clench against the skin of her hip.

"Ahhh... ngh Anna," she cries. "Please!"

Ohhh you like that. The way she says your name, the way she's asking for... something. More? Less?

"What do you want, Elsa?" you ask. "Tell me."

She lets out another moan, hips working just a little faster than before. After a few breathless moments, she finally regains enough control to say – to *gasp* – "H-harder!"

You can't ignore that, not when she's so desperate for some relief. You move your hand from her waist, letting your thumb rub into her stomach before bringing it up to her chest. It rests on her breast for a moment, over the bra as though you're not sure where it should be. When you finally do squeeze it, Elsa lets out such a raggedy groan you already want to hear it again. When your hand slides under the bra, rubbing and pinching her nipple, you're rewarded. You take as much hair as you can with your other hand, pulling from the roots and hoping you're giving Elsa what she wants.

It's enough. *More* than enough as she teeters on the edge and then falls off spectacularly. She comes with a cry, this low, throaty moan that cracks and chips around the edges. The strength in her arms fails and she falls forward, shaking and trembling.

You smile, relaxing your grip on her hair as soon as she topples over you. Your expression quickly turns to one of surprise as her lips seek out your skin, kissing your throat and cheeks and chin and lips. Anywhere she can reach.

But... didn't she just finish?

"What do you want?" she murmurs. Her eyes are shut and she's still trembling a little, her entire weight on you. Her hips jerk every so often, the aftershocks making her muscles twitch occasionally. She's not trying to lift herself up, either; instead, her hands move to trail over your waist, your stomach...

Your chest.

She doesn't go beneath the bra, not yet, but you still suck in a gasp because it feels so nice and it's so unexpected. Isn't she going to roll off you and go to sleep? Or go and take a shower?

"What do you want, Anna?"

Evidently not. Her lips finally move to your mouth proper, drawing out your tongue so you can explore her mouth. All of her is soft and warm, and maybe she thinks the same of you because the hand not on your chest comes up to rest against the side of your head. The hand that *is* on your chest moves in slow circles, applying such tiny amounts of pressure that sometimes you think you're imagining it.

She pulls back eventually, looking down at you. Her hand pauses, though it doesn't leave your chest, and she whispers, "Let me please you, Anna."
You swallow thickly. "I still haven't even seen all of you, yet," you tell her, voice no louder than hers. "Shouldn't... clothes...?" There's no need to be loud here. She smiles, still flushed and breathing heavily, and presses her nose into your cheek.

"We could do that. Or..."

"Or...?"

She kisses you once on the lips, direct and intense and leaving you a little breathless. She barely pulls away to answer you; you can feel her lips move against yours when she says, "Or you could show me what you look like when you come."

The way she says that is almost enough to make you finish then and there. As it is, the blood rushes to your head and you're pretty sure your heart rate has never been this high.

She wants you to orgasm. She wants to be the one to bring you to climax – and you don't even know if someone else can do that for you.

You want to find out.

"You'll have to take off my underwear..." you say, because you can't bring yourself to actually tell her to do what she wants. It's too scary. But this way, you can show her that you're willing to go as far as she wants. You're willing to try.

As always, though, Elsa surprises you.

Smiling, she kisses you again. Her mouth is hot against yours, soft lips kneading gently. Her hand runs along your stomach briefly before pausing for a moment on your ribs. That's not the surprise. The surprise is the words she utters once she pulls away, never breaking eye contact.

"Will I?"

And then her mouth falls to your chest, kissing the skin above your bra before letting her lips land on the fabric. Even through it, you can feel her – and you've never quite had the same confidence issues with your chest as you have with... other parts.

She moves to the other side, hands running along your skin until they're beneath you, short fingernails pressing little indents into your skin.

Oh, short fingernails. Wow you're a moron.

"Anna?" she asks, and it takes you a moment to figure out what she's actually asking. And then you do, and your breath catches again because she's entirely serious.

Swallowing, you nod your head. She smiles, all bright and warm, as she leans down to kiss you. It seems like Elsa really, really likes kissing you. And you really like kissing her back. She's so soft and tender.

You don't even notice that she's unclasped your bra, so thoroughly distracted by her mouth, by the way she's sitting atop you. Not until her hands are retreating, pulling the clasp with her, is your attention drawn to it. It falls either side of your body, but the material still covers your chest as her hands abandon it to cup your face. She sighs into your mouth, and you feel like you could cry just from how caring she's being. How soft and tender and beautiful.
Her hands move, sliding down the sides of your neck to arrive at your shoulders. They gently push the straps of your bra down, and this is it. This is really it. Her mouth is still firmly planted on yours, and your eyes are shut anyway so all you can do is feel her.

She feels fucking amazing.

And then you feel fucking amazing because you've moved your arms so she can completely remove the bra. It gets tossed away somewhere and she finally breaks the kiss. She doesn't go straight for your chest, though; she doesn't even look at it yet. Perhaps you'd feel self-conscious, or anxious, in any other situation, but not here. Not here with Elsa because she's looking at you. She's looking into your eyes, cheeks pink and lips bruised and smiling.

Her gaze is so soft.

"Elsa..." you whisper. You can't get your voice to speak any louder. Her head tilts a fraction, a smile on her face, and you swallow. "Elsa... touch me..."

She bites her bottom lip as she reaches out a hand. You can't look at their destination because you're so invested in watching Elsa. In cataloguing everything she wants... and everything she wants to do for you.

Her hands don't touch your breasts.

They come to cradle your jaw again as she leans forward to kiss you. This time, it's not sweet and tender. This time, it's hot and messy as she drags her lips across yours, kisses your cheeks and chin and the space just below your left ear. Her position makes her weight balance on you, and you're already fairly sensitive. It's definitely not enough to come, but it's a start. Especially when her left hand moves down, leaving a burning trail as it comes to finally, finally touch you.

You bite back a moan, letting it resonate deep in your throat so that it doesn't come out in an embarrassing rush. Elsa smiles against your skin.

"You sound amazing, Anna," she murmurs, hand just beginning to massage. "Please, let me hear you..."

It's not like you have an aversion to making noise, it's just that it's never really something you've done. It always felt wrong, dirty. Obscene. Hans has never made you want to make noise.

But then Elsa actually pulls away to look at your, and there's actual pain knitted between her eyebrows as she says, as she begs, "Please let me hear you, Anna..."

Like she knew what you were thinking without you having to tell her.

