A Mind at Work

by ahrupe

Summary

Alexander is a dick. Angelica and Thomas bond by comforting Eliza.

Rated explicit for future chapters.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes.
Chapter 1

Somehow, the whole campus knew. Alexander hadn’t thought that many people even knew who he was, yet he was getting glares from almost everyone he walked past. He knew he had fucked up, and he told Eliza. She was devastated, and he was kicked out of their apartment. Indefinitely.

Angelica knew. Eliza had called her the minute Alexander had left.

"Liza? What's wrong? It's like..." She squinted in the direction of her alarm, shoving her latest conquest out of the way, "It's 7:00 here. Why are you still up?"

The Frenchman next to her groaned and rolled over. What had his name been? Something too long to remember.

"Ange, I really wish you were here."

"What happened?"

"Alex cheated on me."

That was all it took. Angelica left her room in the care of her new friend -Lafayette, he said his name was- and took the next flight home.

Thomas knew. Eliza was one of the nicest students he had ever worked with, and they still got coffee occasionally. Alexander, on the other hand, was someone he couldn't put up with for more than a few minutes. It didn't help that they had classes together, and they couldn't seem to agree on anything. Thomas didn't understand how Alexander even had time for a partner. Grad school was his life, but Alexander somehow managed to juggle the same amount of work, a relationship, and (apparently) someone on the side.

Thomas had never been cheated on, but he figured heartbreak was universal, and it deserved food.

"Let's see... no, that's not nearly enough tomatoes," Thomas muttered to himself. Grabbing an armful of the best ones he could find (and eliciting a stare from the older woman behind him), he pushed his cart towards the checkout lane. He was finally done with his work for the week, and he was going to make the largest lasagna known to man.

A woman cut in front of him, talking quickly on her phone.

"Yeah, of course. No, I didn't forget the ice cream. Babe, please don't cry. I'll be home in like 15 minutes. Okay, bye."

She turned around, startled. "Oh my gosh! I'm so sorry! I completely cut you off, didn't I?"

"It's alright, you look like you have places to be. I'm in no rush." He smiled, the corners of his eyes crinkling as he tried not to laugh at how many items the woman had managed to carry.

"Opposed to baskets, are you?"

"I was in a rush and I didn't think to grab one." As she finished her sentence, all of the groceries in her hands toppled, landing in Thomas' cart. She began to gather them up again when he stopped her.

"The line is long, you're obviously stressed, just leave them there. It's really fine."

"Well, thank you." She extended her hand. "Angelica."

"Thomas."

"It's nice to meet you, Thomas." Her phone buzzed again, and she looked down to tap out a quick response.

"It's my sister. She wants me to grab more chocolate. Good lord." Angelica cast her eyes to the wide variety of candy bars near the register.

Turning back to Thomas, she said, "Which should I get?"

"Oh! Uh, I don't know. What's the situation? It depends on how your sister is feeling. I would personally go for skittles, but I'm having a good day."
"Well she just got cheated on, so skittles may not be the right choice."
Thomas attempted to take this news in stride, but it must've shown on his face.
"Too much information, I know."
"No, no. You definitely need chocolate in this situation. Lots of chocolate." Using his best
announcer voice, he continued, "As far as specific candies go, I would recommend this high quality
Godiva for when she's feeling better, and this low quality Hershey's for when she's not."
Angelica laughed, taking the candy from him and placing it on the belt. She waited for Thomas to
finish, then grabbed half his bags before he could say anything. "I at least owe you for squashing half
your food."

Once they had loaded their cars, Angelica extended her hand. "Thank you again for the chocolate
recommendation."
"Glad I could help. Give your sister a hug for me."
He paused. "Maybe... I could give you my number and you could let me know how everything
goes?"
Angelica smiled. "Of course."

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T- 3:26 So, how's your sister doing?
A- 3:27 She's okay. We've been making headway on the ice cream.
A- 3:27 What have you been doing today? Besides buying a bunch of smashed up tomatoes, I mean.
T- 3:28 I was going to smash them anyways, you just speeded up the process.
T- 3:28 I'm making lasagna for a friend, and I haven't burnt myself yet.
A- 3:29 Lasagna?? What's the occasion?
T- 3:29 They're upset, so I'm making comfort food.
A- 3:30 And to you, comfort food is homemade lasagna. A little extensive, but amazing.
T- 3:35 Scratch what I said before, I've just burnt myself the once.
A- 3:35 Be careful- if you bleed in the lasagna, how am I supposed to eat it?
T- 3:37 Who said you were getting any?
T- 3:37 Kidding. If I make you lasagna I'll be sure to bleed directly on it.
A- 3:38 I am so blessed.

—
Around 6, Thomas loaded up his car with the lasagna and headed out. He had made about the
equivalent of three full sized ones, but he made sure to package it so it could be easily frozen. Eliza
was so little, he didn't like the idea of her going without food for any length of time.
It may have been too much lasagna, but Thomas was a biased judge.

He pressed the buzzer to her apartment. "Hey Eliza, it's me. Can you let me up?"
"Ange! Thomas is here! And he brought so much food!"
Angelica trudged into the room and looked at their guest, expecting one of Eliza's strange, overly
good friends.
"Uh, hi Thomas. It's been a while."
Angelica was slightly comforted by the fact that Thomas looked just as shocked as she did.
"You already know each other?" Eliza asked.
"Yeah, he's the guy I told you about, from the store."
Eliza's eyes widened. "Oh! The guy you said was really-" Angelica pinched Eliza's side, hoping she got the message.
Thomas covered for their thinly veiled embarrassment by grinning and moving into the kitchen without invitation.
"Ange! You didn't tell me it was MY Thomas at the store!" Eliza whispered hurriedly.
"How was I supposed to know? I've been in France for 3 months!"
"I mean, he's pretty easy to describe. All you had to say was his hair is like-" Eliza made a motion as if her head was exploding when Thomas walked back in.

