

# The Awesomeness of being an Ordinary Lesbian

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On Friday morning, as Tahlia ascended with the office building's lift, she replayed the three minutes in 2015 when her flatmate Alana kissed her on the mouth. It had been a surprise. Even more so that Tahlia had liked it. If she had been raised religious, she would have likened it to Moses parting the Red Sea. It seemed she was being shown the way.

*Tahlia, this way to Lesbania.*

The lift opened and she inhaled deeply; a futile attempt to quell her nerves. It had to be today. Who knew when they'd all be back in a pandemic lockdown?

Tahlia looked down at her phone and re-read the message from Dee Hamilton. It was a short perfunctory text letting Tahlia know Dee was already setting up the meeting room, but nerves simmered in her stomach regardless. She wanted to think they were due to the excitement at seeing Dee in person, but anxiety was brewing. What could be more humiliating than an unrequited crush at work?

She shoved her phone into her jeans.

After three months, the LGBTQIA Working Group had scheduled a face-to-face meeting. Tahlia hadn't felt the need to share how she identified with any of the members. No one else had and she wasn't going to be the idiot to raise it.

*Besides, it was obvious she was queer,* she thought, pulling her mask down and slowly pushing the meeting room door open.

'You've got to be effing kidding me!' A muffled curse came from under the large table that took up most of the meeting room.

A familiar dark head of straight hair emerged and Tahlia laughed. *Those eyes goddamn sparkle.* Tahlia held her breath. Dee was pushing her blunt fringe from her green eyes, climbing onto a chair that was positioned near a laptop.

'Heeyyyy, there you are!' Without a moment's hesitation Dee smiled widely. 'It's so great to see you in person. Here, come sit next to me.' Dee manoeuvred a chair in towards her. 'We can use my laptop.'

Tahlia knew she was blushing, but it was all she could do to concentrate and will her racing heart to slow.

'Do you know if anyone else was coming in, Tahlia?' Dee interrupted. The laptop sat between them; the screen projected on to the meeting room's widescreen.

Tahlia shook her head, letting the way Dee pronounced her name linger. 'Matt said he'll join from home but I'm not sure who else.'

Tahlia dug her notebook from her backpack, grateful for the distraction.

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Several 'you're on mutes' punctuated the 30-minute meeting. As it closed, both their hands reached for the red *Leave* button. Their fingers touched. Tahlia waited for Dee's hand to pull away, but it lingered, out of sight from the working group. Her eyes flicked to Dee on the screen. Tahlia felt a surge of guilt, as if she was stealing a moment that wasn't yet hers.

'I think they're frozen.' A crescendo of voices brings them back to reality.

Dee tapped the button, closing her laptop lid.

Tahlia's chest tightened.

'Let's have dinner one night?' Tahlia plunged in. She held her breath.

'Oh great idea. That'd be so fun.' Dee absentmindedly rolled up her laptop cable. 'Soon, before we go back into lockdown.'

Tahlia exhaled, a smile emerged from the corners of her mouth. *Holy mother of god.*

'Should I ask the working group?' Dee asked. The silence rose between them like empty city laneways around them.

'No.' Tahlia finally replied. It came out rushed and she couldn't be sure it didn't carry the confusion she felt. 'No.' Tahlia was decisive this time. She felt the blood rushing to her ears.

'Oh.' Dee bit her lip. 'I'm not gay. Or bi.'

Tahlia scrambled to think of something to say that would retrieve the situation.

'Oops.' It fell out before Tahlia could think of anything more intelligent. But it was perfect really, she thought. *Oops.* She'd just made a mistake. Like a million other people right now all around the world, she reminded herself. It would be okay. She was still awesome; she'd just misjudged.

'Oops,' Dee repeated, nodding. 'See you Monday.'

Tahlia swung her backpack over her right shoulder and retrieved her face mask from her jeans back pocket.

'See you Monday.'

Tahlia smiled to herself. *Life in Lesbania.*