She moves again once she's said that, but this time, her lips don't go back to yours. Not even close. This time, as she shuffles back to give herself some space, they land squarely on your collarbone. That, coupled with the way her hand squeezes just a little, is almost enough to make you moan.

Then, suddenly, Elsa is making an odd "thbbthbbth" noise that has you laughing. She looks at you, wounded, but it doesn't really work given the numerous strands of hair all over her face and in her mouth.

"Should have gotten that tie," you comment lightly, brushing it away. Even though the absolute last thing you want her to do is move, you also want her to be as comfortable as you feel right now.

Elsa seems inclined to agree about the 'moving' thing. At least, in part. She gets up on her hands
and knees and crawls forward. Her chest is level with your head when she leans forward, towards the bedside table. Her chest is right there. She looks at you and smirks.

And then she's pulling away, moving back to her original position and giving you room to breathe. She's got a blue springy tie and sits up, pulling her hair from her face. When her arms lift up, the muscles of her biceps and her stomach move and flex. You remember that you're basically naked and your face heats up in a flush that's less aroused and actually a little embarrassed.

Elsa notices. Of course she does. Her smile, once a smirk, turns impossibly soft. She makes a point of looking at you, all of you, before saying, "You're beautiful, Anna."

You avert your eyes and bite your lip. It's not that you don't agree with her – you're a fairly nice looking person, all in all. It's just... compared to her, you don't feel it. Not in the same way. Your hair is too red, your face too freckled. Maybe she knows that's what you're thinking, because she leans down to kiss a welt into the side of your throat before speaking.

"You are so beautiful, Anna." Her lips move down, teeth scraping along your collarbone. You can feel her eyelashes flutter along your skin, and you can't help the way you shiver. "All of you."

And then she moves to your chest, kissing around the soft flesh of your nipple before taking it into her mouth.

Even if you wanted to, you couldn't possibly have held back your gasp. Elsa's hand comes up to the other side of your chest, and she's not even doing anything except gently caressing you, but it's so much better than when you do it yourself.

You let out a small, "Ah!" as her teeth graze your nipple, and your hands fly to her head as your push your chest up. With your eyes squeezed shut, you can't see her; but oh boy, you can feel her. Feel everything as she uses her teeth, her tongue – even her voice as she appreciates you.

It's almost a disappointment that she had to tie her hair back, because you'd love to run your hands through it once more. She swaps sides, and this time, she spends a moment just bringing the blood to the surface of the fair skin between your breasts, outside them, below them. And then she latches onto your nipple again, using that same pressure to make pleasure absolutely course through them.

Your eyes squeeze further as you throw your head back, the pleasure crescendoing, building higher and higher and Elsa's only encouraging you further, so focused on her task it's like the rest of the world doesn't exist.

You choke.

Tears fill and fall because no one's ever touched you like this before, and of course it would be Elsa, this amazing woman who's become your best friend. Of course it would be Elsa, this beautiful woman who cares so deeply for you. You don't know how deep it truly runs, and part of that is terrifying.

But you're not coming, even though you can feel yourself approach that edge, there's something holding you back. A chain-link fence that you can't cross, no matter how you throw yourself at it. Why aren't you? You can climax from this on your own, so with Elsa, it shouldn't make a difference, right? Her mouth feels wonderful against you, all hot and wet and she keeps letting out little noises, so she's obviously enjoying it. And you are, too! Right?

Right?

This is ridiculous. Unbidden, a laugh bursts from your mouth, but it's devoid of humour. Elsa
pauses, and with your heart thumping the way it is, it's no wonder you mistook this nervousness, this 'butterflies-in-stomach' feeling for something else.

"Anna..." she says, moving back. You rush to reassure her.

"Elsa, it's- it's fine. You're great, I'm great. I just... have trouble finishing. It's- it isn't you, okay, you're really good—"

"Anna," she interrupts, gentle but stern. Her eyes are wide and earnest as she continues. "Anna... you don't need to come. I just... want you to feel good."

You feel your own expression soften, and she smiles. Then she moves up again, sitting high enough on your stomach that you can feel how wet she is. Automatically, your hands come to rest on her waist. Her hands remain on your chest, fingertips gently working your nipples as she leans down. For a second, it seems as though she's going to kiss your throat again, but she doesn't.

Instead, her lips come to rest next to your ear, and her hot breath washes over your skin as she speaks.

"You don't need to come..." she says quietly. "But I would, however, love to see you let it go."

And then your earlobe is between her teeth and she's groaning and her fingers pinch with just enough pressure that you don't even remember to be nervous or tense. It all hits you at once, and for a long moment you see nothing. Light flashes behind your eyelids. Your hearing muffles. Elsa moves above you. You can feel her lips, drawing you back into your body as you suck in a breath. As you settle back into yourself again, your hands clench her skin, fingertips digging in, and you hear Elsa moan again along with you. You're arching your chest to keep the sensations going as long as possible. She releases your ear and moves down to your chest, and the peak you just hit doesn't have a chance to wane as her lips take your nipple back into her mouth. It's hot and wet and Elsa's still kissing and moaning and it sounds like she's getting just as much from this than you are.

She's appreciating you, how you feel and sound in this moment, and another spike of pleasure rolls through you.

Eventually she moves away, smiling gently as her hands release your chest. The fire that courses through your blood has been tempered, just a fraction, and you suck in a breath. And then another, and another, and there's a ringing in your ears you hadn't noticed before and Elsa's climbing up and saying something but you can't hear her, ears full of cotton.

You can't hear her so you do the next best thing and kiss her, deeper than you've ever kissed anyone. She melts.

The kiss lasts until your ears clear and your heart slows, and then it keeps going because she deserves all the kisses you can give her.

But it turns softer, just as Elsa's wrapping her arms around you and holding you tight. Eventually the kisses stop altogether because you just want to focus on how she feels next to you. It feels so intimate.

You open your eyes and smile at her, and she's already looking at you. There's a peaceful look in her eyes that you've never seen before, and idly you notice her freckles, the hints of green in her irises. Her fingertips draw nonsense shapes into the skin of your shoulder, and you're just so comfortable. The desperation has vanished, but the passion is still there, smouldering in the pink of her face and the blood in your veins. You giggle like a schoolgirl, which is a ridiculous cliché
but it's so true regardless, and Elsa laughs too. Her nose taps yours, and you lean forward again to kiss her because you're not sure how else to thank her.