He tried to hide his smile, turning to gesture back at the kitchen.
"I already stocked your freezer, but I didn't know if you had eaten dinner yet. Should I get out some plates?"
"Definitely. Angelica will show you where everything is. I have to go change. These sweatpants are completely unacceptable for having company." Eliza practically shoved them in the direction of the kitchen.
"I do actually know where everything is, if you also want to change."
Angelica faked offense. "Are these sweats not good enough for you?"
"On the contrary, I feel underdressed. I only wish I were so stylish."
Eliza woke up tucked into Angelica’s side. They were covered in blankets from their collapsed fort, and she was almost uncomfortably warm. In a ridiculously slow move, she untangled herself and tucked Angelica back in. It was then that she saw Thomas’ mop of hair popping out over Angelica’s head. They must have fallen asleep watching "It’s a Wonderful Life," the title screen of which was frozen on the TV.

Eliza chuckled and switched it off as Thomas grumbled in his sleep and pulled Angelica closer. Deciding that she didn't want to be around when they woke up and dealt with this situation, Eliza changed and quietly snuck out the door, sending a text to Angelica, letting her know she was safe.

The fall air was refreshing, and Eliza made her way towards the nearest park. Even after talking to Angelica and Thomas all night, she still wasn’t sure what to do about Alexander. Sure, she loved him, but she wasn’t too sure about trust anymore.

A couple laid out their blanket in her line of sight, and she watched them assemble the elaborate picnic they had packed. Alexander had tried that once. Eliza had only gotten two bites into her sandwich before she had to turn and politely spit it out. Alexander had laughed, not offended at all, and bought them burgers from a nearby food truck.

Eliza was shaken from the memory by an all too familiar voice.
“Can I sit down?” Alexander gestured to the bench she was on. Eliza nodded.
“Did you know I would be here?”
“You usually go on walks when you’re thinking, and I just figured...” He trailed off, looking down at his hands.
Eliza was silent for a minute, studying Alexander’s face. He had only been gone for a day, but she missed having him around.
“Alex, I want to work through this.”
He stared at her in surprise.
“You do?”
“I do. I’m going to need some time. I know you only have one speed, but you’ll just have to wait for a bit. Okay?”
“Of course.”
Eliza’s stomach growled loudly. Without thinking, she reached into Alexander’s backpack and grabbed the granola bar she knew would be in the front pocket.
“So, who are you staying with?”
“Herc. His roommate is gone for a few weeks on vacation so I’m not imposing too much.”

Eliza finished the granola bar slowly, trying to think of a kind way to address what desperately needed to be said. Instead, she blurted out, “Why? I just- I just need to know why.”
Alexander rubbed his forehead.
“Alex, this shouldn’t be a hard question.”
“I know. I don’t have a good answer.”
Eliza bristled. “You either wanted to or you didn’t. It’s that simple.”
“I wanted to.” Alexander hung his head in shame. “At the time, I wanted to. When it was over, I regretted it. You have to believe me.”

“How do I know you won’t do it again?”
Alexander sighed. “I guess you don’t.”
He was silent for a while, his eyes screwed shut in the way they always were when he tried to hold something back. Eliza knew that look, knew that if she waited he would come to some sort of emotional breakthrough. His walls were built so high, and taking them down was more than she could handle at the moment.
After a long silence, Alexander reached out to place his hand on hers.
“I think I was scared of our relationship. I care for you more than anyone I know, and I was scared of how happy I was. I thought that maybe I was missing out on being this stereotypical carefree person who slept around, drove motorcycles, went cliff diving. Before, I thought I didn’t deserve what had fallen into my lap. And now I don’t.” Eliza started to speak and he shook his head.
“I don’t deserve you. Don’t pretend I do. But hey, when has anyone deserved someone so wonderful?”
Eliza met his eyes and smiled.
“Please don’t go cliff diving. That would make me too nervous.” Alexander laughed.
“If you’ll have me, I will never even look at a cliff.” Eliza punched his arm.
“What about the motorcycle?”
“Never wanted one.”
“Well I don’t want you to get too boring…”

Angelica woke up to her phone buzzing.
Alexander and I are going out to lunch. I’ll be home in a few hours.
“That piece of shit!” Angelica exclaimed, sitting up quickly, accidentally elbowing the lump next to her.
Thomas. The lump was Thomas, and he was in a lot of pain.
“Oh my god, are your elbows made of steel??”
“I’m sorry! I, uh, I didn’t know you stayed the night.” Angelica buried her face in one of the many pillows surrounding them, partially out of frustration, partially to hide the blush on her cheeks. She was no stranger to people staying the night, it just usually wasn’t so platonic.
“What happened to piss you off so early?”
“It’s noon, Thomas. And Alexander somehow talked Eliza into going out with him again.”
“What?!”
“I know!” Angelica was seething. After last night, she thought Eliza would’ve made the right choice. The guy cheated on her, what more was there to know?

She turned, realizing too late how close Thomas’ face was. She blushed again.
Thomas grinned. “Something wrong?”
“I just really hate Alexander. That’s all.”
Thomas trailed his fingers up her arm. He knew that he should be working on some way to help Eliza, but somehow Angelica looked more beautiful after she had just woken up, and he wasn’t about to miss the opportunity that was six inches away from him.
“That’s… all?”
“I may be… a little distracted at the moment.”
Thomas rubbed his thumb against her lower lip. Angelica weighed her options. She could worry
about Eliza, who was making a poor decision, or she could pursue… whatever this was.

She chose the latter, swinging her leg over Thomas’ hips and crushing their lips together. His tongue brushed against her lips, and she gladly gave him access, fighting for control. Angelica fist her hands in his hair and pulled. Thomas moaned loudly. She smirked, filing his reaction away for a later date.

Thomas grasped the bottom of her shirt and she nodded, allowing him to pull it over her head. He let out a small groan when he realized she wasn’t wearing anything under it, and lifted his head to suck on one nipple, rolling the other between his fingers. Angelica ground down on him.

“Not fair,” she said, moving to help Thomas pull his shirt off. “You have too many clothes.” She scooted down his body, unbuttoning and yanking his jeans off in one swift motion. Angelica suddenly found herself on her back, laughing.

“How did you do that so fast?”