But then you're distracted because the trails her fingers are leaving... they're not by accident, on a whim. Her motions are purposeful as her other hand joins in, imitating the movements on your stomach. She's still looking at you, still smiling softly as her hand moves down... down... down...

You swallow. And suck in a breath because Elsa's hand is going to a very specific place in particular and suddenly you're... you're really turned on. Blood rushes through your head and your limbs thrum with an energy you didn't know you had, and both of you turn your gaze down to her hand where it rests, just above the hem of your underwear.

"Anna... can I?" she asks, looking back at your face. Her hand hasn't moved any further, and the fact she's keeping it so still is enough to give you the courage you need to look at her. You trust her.

"I—" you suck in a breath. You know what your answer should be, you know what you want. But... "I don't have a lot of feeling there..."

It's hard to maintain eye contact with such a bald declaration, so you return your gaze to her hand instead. She moves it, but it's heading back up your body instead. It reaches your cheek and Elsa tilts your head towards her so she can see you. So you can see her.

"Anna... who said it was just for you?"

Oh god.

You suck in a breath. It whistles through your teeth and a hot flash fills your bones and Elsa's looking at you as serious as she ever has. She leans in and kisses you once, gentle and solid, before moving away.

"So... can I?"

It's impossible to refuse her now. You want to make her happy, and this will do that. Maybe. It's what she wants in this moment and you don't have the heart to refuse her; not when you want it too. So you give a small nod, and a small smile, and she just beams at you. Like you're a present for her to unwrap.

Perhaps you are.

Elsa gives you another kiss before pulling away. And she's still wearing her fucking bra, so you pull her back because you really, really want to see her. See all of her.

She laughs a little and helps you remove the garment, and you kind of regret telling her she can touch you because you really want to touch her. But then she's moving and you've lost your chance and it doesn't even matter anyway. She kisses around your stomach, sucking and nipping at your skin. It tickles, and you giggle. You can feel the way she smiles.

But she pauses to look at you, and she's smiling so wide. She wants this. And you want her to want this, so you smile back. Maybe it's not quite as big, but it's there all the same.
And then your underwear comes off and she's throwing it to the side. She moves forward and pushes your legs a little, just so she can get in close. Elsa sucks in a breath and her eyes close, and she seems to just be savouring the scent of you. It's a sight to behold, and when she looks up at you and grins, wolfish and mischievous, irises blown wide, you realise just how true her words are.

This isn't just for you.

So you smile back at her, tilting your head. "Need an invitation?" you ask, and the bravado isn't even all that false. Elsa closes her eyes.

"Not at all," she says before leaning in.

There are no words to describe just how hot Elsa is, between your legs. She moans, and you almost think you could feel it. It's no surprise that just looking at her, obviously enjoying herself, is enough to get your blood pumping. You can't feel it, but it's always been more mental than physical for you anyway, and watching her... watching Elsa... it's more than enough.

It doesn't take long for you to hear her say other things, either. She moans every so often, but then you start making out actual words as she nuzzles in. Words about how good you taste, how sweet, and how wet you are. Words about how much Elsa loves doing this, being in this position, serving you.

"I wish you could just sit on my face," she murmurs into you, entirely unexpectedly. She's literally rubbing her face into the crook of your thigh like you're fucking catnip, and if you weren't caught off guard by what she just said, you might laugh again. Instead you feel a small pang because Elsa wants something that you're not sure you can deliver – even less sure about everything else so far. She's still rubbing her face into you and you can't help the words as they tumble out. It seems Elsa hadn't expected you to hear her.

"Why do you want me to sit on your face?"

Elsa pauses. She looks up at you, eyes wide, and you'd laugh in any other context. Right now, you can only stare at her because she's made a complete mess of her face and looks so fucking trashed. You watch as she swallows thickly, and she doesn't make eye contact. It's the same expression she had at the beginning, back on the couch right before you kissed.

Before you told her what to do.

"Elsa," you say, voice a little stronger. A little more commanding. "Why do you want me to sit on your face?"

Elsa closes her eyes and trembles, and when they reopen, they're glazed and glassy. She's looking at you, but she's not looking at you. She gapes for a moment, unable to answer, so you try one more time.

"Elsa, answer the question."

Her eyes roll into the back of her head, and she shudders with a choked gasp.

"I- I like it w-when you tell me what to do. When you... control me..."

Elsa's voice is so soft; for the first time that evening, she sounds... embarrassed.

You can't have that. Reaching down, you brush the backs of your fingers against her cheek. She leans forward, aching for contact.
"You... want to be under me."

Elsa nods and inhales through her nose.

"Trapped."

She shudders again.

"Taking care of me."

Elsa squeaks out an "mhm", with a little jerk of her head. It seems that she doesn't have the courage to actually speak, which is unfortunate.

But it's okay because your own confidence has kicked in, and your creativity. You want to try new things – this is new already, so why not throw in a little more? Especially if Elsa really, really likes it.

So, sucking in a breath, you say something you never thought you'd feel comfortable enough saying. Comfortable enough to ask someone to do.

"Take my leg," you say, eyes staring into Elsa's, "and move it over your shoulder. Same with the other one."

Elsa just looks at you for a second, wavering. Her eyes flicker between yours, you can see how turned on she is. Like this is doing it for her as much as for you. "Now, Elsa," you prompt when she doesn't move. She shudders and nods.

You can't feel her move your legs, but they're a dead weight – and she did want to be under you. Elsa wiggles, and when she realises that her movement is actually restricted, she lets out another little noise.

And then you reach down and grab her hair again because you know that she likes that, and you say, "Well?" and tug her hair. She dives right back in, moaning an "oh fuck," that shoots through you. You can't feel it, not in the typical way, but you know she's there; there's a sensation, deep in your belly; a fire, smouldering as she moves harder and harder against you.

She moans, and you see her hands move up your sides to grip your waist.

You can feel that. As much as you want to keep looking at her, you can't; your eyes close and you throw your head back because even though you can't feel it, your body still responds as though you can. It's not like you can rock your hips against her, but Elsa doesn't care. She just wants to taste you and...

Hear you.

Your free hand – the one not tugging on her hair – moves down. For a moment, you contemplate letting it rest on your breast, but it keeps moving of its own accord.

It lands on her hand, and she grabs it immediately. Your eyes open, and it's everything she's doing that pushes you, unexpectedly, over the edge. It's the way her eyes are on you, the way she moans and the sounds she makes when you pull her hair.

The way her hand squeezes yours, encouraging and soft.