“Proper motivation,” Thomas muttered, kissing his way down her chest. He bit at her hip, his hands spreading her thighs apart. His lips found her clit, and she writhed underneath him. He really was too good with his tongue. Thomas hummed in pleasure and the vibrations against her clit pushed her over the edge. She ground down onto his mouth as she rode out her orgasm, shaking.

Thomas kissed her palm as she caught her breath. Angelica pulled him up and tucked herself into his side. She reached down to feel his length through his briefs. As she went to pull the band down, her phone rang.

“It's Eliza. I've got to answer it.” Angelica leaned in to give him a quick kiss.

"Hey hon. What's up?" She pulled Thomas' cock out and began to stroke it gently. His quick intake of breath made her pick up the pace. She paused, listening, as licked a stripe across her hand for lubrication.

"Yeah, where are you?" Angelica smirked as she leaned in to bite his earlobe.

"No, I just don't understand why you're being so nice." Thomas started to moan and she slapped her hand over his mouth.

"Okay, I'll be there in 10." She hung up the phone and Thomas immediately captured her lips with his. Angelica pushed him onto his back and swallowed him as far as she could go, using her hand to stroke the rest of his cock. Her other hand cupped his balls.

"I'm gonna come," Thomas grunted. Angelica looked up at him and sped up, pressing her tongue underneath the head. Thomas' hand gripped her shoulder as he came, thrusting shallowly into her mouth. She pulled off and saw that Thomas had thrown his arm over his face, breathing heavily. He pulled her up, kissing the top of her head. Angelica laid her head on his chest for a minute, listening to his heartbeat.

"Alright," she said, patting his stomach, "I have to go get Eliza." She went to put her shirt and sweats back on, but Thomas pulled her into a slow kiss, full of something she couldn't place.

"I don't want to keep her waiting. I'll be back soon. Maybe you could make lunch?" She looked at him hopefully.

"Yeah, I'm starving." Thomas smiled.

"Does lasagna sound okay?"

Angelica just laughed and shut the door behind her.
Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading, don't hesitate to message me!
You reading this- you're the best.
Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Eliza stands up for herself.

Chapter Notes

The John they talk about is John Church, not Laurens. It’s confusing.

“Are you sure you don’t want me to come with?”
“Angelica, if you keep asking I’m going to put you on a plane and send you back to France!” Eliza shut the door behind her, letting out a sigh. Having Angelica around was great, but she missed the quiet of her apartment. Well, relative quiet. Alexander was silent often enough when he was working, but at least once a day he would turn to her and talk through a complex problem which she did not understand in the slightest. She usually just nodded and smiled, and when he figured it out he would dance and pepper her face with kisses, calling her his muse.

Alexander had been gone for a week, and Eliza needed some semblance of normalcy. Grocery list in hand, she pushed her cart through the store making sure to grab extra of everything, as Thomas had been coming around quite a bit. Angelica and Thomas seemed to think that Eliza couldn’t see the small touches that passed between them. They weren’t exactly being subtle. Eliza could hear the whispered goodbyes coming from the living room at 1 in the morning. Angelica had been sending her work in over email, claiming her professors didn’t mind. She proofread parts of Thomas’ papers when he finished them, continually surprising him with her insight and feedback.

Eliza wanted the best for her sister, but watching a new relationship form while she was struggling with her own could be a bit much at times. She had been politely declining all of Angelica’s invitations to go out, claiming that her homework was getting to be too much. Getting groceries had turned into an escape.

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There was a knock at the door. Expecting Thomas, Angelica opened it, but she was greeted by a surprised Alexander. “Oh, hey Angelica. I didn’t know you would be arou-” Angelica’s fist connected with his jaw, cutting him off. He stumbled back, holding his face. “What the fuck?” “You hurt my sister, I hurt you. Now get out. Eliza’s not around, and I have no desire to talk to you.” “Alexander?” Eliza’s voice echoed down the hall. “What’s wrong?” Angelica heard her approaching footsteps and stormed into the kitchen. Of course Eliza was going to comfort him. “You must have one hell of a right hook. He’s going to have a huge bruise.” Thomas entered, a grocery bag about to fall out of his arms. Angelica grabbed it and started unloading what Eliza had bought.
“He deserves it.”
“I agree.” He was silent for a moment, then pulled her into his arms. She buried her face in his chest and tried to hold back the tears that she had been fighting since she had first seen Eliza.

She was lying on her bed, not in it. When Angelica came in the room, she stayed quiet. “Honey? How are you doing?”
Eliza didn’t answer, so Angelica went to the kitchen and made tea. She checked her phone to see 12 unread messages from Peggy, who was worried because Eliza hadn’t been returning her calls. Angelica reassured her that everything was alright, and promised to call soon.

Eliza still hadn’t moved. Angelica gave up and tucked her into bed, cuddling up next to her. She pressed kisses to Eliza’s hair until she finally broke down and cried, her whole body shaking. They fell asleep holding each other and hadn’t gotten out of bed for almost a day, spending a fair amount of time on the phone with Peggy, who promised to “kick Alexander’s ass five ways to Sunday” if Eliza wanted.

“What the hell were you thinking?!” Eliza burst into the kitchen, throwing the rest of the groceries onto the counter.

Angelica pulled away from Thomas and faced her sister, stunned. “I told you I wanted to work through it. I asked you to be patient and to try to understand. And then you go and do this?” Eliza gestured to the doorway where Alexander had been. “He broke your heart! I can’t sit around and pretend I don’t want to hurt him.”

Eliza took a step forward. “You never listen to me! You have to let me deal with this my own way.” “He fucking cheated on you! He deserved it. You wouldn’t do it, so I did.”

“Alexander isn’t John!” Angelica fell silent, staring at her sister, her eyes full of hurt.

Thomas cleared his throat. “I’m sorry, who’s John?”

“You know what, fine. Deal with this on your own.” Angelica moved to leave, but Thomas grabbed her arm. “Wait, let me-”

“Fuck off, Thomas!” She yanked her arm out of his grasp and stormed out the front door, slamming it behind her.

Thomas looked at Eliza. She had started crying, and he hugged her tightly. “Who’s John?” He asked again.

Eliza shook her head. “I shouldn’t have mentioned him.”

“I just want to help.” “I’m sorry, it’s not my place to tell.” She sighed shakily. “I need to go call Alexander, I said I would let him know what happened.” She turned to head to her room, and said, “She’s probably at the gym. Check there.”

The punching bag swayed, making it harder to hit. There was no one around to spot her, so she was having trouble letting out her anger. Eliza was right, she shouldn’t have punched him. But he had showed up without a care in the world, and she hadn’t been able to hold back.

Large hands reached out to steady the bag she was hitting. “I understand why you’re so good at this now. You have great form.” Thomas gave her a small smile.

Angelica was quiet, save for the small huffs of air when she landed a punch. After a while she got tired and sat down on the mat. Thomas moved to sit next to her, waiting. “I’m sorry I yelled at you.”
He took her hand, looking into her eyes. “I accept your apology.” He paused. “I don’t want you to think you need to tell me anything.”
“Can I come back to your place? Eliza probably doesn’t want to see me right now, and I need to shower.”
“Of course.”
Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

Angst, then smut.

Chapter Notes

John Church probably did nothing wrong in real life, but here I am vilifying him.

Angelica stayed in the shower until the water ran cold. Thomas wasn’t upset with her, but she didn’t have the energy to talk about what had happened. She found him in his bed, thanking her lucky stars when he simply reached out an arm to pull her in, falling asleep almost immediately after she was under the covers. Angelica tried to think of an adequate explanation to send to Eliza, but decided she had better do it in person. Thomas woke up around 2 am to find her asleep, phone in hand. She had evidently crafted a text and passed out before she could send it.

_I’m so sorry. Let me know when you want to talk again, no pressure. Love you_.

He chuckled and gently pulled it from her grasp, pressing send and setting it on the bedside table.

The smell of eggs and bacon wafted into the bedroom, waking Angelica up. Thomas rounded the corner carrying a tray that he set on her lap as she rubbed the sleep out of her eyes.

“If I had known this was waiting for me I would’ve stayed over a long time ago.”

“Babe, all you had to do was ask.” He beamed at her and picked a piece of bacon off her plate. Thomas had made an exorbitant amount of food, and they ate in comfortable silence. As he ate the last piece of toast, he met Angelica’s eyes. He wasn’t pressuring her, but she knew she couldn’t avoid the conversation any longer. She sighed.

“John is my ex.”

“I figured as much, given your reaction.” Thomas laid across her legs, staring expectantly.

“We had been dating for three years when I found out he was cheating on me. He had been doing it for a while and I was too stupid to notice.”

Thomas started to speak but she cut him off. “No, I was. It was so obvious. He would cancel plans at the last minute, or just blow me off without saying anything.” Her eyes filled with tears. “When we had sex I could smell her on him.”

Thomas sat up and hugged her. She continued talking into his shoulder, her words muffled.

“I would ask him where he had been, or why he was acting differently, but he would brush it off and tell me I was imagining things. It got to the point where if I even mentioned that something was wrong he would call me an idiot; tell me I was just trying to stir up trouble where there wasn’t any.”

Angelica felt him stiffen, his arms tightening around her.

“And I know now that it was abuse. I’ve told myself that enough times. It’s just… hard to accept that someone you loved would try and hurt you, you know?”

Thomas nodded, lost for words.

“That’s why I’m so scared for Eliza. I don’t want her to ever have to go through what I did.”

Angelica sighed and looked up at Thomas, who was crying silently. She adjusted herself so she was sitting in his lap and pressed a kiss to his forehead.
Holding his face in her hands, she said, “If it makes you feel better, I kicked his ass.”

Thomas looked shocked. “You did?”

“Mhmm. He came by my dorm earlier this year, drunk, banging on the door. When I opened it he tried to get in, and I… forcibly removed him.”

Thomas raised his eyebrows questioningly.

“In addition to getting him out I may have also given him a black eye and a broken rib. I never heard anything about it and I haven’t seen him since, so he must have been too ashamed to tell anyone.”

She let out a small laugh, trying to get Thomas to smile.

He brushed a strand of hair out of her face and whispered, “Can I kiss you?”

Angelica leaned into him. It was an innocent enough kiss, and when she pulled back she saw fresh tears on his cheeks.

“Really, I’m okay now.” She tangled her fingers in the hair at the nape of his neck. “I trust you, with my feelings and with Eliza’s.”

Thomas grinned, and flipped Angelica onto her back on the bed, looming over her. He swooped down to kiss her again as she giggled.

“You know,” he said, “we’ve never been on a real date. What do you say we change that?”

“What did you have in mind?”

Angelica’s hair whipped around her as she drove. Thomas had gotten them out of the city, then let her take the wheel on the country roads. He had been willed a Jaguar by his grandfather, and he almost never had the chance to use it.

“You’re going to take a right in half a mile,” he yelled over the rev of the engine.

They had packed a picnic and were headed to an orchard owned by Thomas’ aunt and uncle. Angelica had insisted on their dressing up, but she was beginning to regret it as the hem of her dress had gained a mind of its own and was flying all over the place. Thomas thought it was hilarious and volunteered to hold it down, but his hand was creeping higher on her thigh as she drove.

“Thomas,” she said warningly, “driving requires focus.”

He tried his hardest to look innocent as he reached his goal, but he could not suppress the groan that came out when he realized she had worn no underwear whatsoever.

“God, you’re soaked already.” He thumbed at her clit and her jaw clenched. Thomas slowly pushed one finger inside her and she moaned, her eyes closing for a split second before she remembered where they were. Angelica swore and pulled them off to the side of the road.

“You couldn’t handle a little teasing?” Thomas asked, popping his finger in his mouth. She parked and practically ripped her seatbelt off. “I was going 80!”

“I never would’ve let you come while you were driving. That would be no fun.”

Angelica laughed, fumbling around for the passenger side lever.