You don't cry this time, even though you feel like you need to. Releasing her hair, you use your
other hand to pull her up.

She tastes like you.

You kiss all around her face, cleaning her, appreciating her. Elsa laughs a little, self-conscious, and you push her down so she's lying on her back, looking up at you as you roll to half-cover her.

They aren't heavy kisses, but they're enough. Holding her face, you show your appreciation as you kiss away remnants of what she's just done, as your tongue licks inside her mouth and she tastes like you but also like her, and the thought makes you sigh helplessly.

Your hand moves, letting her hair out of its tie because you just really love her hair when it's out, and now that it's not going to get in the way, it's the perfect opportunity.

The band gets lost somewhere in the bedroom, and Elsa lets out a little giggle. It's cute and bashful, and you return her smile. Closing your eyes, you nestle into the crook of her shoulder, kissing her collarbone as your hand wanders down her chest. You really just want to touch her. Her breasts fill your hand, and she sighs, relaxing into it as you continue to kiss her. Your hand doesn't stay there long.

No, it moves even further down, tickling her belly button before pausing. Elsa pulls away just a little so she can look at you. There's no hesitation in her eyes – only concern, like she thinks you don't want to do this.

She couldn't be more wrong.

You touch her waist, fingers sliding under the band as you begin to push down her underwear. She bites her lip and you smile, and then you're both working to throw the offending garment away. Her legs fall open, just a little, and your hand drops a little lower. It brushes against the scars on her legs, and that thought from earlier – the one about maybe wanting to kiss them – is still there.

But it would be too much. Too soon. It seems that your hand – heck, even simply your presence – is enough as you slip against her, and Elsa lets out a small gasp.

She feels like you.

You bite your lip, watching everything she does in response to your fingers. You circle her clit with your middle finger, and Elsa lets out a choked gasp. Her hands come up to cup your face, and you can feel how she trembles. Her bottom lip quivers, too, like this is so much bigger than she'd thought it would be. Thought it could be.

"A-Anna..." she murmurs, voice shaky. You lean in to kiss her softly, briefly, as her hips roll against your hand. She tears her lips away so she can speak again. "Please, Anna," she says, voice breaking. "In-inside?"

Her soft pleas make you smile sympathetically, and really, who are you to refuse her? So you let your hand drop even lower, exploring everything as you kiss her lips. She tries to deepen it, press harder, but you refuse to be coaxed into it. You want to enjoy this, you want to take her slow.

She lets out a particularly heart-wrenching moan as your middle finger finally slides into her. She's so wet, and so hot, and you can feel how pent up she is, how she wants you to go harder, faster. It's obvious in the way she kisses you, in the way she moves. Her nipples press against you, and you realise she's completely under your control. Not only that, but she's in precisely the position she wants to be in. She wants to be under you, at your mercy. She wants your kisses and your fingers and anything you want to give her, and it's clear from her cries and the wild look in her eyes
that she never expected it in the first place. That everything, from her position to the fact that it's you is so... much. So everything.

She's trembling, body pulled taut as you lean forward to nuzzle into her cheek. Your free hand moves up, fingers running gently through her hair, while the hand at her core begins to explore more fully. The pads of your fingers are slick as they flutter within her, and Elsa is all you can smell. You want to taste her the way she tasted you, to drink straight from her.

But before you can move, she's turned her head and used her own hands to hold you. Her eyes slip shut as she leans forward, and with a shaky breath, kisses you. Immediately, there's a change. The kiss becomes strong, fierce. Elsa's whole body quivers underneath you, hips rolling in time with her moans. Her fingernails dig into your cheeks for a moment, squeezing as you add a second finger. It makes her gasp, and then moan, all in one breath.

"Shh, Els," you murmur softly. "I've got you."

She chokes, body freezing for a moment before it relaxes once more into you. Her legs move, drawing up so that her feet are planted on the bed. It lets her hips roll against your gentle thrusts, meeting you partway.

"It's so much, Anna..." she says, voice low. Voice breaking.

You don't know what to say to that, don't even know if you should say anything, but Elsa's blinking at you like she needs to hear your voice. Like she needs some validation or acknowledgement of her words. So, you just say the first thing that comes to your head. "I know, Els. You're being so good..."

Her breath hitches and becomes shallow. Her chest barely moves as she stares at you. For a moment, it's almost like you've done something wrong. And then her cheeks colour bright pink and you realise it's taken her that long to process what you said in the first place.

That, and she likes it.

You press your face into the crook of her shoulder, fingers slowing down inside her because you want to savour this. She's so receptive to you, so open, and you just want it to continue forever.

"Such a good girl, Elsa," you murmur, eyes shut as you kiss bruise after bruise into her pale skin. She inhales and holds it, and you smile. The words come easier, like you don't even have to think about it. All you know is you want her undone, and she wants you to just keep talking. "So hot, so wet, all for me. You sound beautiful, Elsa, let me hear you."

She whimpers, and that's a start. Just a start because it makes something in your head tick over, leaving everything light and wonderful and clear.

"Come on, Elsa," you goad gently. "You want to be a good girl, don't you?" Another soft cry, louder and more wrecked than the first; heat flares in your belly and you've already come – twice! – but you know that there's definitely room for another one. Your thumb slips against her, and she inhales sharply before letting out a long, low groan in the back of her throat.

You have to pause a moment just to press your forehead into her throat, fighting down waves of crushing arousal. Your hand stills inside of her, fingers pressing gently against something so fucking soft it's unbelievable it's part of anyone at all. Elsa clenches around you, and you become aware of her hand as it brushes against your thumb.

She's trying to touch herself.
"Oh God Elsa," you say in one quick breath, looking up at her. She's already looking at you, and as her fingers begin to move, nudging your wrist. Her hips begin rolling, forcing your fingers to move.

You hold back.

"Ah, ah, ah..." you say, pressing your lips to her ear. It's not particularly angry or upset, just this... almost chiding way, like she's doing something she knows she shouldn't be. Elsa pauses and blinks up at you before pulling her hand away, a sheepish look on her face. She's all red and flushed, and some of it is definitely embarrassment. The rest of it seems to be unbridled arousal, and both probably stem from the fact she got caught. "This is my chance Elsa. My opportunity to explore you. It's your turn to let me."

She nods in agreement, her expression totally honest and eager to please.

"That's it," you say. "Hands at your side. Don't move them."