“Just shut the fuck up and lean your seat back.” Thomas’ eyes glinted as he realized her intentions. He held onto her hips as she moved to straddle his face, gripping onto the backseat for support. Angelica cried out as Thomas’ tongue entered her. He let one hand trail over her ass as she rode him, squeezing gently. He reached up and pulled the cups of her bra aside, massaging her breasts and tweaking her nipples roughly. Picking up speed, Angelica fucked herself on his tongue. She wasn’t going to last long. Thomas’ plump lips wrapped around her clit and she felt the familiar tugging sensation.

“Thomas-” she started to warn him, but it was too late. He kept flicking his tongue against her clit as she came until she whined from oversensitivity and rolled off him, landing in the backseat.

“I just… I just need a minute. Wow.” She panted.

“Don’t worry about it.” Thomas looked sheepish.

“Did you come?” He shifted, not answering. Angelica crawled back into the front seat, leaning in close. “That’s really hot.”

Thomas finally met her eyes, seeing the fire there. She bit his earlobe and whispered, “I can’t believe
you got off from eating me out. Oh my god.” Her hand roamed under his shirt, scratching her nails across his toned chest. Their lips met and Thomas immediately deepened the kiss, pulling her back into his lap.
Angelica’s phone buzzed.
Ignoring it, she licked a stripe up his neck and went to undo his belt.
It buzzed again.
“Just check,” Thomas murmured, “we’ve got all day.”

Angelica’s face fell. “Actually, we don’t. Eliza wants to know if I can meet her in an hour.” She looked at him apologetically. “This is important to me. I can’t stand seeing her upset.”
“I get it.” Thomas checked his watch. “We’re about half an hour out- how much time do you need to get ready?”
She grinned, tugging at one of his curls. “I could spare a few minutes.”
Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

Angelica and Eliza work through stuff.

Chapter Notes

I'm terrible at summaries.

Angelica rushed into the café, her hair falling out of its bun. Eliza stopped herself from grinning. She knew that look, but she was supposed to be tough. She needed to stand her ground for once. “Thanks for waiting for me. Thomas agreed to drop me off but traffic was shitty.” “It’s alright. I ordered for you.” The server set two scones down in front of them—orange for Angelica, chocolate chip for Eliza. This had been their tradition since Angelica had left for college; whenever they missed each other they would meet and share a favorite childhood treat. When Eliza and Peggy were still in high school they would come together, but Peggy’s choice of college meant that she couldn’t visit at the drop of a hat.

Fiddling with her napkin, Angelica waited. “Ange, don’t look so sad. I’m done yelling. I just need you to actually listen to me, okay?” Eliza reached out to cover Angelica’s hands with her own. Angelica nodded.

Letting out a sigh, Eliza began. “I’m truly sorry for bringing up John. I had no right to talk about him in front of Thomas, but I meant what I said. Alexander is different. For one thing, he’s honest with me. We’ve been talking, working out why he did what he did,” she paused, shaking her head. “I don’t know if I will ever get over it, but I’ve decided that I want to rebuild our relationship, and I need you to respect that. We’re focusing on trust right now, and he’s said he will wait as long as it takes for me to feel comfortable having him around again.”

“Thank you for always being willing to tell me when I’m being an asshole,” Angelica said. “I hope Alexander will let me apologize next time I see him. I overstepped my bounds. Sometimes I forget you’re an adult—not that I will ever stop wanting to protect you.”

She squeezed Angelica’s hands reassuringly. “I love you so much, and I am thankful every day that I have someone as caring and ridiculous as you in my life.”

“Ridiculous?” Angelica asked.

“I mean, I listened to you buy your plane ticket.”

“It was impulsive, but not unnecessary.”

Eliza laughed and bit off a piece of her scone. “You’re right. I needed you around. But honey, you have to go back to school soon.”

“I’ve been handling all my work here just fine, I can stay as long as you want me to.”

“Ange, don’t lie. I know you miss going to class and seeing your friends. I can handle being without you until break.”

“Okay. But if you change your mind I will come back right away.” Angelica broke off the end of Eliza’s scone and tried it, nodding.

“If Thomas hangs around my apartment any longer I’ll go broke. He eats a ton.”

“Sometimes he cooks for us,” Angelica said defensively.
“Maybe for you he does. I stay out of the kitchen because I’m afraid I’ll find you two having sex on the counter!”
Angelica nearly dropped her scone. She looked at Eliza who was smiling mischievously and choked out, “Not on the counter, no.”
“So you have had sex with him?” Eliza was being uncharacteristically brash, and Angelica loved it.
“Not yet.”
“But you have sex hair,” she said, pointing to Angelica’s bun, “you always pull your hair up like that after you hook up with someone.”
Angelica recounted the events of that morning, and Eliza’s eyebrows shot up.
“You have to keep him. That sounds incredible.”

*Can you pick me up? I need to talk to you about something.*
*I’ll be there in 10.*

“Is Eliza riding with us?” Thomas asked as he pulled up to the curb.

“She’s meeting Alexander.” Angelica caught the look in his eye and continued, “We talked about him. She’s dealing with it much better than I would. I need to step away and let her figure it out.”

“That’s very reasonable of you.”

“I know. I hate it.”

Thomas laughed and merged back onto the road. “What was it you wanted to talk about?”

Angelica didn’t want to tell him. It had only been a week, but she had gotten used to having Thomas around. Still, she couldn’t lie. “I’m buying my ticket back today.”

He was silent for a moment, keeping his eyes on the road.

“I need to finish out the term—”

He cut her off. “I know. I just hoped you would need to stay or something. It was stupid. But I get it.”

Angelica took his hand.

“So when do you leave?”

She shrugged. “Probably day after tomorrow. I haven’t decided.”

“If you waited another day we could go to James’ Halloween party together,” he offered.

“Did you have a particular costume in mind?”

“Is that going to affect your decision?”

“I mean, if your idea sucks…” Thomas leaned over and punched her in the arm.

“Okay, they’re bought.” Angelica let out a sigh, shutting her laptop and leaning back against Thomas, her head on his chest. He ran his hands through her hair, humming.

“Do you want me to take you to the airport?”

“If I won’t be disrupting any plans, yeah.”

He nodded. “We can spend the day together if Eliza doesn’t have any plans for you.”

“I think she’s getting sick of me,” she laughed. “Should we invite her and Alexander to the party? Would they know anyone there? I feel so out of the loop.”

“Alexander would definitely know people. I’m not sure how much they like him right now, so I suppose it’s up to him whether he wants to deal with that or not.”

“He’s going to have to face the music sometime.” Angelica turned her head, listening to Thomas’ heartbeat. His breathing hitched, and she turned to look at his face. He put on a smile, but it seemed forced.

“Are you okay?”

He took his time answering. “I know it’s selfish, but I’m going to miss you so much.”

“How is that selfish?”

“I’m sure Eliza loves having you here, and I’ve only known you for a week—”

She shook her head, rolling her eyes at him. “I’m going to miss you too. I can care about more than one person, you know.”

Angelica meant it, but she was nervous. She hadn’t let herself get close to anyone since John, instead
choosing to have a series of one night stands. It was safer. Whatever relationship was forming between them was something she hadn’t intended. Thomas looked as if he was going to question her expression, so she patted his chest and said, “Let’s go through your closet and find you a costume.” He groaned and refused to move, so Angelica took it upon herself to rifle through his clothes. His wardrobe was standard, and she had almost given up hope when she found it. “This is the ugliest vest I’ve ever seen!” She threw it at him. “Put it on. I’ve figured it out.” “Hey, my father gave this to me.” “Yeah, and there’s a reason it’s collecting dust. This is perfect.”
Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

A Halloween party is the best place to have an emotional conversation, right?

Chapter Notes

I know it's a bit short, but I'm trying to get back into the swing of things.

The party was in full swing when they arrived. Angelica had talked Thomas into being the Ferris to her Sloane. They looked the part. Thomas’ father’s vest was almost exactly the same as the one from the film, and Angelica couldn’t believe he had never used it in a costume before. Alexander had been unable to come due to work but Eliza tagged along, dressed as Cameron. Thomas’ jersey hung to her knees. She looked adorable, and Angelica insisted they take a photo together. The only person sober enough to hold a camera was Hercules, and he didn’t intend on staying that way for long. He engulfed Eliza in a hug before taking their photo, kissing the top of her head gently.

Eliza’s smile faltered. "She's here."
"Who?"
She pointed to Aaron, who was talking to a woman wearing a bright red dress. Breathing in shakily, she said, "Maria. That's who Alexander slept with."
Angelica's eyebrows shot up. She wanted to storm over and give Maria a piece of her mind, but she didn't want to do anything rash that would upset Eliza.
"What should we do?"
Eliza wrung her hands. "I don't know. Just stay with me for a bit while I figure it out."
Thomas went to get them drinks, giving Angelica a worried look.
James came over almost immediately. ‘Eliza, I’m so sorry. I didn’t know she would be here. Burr brought her without asking and I can’t really make her leave—’
“It’s okay.” Eliza looked strangely calm, but she took the drink Thomas offered her and chugged it. She grabbed Angelica’s arm. “Shots. How does everyone feel about shots?”

Angelica held onto Thomas’ arm for balance. She had never seen Eliza drink so much, but somehow she was still up and walking around. Several people had approached her to ask what had happened with Alexander. She wasn’t too surprised, as the university used his photo in everything that they could manage. He was an immigrant who had jumped several grades, and that was enough to make him a figurehead of his department.
“She looks okay. Do you think she looks okay?” Angelica poked Thomas in the chest to get his attention.
“You’re doing a good job of letting her fend for herself, don’t stop now.” Thomas smiled down at her, pulling her in for a kiss. The party had grown substantially since they arrived, and there was a decent sized dance floor that had emerged. Angelica tugged him towards it, guiding his hands to her waist.
Thomas did not consider himself to be a particularly gifted dancer, but Angelica pressed up against him and his brain short-circuited. “This is a good distraction,” she hummed just loud enough for him to hear.

Eliza was in the middle of a conversation with someone whose name she couldn’t remember when she was almost knocked off her feet. A pair of soft hands caught her and pulled her out of the way of the football players who were rushing by.

“I don’t know why they’re here, no one invited them,” Maria said.
“Jerks.” Eliza straightened her jersey and looked up.
“Oh.” Maria’s cheeks flushed.
“Uh, yeah. Well, thanks for helping me, but I should probably go. Far away.” She turned to leave but Maria caught her arm.
“Please, let me explain.”
“There isn’t much to explain. You slept with my boyfriend. I would think that I was a taboo subject for you.”
“I didn’t know he was dating anyone. You have to believe me. We just happened to be at the same party. We didn’t even talk before… you know.”
Eliza’s shoulders sagged. She was suddenly very tired.
She stepped out onto the small porch and Maria followed her, confused. When Eliza said nothing, she continued, “I didn’t know you were in the picture until everyone else found out. I don’t sleep with people who are taken.”
There was a long silence. Finally, Eliza nodded.
“I forgive you.”
“What?”
“I’m not happy about it, but I’m glad I understand now.”
Maria was shocked. “You’re far too nice.”
Eliza laughed. “I’ve been told that on a few occasions. I’m trying to stop.” She leaned on the railing.
“I can see why he liked you. You seem nice. Comforting.”
“I guess so?”
“I bet you’re smart too. Are you smart?”
Eliza’s phone buzzed.
How’s the party going?
She held it up, showing Maria the text. “Speak of the devil.”
I’m pretty tired. Can you pick me up?
Anything for you.
“I think I’m going to go home. Thanks for making me listen. It helped a lot.” Eliza moved to stand, stumbling a bit.
“Do me a favor, okay?” Maria gently took Eliza’s phone, tapping in her number. “Text me when you get home, so I know you’re safe.” Eliza nodded, stowing her phone and giving Maria a quick, unexpected hug.
“Sorry, I’m a bit drunk. Will you let my sister know I left? She’s with Thomas- tallest guy in the room, huge hair.”
“Yeah, I know who you’re talking about. I’ll find her for you.”
Maria slipped back into the house, leaving Eliza alone on the porch. She had genuinely liked Maria. Sometimes, she thought, life didn’t give a straightforward answer as to who was good or bad. People were flawed. Love seemed like the best choice.
Eliza shut the passenger side door, taking Alexander’s hand.
“I love you.”
Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

Smut smut smut smut

Chapter Notes

I write short chapters because I am SO SLOW.