"Ngg yes m—"

You look at her curiously when she cuts herself off. She doesn't look at you, and the flush on her cheeks seems less aroused and more... something else. Something not good. So you don't draw attention to it. You just lean in to kiss her again, releasing her hand so she can follow your instruction.

She does so without hesitation.

"Good girl," you say, and maybe there's a little more pride in your tone than you would have expected – such a simple request, after all – but it's so clear how hard this is for her, how much she wants to touch herself, or maybe even touch you. That, and how much she wants to please you. Wants to follow your every command. The control you have is dizzying, and probably that's how Elsa feels at giving it up.

You slide two fingers back into her easily, swallowing her every gasp and moan as you lock lips once more. Her hands remain at her sides, though she's trembling like a leaf at the exertion of holding back. Elsa makes a sound deep in her throat.

"What do you want, Els?" you ask gently, fingers thrusting in slowly. The bed shifts, and when you glance down, you realise just how obscene it all is, at how much she's spread her legs and how hard she's moving against you.

It seems logical that her answer would be 'I want to come', but that isn't what she says. Elsa bites her bottom lip for a moment before summoning the willpower to turn her gaze on you.

"I want to touch you, Anna," she says, voice cracking. She's blinking rapidly, and you realise she's on the verge of tears. "It's so much. Please."

Swallowing, you nod. "Okay, Els."

She moans at those words, the loudest she's been yet, and her hands fly up to your head. You feel her fingers run through your hair, down your shoulders. Her lips search out yours, desperate, hips rolling as she begs you to go harder, faster, more. She manages to pull you closer until you're half-lying on her, and it seems like she needs the contact. More than your fingers and perhaps even more than your lips. She needs your warmth and your weight and you just want to make her happy.

She's not speaking, barely making any noise other than little gasps and chokes, until your thumb
brushes against her clit once more.

"A-Anna," she says, eyes wild. Her eyebrows furrow, and you're not sure of the reason. Your fingers flutter inside of her, and she arches her back. "T-talk to m-me," she urges. There's a red mark on her lip from where she'd bitten it, and you realise she's close to tears again. "T-tell me you're h-here..."

"I'm here, Els," you say immediately. "I'm here. For you."

She's looking at you, nodding along until you get to the last two words. Then her face scrunches up again and oh god she's crying. Her hands cup your face but her eyes never leave yours. They're searching for something, and maybe she finds it. You feel her pull you close, sealing your lips in a damp kiss that tastes more like the salt of her tears than anything else now.

"I'm here," you repeat, nuzzling your nose into her cheek as your hand speeds up. You want her to find that pleasure because she's moments from either breaking down or coming completely undone.

"A-Anna—" she begs, helplessly. "Anna please, can I come?"

You move up to her mouth again, kissing little trails along her skin until you reach her lips. She can't kiss back, not easily, so you thrust a little harder as your lips press against the skin of her face. It's not really erotic, but you hope it's at least a little comforting.

"Please, Anna, please," she begs, blinking back tears. You return your thumb to her clit before finally answering her, repeating her own words back at her.

"Come on, Elsa," you say softly. "Let it go."

She does.

Elsa wails as she orgasms, hips rolling as the cries turn harsher, more guttural. You pull your fingers from her as she shudders, but it's obvious it's not just the orgasm when she curls up, turning her body towards you and lying almost foetal. She's crying real, horrid sobs, and you don't know what to do other than to hold her. It brings tears to your eyes because you wanted this to be enjoyable but she sounds like she's heartbroken and you don't know how to fix it.

So you hold her tight. You wipe your hand on the bedspread and pull her close. With a hand at the back of her head, you let her cry into your skin. Now when you shush her, it's because you're trying to calm her down, not bring her up; you hope she can tell the difference. The kisses you leave on her face – her forehead and cheeks and lips – are there to comfort, to remind her of what she seems to need: that you're here with her.

Eventually her tears cease. Your own have fallen, but they're tears for her, not yourself. She wipes her eyes and looks at you and you can see her heart break.

"Hey," you say softly, wiping her cheeks. You smile, but it's small, empathetic. "Are you okay?"

She swallows and nods. When she tries to speak, it's apparent that she can't find the words, and even if she could, the hoarseness of her voice tells you that she wouldn't be able to say them anyway. You shush her once more, and pull her close.

"I'm sorry, Elsa," you say. She shakes her head, slow and exhausted and maybe even sad. She's got a far off look in her eyes, and it takes a while to come back to here. To come back to you.

"N-no... It's- I'm okay," she says slowly, drawing out every single syllable and every single sound. 
You don't interrupt her; you can see in her eyes how she's working through it, figuring out what to say even as she begins to fade again. Not from consciousness, but rather into herself. "Promise. Was just... big."

You hold her face close to yours, touching foreheads. Maybe her legs are entwined with yours but you don't want to tear your eyes away to check. You're chest to chest and her arms are between you. She looks so young.

"Has that ever happened before?" you ask. You're not sure really what you're asking about specifically. If Elsa feels the same, she doesn't let on. Her fingertips run along your lips, your chin, and you know that now isn't a good time to be questioning her. This was intense and she needs care and comfort and she needs it from you.

Her mouth opens, just a little. Her breathing is shallow, and it takes the last of her strength to speak.

"H-hold me? Please?"

"I'll hold you forever, Elsa," you promise. Her eyes sparkle.

And then she's gone, tension slipping from her body. You lie there together, and she's still awake even if she isn't speaking – and honestly, she seemed so completely wrecked you're kind of surprised she's conscious. But she is, because her eyes are open. They're unseeing and unfocused, and it kind of feels like she's staring into you. Her fingers move slightly, flexing against your skin, running over your freckles and lips and chin. You use your position wrapped around her to touch along her back, feeling her spine and her shoulderblades. Just mindless exploration.

Eventually, after a long time, she blinks. Her eyes refocus and she shifts against you before pulling away a little. Her hand moves to brush your hair from your face, and you smile, even though she isn't. She doesn't seem upset anymore. It kind of feels like... like she's empty. Waiting to be filled with some other, new emotion.

"Elsa..." you say softly. There's a peace, not a passion, that's shared between you now. Whatever was going on in Elsa's mind has eased, and she doesn't look so blank now. Her entire face relaxes as she lifts a hand, cupping your cheek. You can't help the way you lean into it.

"Anna..." she responds, smiling faintly. And then she looks away, though you can't read her expression. "We should probably... get cleaned up..." she says after a few moments, and she actually sounds a little breathless. The thought of moving sounds terrible, and it must show on your face because suddenly she's smiling, a soft, tender expression. All for you. "Wait here."