Angelica saw Maria approaching, and felt Thomas grip her hip tightly.
“Eliza wanted me to let you know she left,” Maria shouted over the music. Angelica nodded, unsure of what to say. Maria looked uncomfortable, and left quickly.
“Do you want to go?” Thomas asked. In lieu of an answer, Angelica pulled him down for a searing kiss, gripping his biceps tightly. He tugged her off the dance floor, waving goodbye to James. Once they were outside Angelica hopped on his back, giggling.
“Go!” She yelled, reaching down to slap his ass. Thomas laughed and ran as quickly as he could without dropping her, stopping only when he reached his apartment. He fumbled with his keys as Angelica kissed behind his ear and tugged gently on his hair.
“If you want me to be able to unlock this door you’re going to have to stop.”
Angelica ignored him, only stopping once they had reached his bedroom. Thomas practically threw her onto the bed, pinning her arms above her head and kissing her fiercely. He pushed her sweater up, grinning when he realized she hadn’t been wearing a bra. As he moved to take her nipple in his mouth her hands flew to his hair, pulling sharply.
“Wait,” Thomas shook his head, “we’re drunk, and I don’t want to pressure you into anything.”
Angelica sat up, taking his face in her hands. “Thomas, do you want this?” He nodded.
“Okay. I want it too. This is me consenting.” He still looked worried, so she added, “I trust you.”
She fiddled with the hem of his shirt, looking questioningly at him. He lifted his arms so she could take it off, eyes shutting as she scraped her nails lightly down his back. She tangled her fingers in his hair again, using it as leverage to bring him closer. Thomas kissed her hungrily, biting her lower lip.
Angelica pulled his head back, and he let out a particularly loud moan. She did it again, moving his head so she could bite at his pulse point.
He popped the button of her shorts open, wordlessly asking for permission. Never letting go of his hair, she pushed him down her body, lifting her hips so he could take her panties with. He took his time sucking maddeningly softly on her clit, occasionally dipping a finger inside her and curling it. She tried to urge him to go quicker but he was relentlessly slow, denying her any change in pace until she started chanting “fuck” under her breath.
“Thomas,” she whined, “I’m so close. I want to come with you inside me.” She released him, fumbling with the drawer of his bedside table. His pants must’ve made it to the floor, but Angelica pushed him onto his back, rolling on the condom and positioning herself above him. As she sank down she laced their fingers together, using him as leverage. She set a slow pace, feeling her orgasm building again.
She leaned down to kiss him, and felt him start to match her thrusts. When he picked up the pace she dropped her head to his chest, moaning. The friction of Thomas’ body on her clit pushed her over the
edge. She tried to warn him, but no sound came out. Thomas fucked her through her orgasm, stroking her hair.

"Keep going. I want you to come," Angelica murmured, and he thrusted into her erratically, crying out her name before finally stilling.

She rolled off him, stretching out her limbs and letting out a sigh. "We’re good at that." Thomas hummed his approval, disposing of the condom and throwing a blanket over the both of them. He kissed her shoulder before falling asleep, arm slung over her stomach.

Angelica awoke to a face full of Thomas’ hair. He must have fallen asleep laying on her chest. She batted his messy curls out of her mouth, reaching for her phone. A few drunk texts from Eliza, and one from Alexander assuring her that they were both safely in bed. Thomas grumbled and rolled off her, rubbing his eyes.

"I was going to cook for you, but my brain hurts." Angelica laughed, but held it in when she saw him wince. Thomas’ tolerance was so at odds with his size, and he had been trying to match her shot for shot. She pressed a quick kiss to his lips and went to brush her teeth. When she came back, Thomas was attempting to pull his hair back into a bun.

"It’s not cooperating today," he muttered, adjusting it.

"I think you look beautiful," she said, pulling on a dress that had somehow made its way into his closet. "Why is so much of my stuff here?"

He shrugged. "It’ll make packing easy, I guess."

Angelica’s brow furrowed as he turned away to find a jacket. "You know I’m coming back for Christmas, right?"

Thomas nodded. She wrapped her arms around his waist, looking into his eyes. "I’m not going to forget you, if that’s what you’re worried about."

He didn’t answer, just brushed some hair out of her face and kissed her forehead.

"This waiter is far too peppy," Thomas groaned, burying his face in his hands. He hadn’t yet taken off his sunglasses, claiming that their seat by the window was “the brightest place in the world.”

Angelica pushed several ibuprofen across the table. “Admit defeat.” Thomas swallowed them in one go, finishing his water. Their waiter, Mike, arrived with a pitcher, ready to take their order.

"Are we all set?"

Angelica ordered cheerily, squeezing Thomas’ hand to remind him to be polite. He put on a smile.

"Yeah, can I just get a bunch of fuckin pancakes?" Angelica held back a giggle at his uncharacteristic language, but thankfully Mike laughed. “I understand man. I’ll be back.”

“So,” Angelica asked, “do you have anything you want to do today?”

“Spend time with you.”

She smiled. “Well I vote we lay on the couch, watch movies, and eat too much popcorn.”

“I am so in.”

The day passed in a blur. Saying goodbye to Eliza was hard. Angelica even hugged Alexander, although she squeezed a little tighter than necessary. All too soon Angelica was taking her suitcase out of the trunk of Thomas’ car.

“Going to the airport is far less romantic than it used to be,” Angelica said, looking around at the sparsely populated drop off zone, “you can’t even come to the gate and watch me cry as I board the plane.”

“If I wanted to get arrested I could,” he mused, pulling her in for a hug. She inhaled deeply, trying to memorize the feeling of his arms, the smell of his fabric softener, the sound of his heartbeat.

“Six weeks, you said?”

She nodded into his chest.

“I can do that.”
Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

More Eliza and Alexander working things out!

Chapter Notes

I wrote something over 1k words, yaaay.