You're about to argue when you realise you don't really want to. She moves from the bed and you watch unabashedly as she heads out the door and down the hallway. As soon as she's gone, though, you find yourself fading, absolutely exhausted. Your eyes close, and you fight to keep them open because you want Elsa to come back, but it's a battle you're swiftly losing.

But then she returns, dragging you back to consciousness as she helps you sit up, kneeling on the bed in front of you.

"Here, Anna, have some water."

She's pushing a glass into your hands, and you didn't notice until now how completely parched you are. It only takes a few seconds before it's all gone, and you feel a little more awake – enough to watch Elsa. Along with the water, she's also brought in some wet wipes. She takes your hand – the
one that was inside her – and cleans it. When she's done, it feels clean, but it still smells like her. You sit up and grab a wipe yourself, cleaning Elsa's face with long, gentle strokes. Her eyes shut, just enjoying the sensations, and this all feels so natural. Like you're doing exactly what you should be.

It doesn't take long to clean up the rest of you, and her. You want to help her do that, but that feels like a little too much; a little too soon. She has a trashcan in the corner of the room, and so she collects up the wipes so she can throw them out. Before she stands up, she flicks the bedside lamp on, and while up, she turns the ceiling light off.

She's still naked when she slides under the covers. So are you, when she helps you under. Your heads hit the pillows, and you're looking at each other.

"Elsa..." you say softly. You like the way her name feels on your tongue, though you're not quite sure what to say now. You need to talk about this, now that she's a bit more... here. "Elsa, are you okay?"

She doesn't answer for a moment. Instead she spends a few seconds moving close. Your arms wrap around hers, almost out of instinct, and you kiss her forehead.

"I'm sorry..." she says softly. "I didn't mean—"

"Shhh, Els. Are you okay?"

You can see her swallow, blinking rapidly before she nods. "I- I am. With you here, how could I not be?" Her eyes meet yours, briefly, before she looks away. "I'm... sorry it got a bit... weird." She grimaces when she says the final word, and your heart breaks a little because that's not true!

"It wasn't weird, Elsa," you say. Her eyes meet yours, and well... "Okay, it was... different. And unexpected, and a little intense. But it's no weirder than... than being in this position with you in the first place. You don't expect to sleep with your boss, a woman, who is literally a thousand times out of your league..."

You give a self-deprecating laugh, but Elsa doesn't follow suit. She grabs your face and holds you there as she closes the distance.

"Never-" she starts, fierce. "Never say that. You are perfect, Anna." Her lips meet yours, and the way she kisses is almost enough to make you believe her because... well, it's obvious that she believes it. "You are so much better than me, better than I could ever hope to be."

There are things she's not saying, words that she can't find at the moment, that you don't have the strength to accept.

So you pull away so you can kiss Elsa properly, bodies close. Your eyes slip shut, and it's not the desperate, ferocious kisses of earlier. It's something soft, full of an intimacy and lingering passion that just reaffirms this whole evening.

When you fall asleep, Elsa's lips still on yours, you find that you dream of her, too.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: There you go folks, the big chapter! We hope you enjoy it as much as we do. A
couple of announcements: we're going to take a few weeks hiatus to make sure the next chapters are solid, so look for updates to resume early in the new year, and also Turwen is now co-writer! In the year and almost fifty chapters since she started betaing Risky Business, we've gone from acquaintances to friends to lovers, and the story wouldn't be as wonderful as it is today without her.

Happy Christmas and seasons greetings and all that stuff :)}
Your dream ends, and you wake up. Elsa's still fast asleep, her head tucked in close to yours. Her breathing is deep and even, and she's the most relaxed you think you've ever seen her.

She looks so young, like this. So relaxed and unspoiled. Her bangs fall over her eyes, hair miraculously unfrizzed.

Even though the blankets are still pulled up, you're aware of your own nudity; and, with the way she's still pressed against you, you're aware of hers, too. You smile – never before have you felt at such peace with another person – and move so your forehead is pressed against hers. That simple act makes her stir, and your hand lands on her waist as you patiently wait for her to come back to the world.

"Morning," she murmurs, as though reticent to break the peace. You don't respond.

Instead, you let your eyes trail over her face, her lips. Down to her collar, and the dark marks you've left there. The blanket prevents your gaze from drifting lower. Something spikes within you, just below your navel, and you feel your face heat up in a soft blush. You've never felt this pull before, this honest desire to be close to someone.

You push it to the side.

"Hey..." you finally say with a smile. You bring a hand up, but pause just before it touches her face. It's impossible to place, this desire to be near her, to touch her. She grasps your hand in hers, moving so she can kiss the backs of your fingers. Butterflies swirl in your stomach, and it just makes you smile wider.

"Wha- whassatime?" she mumbles, still waking up. You're not sure, and you don't want to move to check. Well, you don't want to move away. Moving closer, resting your hand on her hip and tilting towards her, is absolutely fair game.

"Early. Go back to sleep..." you say, rubbing gently. She blinks, and definitely looks more aware of her surroundings as she smiles at you. Her gaze drops away in a manner that can only be called 'flirtatious' as she moves even closer.

"I can think of something better to do..." she says softly, biting her bottom lip, and holy hell where did this woman come from? You struggle to swallow past the sudden dryness in your mouth; every single drop of liquid in your body seems to have gone to a very particular place indeed.

"Y-yeah? Like what?"

Elsa grins, pressing her nose into yours for just a second before her teeth graze gently over your
cheek and her hand moves to your stomach. Cool fingertips leaving burning trails as she rubs your
skin, and you inhale sharply. It makes her smile, you can feel it, lips curling up for a second before
she's moved to lavish kisses into your throat. Oh god you want more – shouldn't you be satisfied
after last night? Her hand slides up, resting on your ribs and teasing the skin just below your breast.
She walks her fingertips up higher, closer and closer to your nipple as her kisses grow harder and
harder, and you just about feel like you could finish already—

—and then she stops.

"Breakfast."

"W-what?"

Your head's all fuzzy, drowning in Elsa and how she'd just made you feel. Her hand moves away,
and you lament the loss.

"I thought we could have breakfast." And then she gets up – rude – but you've already kind of
forgotten because it's just made you realise that she's as naked as you and completely covered in
marks. Her hair's a mess, but a hot mess. You can already tell you're going to be battling with your
hairbrush so you can wrangle yours back into your braids. She doesn't turn around, but you still get
a great view of her from behind; a fantastic view of her completely glorious hourglass figure that
she definitely needs to flaunt more while you're around (or she could just like... not wear clothes.
You'd be pretty happy with that). A smile forms on your face as she pulls a fresh pair of panties out
of the dresser and casually slips them on before bending over to dig around for a shirt. She's so
relaxed and it feels so natural and wondrous and surreal all at once, like you've done this dozens of
times even though it's brand new. She straightens and tugs on what looks like an old university tee,
and when she turns around and spots you, she's got a pretty pink blush on her face. You wonder if
she's been thinking the same thing.

"I'll be in the kitchen," she says. "Don't take too long..." And then she's gone.

After she leaves, you look up, suck in a deep breath, puff out your cheeks and exhale slowly
through pursed lips. Despite what she says, you lay there staring at the ceiling for a while. The
fuzziness in your mind clears and in its place come questions. What does this all mean? Are you a
couple now? Can you even be one? And what about Hans? You pull a face. You don't want to
think about that right now.

But... What about Elsa? It's obvious that this isn't a one-sided affair. It's obvious that whatever is
between you is between you and that this wasn't just a night of fun. That she didn't acquiesce for
your sake alone.

Elsa... likes you. Likes you likes you. And you...

You exhale again at the realisation, stomach curling tightly. It's impossible to say whether it's a
good feeling or not, but now you've had that thought, it's impossible to ignore it any longer.

Pulling on your clothes from the night before, you wheel down to the guest room. Elsa's clattering
in the kitchen, pulling out pots and pans, and you're curious about what she's going to make. Your
phone's lying in the bottom of your bag, and you wonder for a moment if it's dead because you
didn't charge it.

It isn't, because you'd turned it off, but you think you're going to pretend it is – pretend you'd never
even turned it back on – when you see you have a notification.
There's a single message from Hans on your phone; it only came through about half an hour ago. It just says "whered u go babe", and you frown because he didn't even notice you were gone. And it doesn't actually sound like he cares.

You don't want to talk to him right now, so you throw your phone back into your bag and fish out your clothes. You're going to need to talk to him. But not right now.

You sort of want to take a shower because after last night you're not exactly... clean. But you also maybe like having Elsa still on you. You still take your time getting changed, appreciating the soreness of your muscles. Looking at the marks she'd left on your throat, your chest.

Your thighs.

It's ridiculous and possessive and you love it.

You change your underwear but you don't bother throwing on a bra because honestly? You probably won't need it today. And then you're rolling out into the kitchen where Elsa's making something on the fry pan. It smells like... pancakes?

"French toast," she says when you ask. "With some cinnamon and nutmeg. Although I can make pancakes if you want?"

"French toast is perfect." And it is. You hug her from behind, pressing your face into her lower back. She makes a happy little humming noise in response, and you just kind of stay there until she's grumbling half-heartedly because you're in the way but she also doesn't want you to leave.

It's not just the breakfast that's perfect (though it definitely is, because there's warm maple syrup and Elsa's made some sort of fruit compote and, your breath catches as you realise, fresh whipped cream). Elsa brings it to the table and it's hard to eat because you both keep glancing up at each other and smiling. It's so perfect, this energy that's between you.

There are... things you'll have to deal with. Things like Hans. But right now, what you've got here... you need to talk about, but you want to explore them. And it seems that maybe Elsa wants to explore them too. You want to see her, all of her, again and again. And not just physically. You want to hold her and hug her. You want to be her confidante, and you want to confide in her, too.

When you're finally done, Elsa takes your plates to the sink and you move to the lounge. The remote is still on the floor where you dropped it, and it brings a smile to your face. Elsa joins you not long after, sitting cross-legged on the couch, and she looks so young and carefree. Or well. Young. Not really carefree, not with the way she's gnawing at her bottom lip, nerves or something getting the better of her. You're nervous too, but everything just feels like it's going to be okay.

Reaching up, you cup her cheek, just to get her to look at you. You're smiling softly, but she isn't. Does she... regret it?

That makes you swallow.

"Elsa?"

"I have to tell you something," she says in a quick breath. You release her cheek, and immediately she looks at her lap.

Even with your blood now as cold as it is, you trust Elsa. So, swallowing your trepidation, you take her hand. "Hey, whatever it is, it's okay." The smile you give her is encouraging, but Elsa looks like she's about to burst into tears, or pass out, or something. "...Elsa?"
She opens her mouth, then closes it. Her fingers come up to her lips and her eyes fill with tears.
"I'm sorry, Anna," she says, in a choked sort of whisper. "L-last night shouldn't have happened."

Perhaps out of instinct, more than anything, your hand jerks away from hers. She... regrets it?

Of course she does. You're lucky enough to be her friend – sharing her bed was way out of your league, let alone anything else you might want to do. God, how stupid of you to think she'd want the same as you.

"I'm... I'm sorry, Elsa," you say, voice low. You blink back tears because you've had these grand ideas of a relationship, and she's still wondering how you ever pushed the limits of friendship with her in the first place.

But then she's reaching for your hand, grasping it with her two and holding it near her chest. "N-no! Don't apologise, Anna. I'm sorry. I- I shouldn't have let this happen. N-not because it's you, but... because it's me."

Okay, now you're just confused. You make no effort to hide it, and Elsa looks away.

"There are... things you don't know about me. I was going to tell you, I swear. I just wanted to let you get used to your new job first. But then you became my PA... and then my friend... and m-my feelings grew and I couldn't. I'm so weak, Anna."

She finally looks up, barely holding the tears in, and you don't even know why yet, but you feel like you're going to cry, too. "Elsa...?"

"I never thought we'd get this far. Never thought I'd ever have this chance with you, so it became a moot point, right? You- you're straight and you have a boyfriend and I'm your boss..." It sounds like she's starting to panic, and you grasp her hand again to make her calm down. Okay, so she wasn't expecting this. That's okay, you can figure it out together.

"Elsa, you're not making sense."

She sucks in a huge breath and squeezes her eyes shut. And then she speaks, the last words you ever expected anyone to say to you.

"Anna... I killed your parents."

Chapter End Notes

Ahhh we're sorry! (but also not because this scene has been planned since even before the first chapter. This was always going to happen).

On the plus side, we can absolutely promise you with all of our hearts that this will end happy. That has also been planned from the beginning.