Eliza looked down at her phone and chuckled.
“What’s so funny?” Alexander walked into the room, carrying two mugs of coffee.
“Nothing.” She sent a reply, still laughing. “Maria has a great sense of humor, you know that?”
Alexander tensed. Was this a trap?
“I actually don’t. We didn’t talk too much.” He was trying to be completely honest, but Maria was a subject he was unsure about. He had promised Eliza that he wouldn’t keep anything from her, and so far it was going well. Sitting down carefully, he sipped his coffee. “I’m a little unclear as to why you’re talking with her.”

Eliza stared at him as she sometimes did- not accusing him of anything, but waiting for more information. She knew how to get him to talk. He fidgeted, finally adding, “I’m nervous that you’re talking to her because you’re thinking of leaving.”

“Alexander,” Eliza began, “just because you have a bad relationship with her doesn’t mean I have to.” She patted his thigh and took her coffee from his hand. He really did make it well, she thought. His tendency to stay up too late and work too hard probably lent itself to pots and pots of coffee.
“I’m not leaving you. I’m trying to make the best out of a bad situation.”
“Right, but I had no idea that you were on good terms. And I know that’s because of me- I was in the wrong. I didn’t know that she was someone you would want to spend time with.”
Eliza shrugged. “I texted her the night I met her, and the next morning she was so kind about everything. She didn’t do anything maliciously, and I think that too often people who unknowingly hurt relationships get demonized. Under any other circumstances, I would’ve loved to be her friend. So I’m doing that.”

Alexander was stunned. He took her hand, holding back tears. “I can’t believe you still love me, I really can’t. Your capacity for empathy is astounding.”

Eliza hugged him, rubbing his back soothingly. When he pulled away, he cleared his throat.
“I’m not sure where to go from here.”

Eliza’s eyes widened. “With our relationship?”

“No! God no, I’ve never been more sure of anything.” He smiled reassuringly. “I know it’s not your job to figure out my life, but I hope that you’ll help me navigate your friendship with Maria. I don’t want to avoid talking about her, or seeing her- if you want me to even be around, that is-” He shook his head in confusion. “I guess what I’m saying is that I trust your judgement much more than my own.”

It was a rare occasion that Alexander rambled, but Eliza treasured it when he did. It was a side of him that no one else got to see except her. It was good to be vulnerable once in a while.

“Thank you.” She took his face in her hands, giving him a gentle kiss. “You know what you need to do?”
“What?”
“You need to apologize to Maria.” Eliza moved away, pulling out her phone again and finding Maria’s number. “Find a time to talk with her.”

“Will you-”
“Nope,” she cut him off, “I will not go with you. You have to do this on your own. Not my job to fix your mistakes, remember?” She sent him Maria’s number, then headed to the bedroom. “I’m going to get dressed- I’m leaving in a bit to have brunch with Thomas.”

“How long do you have?” Alexander wiggled his eyebrows, and Eliza laughed.

“No long. If you try to help I’ll just be late.”

He jumped off the couch and chased her down the hall, grinning as she squealed and shut the door in his face.

“How’s Angelica?”

Eliza took a huge bite of her sandwich, looking at Thomas expectantly. He shrugged, “We haven’t talked in a few days- she’s been busy with things.” He waved his hand around aimlessly, hoping to find an explanation. “She hasn’t really explained them.”

Eliza frowned. Angelica wasn’t the best at communicating, but she didn’t want to worry Thomas. “She works hard. She’s probably finishing some paper or another, and she is caught up in research. It’s happened before.” It wasn’t entirely a lie, but Eliza made a mental note to find out what was going on.

Thomas seemed satisfied with her answer, and lightened up considerably. He told her about the class he was working with, who he had high hopes for, and how the professor was in private. Not good, apparently. Eliza beamed. The students were lucky to have him- she had enlisted his study help many times when he was assisting her class.

Eliza told him about her classes, and how Alexander was doing. Thomas tried his best to keep a straight face, but Eliza knew he hadn’t gotten past the cheating. He was adopting the same attitude as Angelica- intimidating Alexander whenever he was around so that no threats needed to be made. Alexander had joked (with fear in his eyes) on more than one occasion that Thomas could probably pop his head off with one arm, and Eliza didn’t doubt it. Thankfully after Angelica’s outburst they had started consulting with Eliza to figure out her opinions first.

Thomas gave Eliza a huge hug before leaving for his class, refusing to let her pay for their meal. “You paid last time,” he insisted. She hadn’t, but appreciated the gesture.

Thomas dialed hesitantly. The line rang and rang, and he was considering hanging up without leaving a message when Angelica answered.

“Thomas!” She sounded excited.

“Hey. I’m not interrupting dinner, am I?”

“Nope. I’m straightening some stuff up and then heading out. Things have gotten messy lately- I haven’t had time to clean in a while.”

“I have a few minutes before class so I thought I would check on you. Did you finish that paper you were working on?” Thomas sat in one of the chairs outside his classroom, picking at the armrest.

“Yeah, and I think my professor loved it. Her face lit up when she saw the title, so that’s a good sign, right?”

“That’s always a good thing.” Thomas couldn’t help but smile. He and Angelica shared the same passions for learning and achievement that had gotten him through his hardest times. It was nice to be with someone who understood.

He heard a knock on her end of the line.

“Laf is here, I have to go.”

“Who?”

“Lafayette? The guy who took care of everything while I was gone. He’s really sweet- I think you would like him.”

Thomas chuckled. “Should I be jealous of this Lafayette?”
“I don’t know, should you? You’re incredibly hot, intelligent, and talented.” Her voice deepened. “To say nothing of your cock. I miss it. I think about you every day, how you touched me, how you made me feel. I’ve never been fucked like that before—”
“Angelica,” he started, clearing his throat, “I’m, uh… I’m about to teach a class, you need to stop talking now.”
“-no one’s ever made me come that quickly with their mouth-”
“I have to go!” he squeaked, hanging up the phone.
Angelica grinned. She loved making Thomas uncomfortable. He was so cute.

End Notes

To be continued.

Y’all rock, thanks for reading, party on.

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