This hurts and they will get through it. You just have to trust us a little <3
You want to laugh because this- this isn't happening. Elsa's playing a really, really bad joke on you.

Except she isn't. You know she isn't and you hate how everything all makes sense. Everything's fallen into place. It was the last puzzle piece, and it wasn't until you got it that you realised you didn't like the picture it was creating.

"N-no," you say, shaking your head. Elsa's still got her eyes shut. "No, my p-parents... it was a car accident. You didn't... didn't..." You can't finish your sentence. Everything's numb, a stark contrast to Elsa, who is sitting as tense as you've ever seen her. Her hands are clenched and trembling. You don't want to say it out loud, to make it real, but it's like you aren't in control of your own voice. "You... you were the other driver..."

She's nodding now, and it's stupid but you actually... don't know much about the accident. Almost nothing. They – the adults who had remained behind; the adults you met afterward – tried to shelter you from it. Truthfully, you hadn't wanted to know the details. Maybe you should have made an effort.

Finally, after what feels like hours of silence, Elsa looks at you. Her eyes are red and swollen, tears leaking out over her cheeks. For the first time, you don't have that flush of sympathy. You don't feel anything, not even anger.

"Please forgive me, Anna," she says. She reaches for your hand, and you can't help the way you recoil. You don't want her to touch you. The marks she left burn still, but this time, it doesn't feel good. You want to throw up.

"You- you kept this from me?" Your voice is barely louder than a whisper.

She doesn't speak.

"I l-let you touch me, but you... you're the reason my parents aren't here? That I'm stuck in a wheelchair?" You have to get out of here; you have to get away. Grabbing your chair, you try to move across, but you're shaking so much that you don't make it. You topple off the sofa, and Elsa springs up to help. Of course.

"Don't." The word is snapped, and now it's Elsa's turn to recoil. She looks like you've slapped her, and maybe she'd deserve that, too. "Don't fucking touch me."

Elsa's forced to stand to the side as you struggle back into your chair. She's watching, and weeping, and you want to cry, too. You want to shout and scream at her, but you don't even know where you'd start, and it's not like you actually have any room to feel the anger and betrayal you know you should. Your heart is too full of this aching swelling pressure that has no name.

She doesn't deserve to cry, not after this. God, you let her touch you, let her get closer than anyone ever had before – both physically... and emotionally.

And then another unpleasant thought strikes, just as you're finally back in your chair. You look up at Elsa, and she hasn't taken her eyes off you. Her whole face is red and puffy, not just her eyes,
and she looks like she wants to throw up.

"My job. I got that because... because of the accident. It wasn't my skills, or what I could do. It was just because it was me. Wasn't it? Wasn't it?!"

Elsa doesn't respond with anything other than a wet hiccup, and you know you're right. Huffing, you turn around and make your way down the hall to the guest room. You grab your bag, haphazardly tossing everything back in. When you turn back, you realise Elsa has followed you, and suddenly the anger you wanted to feel earlier is here. It roars to life, and your breath catches for a second at the intensity.

"Get out of my way."

She moves to the side, letting you leave, but she still follows you to the elevator.

"Anna- Anna, wait—"

"What?!" you scream at her. And you've never raised your voice to Elsa, not ever, and maybe that's what has her actually falling silent, harsh – but silent – sobs wracking her frame. There's no room to be sensitive or kind now. "What could you possibly say that could make this any better? I came here last night because I wanted to see a friendly face, and it turns out that my best friend is the same person who put my parents in the ground."

She looks absolutely stricken, but you're right. There's nothing she can say. She takes a breath, enough to offer a, "I'm... I'm sorry, Anna. I'm so sorry," that means nothing to you now.

It's not enough.

You press the button to call the elevator and when it arrives, you get in. The doors start closing and you lean forward to halt their progress.

"I quit."

The doors shut on the sound of a sob. It's not yours.

You manage to make it all the way home before you break. It takes more and more effort to hold onto the anger, because it's the only thing holding you together. The only thing stopping you from just falling apart on the bus in front of everyone is the fury you feel that Elsa... Elsa lied. She lied and she kept it a secret, and for what?

Was it all an act? The friendship, the job, the... sex?

What else has she lied about?

What else is fake?

It's obvious now that everything she's done, it's been because she felt like she had to. To make up for what happened ten years ago. It only makes sense. You're a nobody, barely graduated high school. You hadn't even had your first kiss before this year! You're nothing special and Elsa made you feel important. But you're not.

Only important for her to assuage her guilt, and nothing more.

Joan meets you at the door, mewling, and you push right past her because you... can't deal with her at the moment. You grab some fresh underwear from your bedroom and go to the bathroom and it's
only when you're under the hot stream that you find you can't hold onto the anger anymore. Your
tears mix with the spray and you close your eyes and just... weep.

You cry for the things you had, the things you lost. You weep for the past, and a future that no
longer exists.

Finally, you think you're finished crying. You're ready to wash your hair and your body and face
the day properly. Except you make the mistake of looking down, not at your useless legs, but the
marks left on them. Elsa's sucked bruises into your hipbones, your thighs, and you remember. You
remember everything, from the way she looked to the way she sounded; the way you tasted on her
lips.

You throw up.

When you finally manage to leave the shower, you toss on an old pair of pyjamas and crawl into
bed. You look over to the bedside table and remember that your photo – the one of you and your
parents – is sitting on your desk at work. Elsa must have been in your office a thousand times, must
have seen it.

Where the strength to actually go back into your office and collect your things will come from, you
have no idea.

Joan jumps up on the bed and mewls plaintively at you, and you probably should have fed her
before getting in. The idea of getting up again isn't something you can really deal with.

You feel so... fragile. Like anything could break you. Joan's face, eyes wide as she looks at you,
pawing at your face as she begs for food... that might just do it, too.

Sighing, you sit up. Move to the kitchen and get a tin of food for her and it all just feels so
mechanical. It has to be because you're not sure if you can cope with it. If you can cope with
feeling anything.

Once the food is on the floor with Joan, you make your way back to bed. You're not tired, but you
just... you just want to sleep. Escape the world for a little while. Maybe that will make you feel
better.

You doubt it.

Chapter End Notes

AN: First of a few chapters without Elsa. Sorry guys! ;_; If you have any questions or
concerns, feel free to message me over on tumblr!

Also, I've created an Elsanna interactive fanfic that you can play! The link is on my
tumblr sidebar – same name! :)

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!