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Company on a Night Drive.....

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I went ice skating tonight, with all of my new college friends. We went round and around the rink, with the music, with the lights. It was cold. My friends were chatting, stepping off of the ice for food, stepping back onto the ice for fun. But there was one that I really cared about. Ava. I wanted to keep pace with her, show off for her, enjoy this experience with her. But she's fresh out of a relationship, and I can't, won't do anything just yet. So I watched her skate under the blue lights, and I ached to reach out for her hand, but Instead I gave a twirl, and a smile, and hoped that maybe one day she'll reach out to me, if she was ever ready.

11/19/24

She was.

### Love, Unscripted

## Chandler

We're taught over and over what a straight happily ever after looks like and exactly how to get there. Both a boyfriend and a girlfriend have an unspoken understanding of their roles and the things that they owe to each other; but we aren't taught how to navigate sapphic relationships. They are no fairy tales, no cult classic rom-coms to look to for a romanticized sort of guidance. There are no guides to our intimacy, no notions of who should take the lead and who should follow. The end goal is clear and the want is there, but the in-betweens are vague and often daunting. The phases and expectations can get lost in translation. Past straight relationships inherently leave us with assumptions about what romance should look like, but the realization that love is not one-size-fits-all across gender identities can complicate the development of a sapphic relationship. Years in and out of straight relationships can create the impression that most relationships look or flow similarly, more or less, but there is such stark contrast between the phases of straight and sapphic relationships that any prior relationship knowledge suddenly becomes obsolete.

From the start, sapphic relationships often avoid the same stages that other types of relationships hinge on. Relationships between queer women aren't always initiated with romance in mind first, and sapphic friends often find themselves getting into relationships with each other. Seemingly overnight, a friendship clearly defined in its boundaries and nuances becomes a relationship that cannot fit neatly into a specific category. What follows is a simultaneously complicated and simple connection. Falling in love is not just falling in love—it's navigating the gray area between girl friends and something more. The hurdle of getting to know one another no longer exists and the nature of female friendship remains, but the challenge lies in redefining the relationship in a romantic context. Here, the lines of responsibilities and expectations are blurred. The feeling of falling is intense, but its rules are not written out so precisely. Where is the line drawn between friend things and girlfriend things? Or are they now one and the same?

And even when a friendship doesn't come first, these boundaries take some time to understand. It is difficult to know how much to give and how soon. Because women are allowed a fairly high degree of platonic

physical closeness, it is more complicated to determine exactly what constitutes sapphic touch. Emotionally, it is hard to create a distinction between the cheek kissing and casual touching in our friendships and the same gestures in our romantic relationships.

Stepping into a sapphic relationship is more than learning to love a new person; it is becoming a different version of yourself as a partner. It is a journey of personal change just as much as it is about connection with another person. A lack of strict norms, though intimidating and sometimes confusing, provides the opportunity to reevaluate our wants and values with less external influence guiding us firmly toward one thing or another. Without heteronormative scripts and expectations, we can define our relationships and our dynamics in ways that are unique and personal.



## Kept to Myself

Kaiva Yanoski

Face me, and I will look away
I avoid meeting yours
Pupils, tunnels to the heart
See the light you brighten in my eyes

Looking away while my thoughts wander
I imagine your company,
hoping it becomes familiar
Know the jingle of my keys as I unlock my door
The descent into my home
Its smell a reminder

Your words becoming my favorite lyrics Speculations and assumptions waning with connection and the ever evolving seasons Skeletons in my closet learn that they are safe to open the doors In time, see how my stories have shaped me

Though now, the fanciful film continues to reel behind the lense never to be projected with this tender light And when yours look elsewhere my eyes will follow you



#### Girl (friends?)

## Sophie Wheat

If you are a sapphic individual, it is more likely than not that at some point you've been in some variation of a homoerotic friendship. The label of best friend holds a deep meaning for most people, but for many sapphic individuals it may hold a deeper substance. The line between friendship and romance can be especially blurry, and sometimes the term "best friend" acts as a kind of code-switching, or changing the way you act in order to navigate emotional and sexual attraction without having to confront the messy reality of it all. I think the main reason this is such a common scenario is largely due to this avoidance of confrontation, while it may go exactly as you want it could also blow up in your face, and while these spurts of romantic seeming affection may give short term validation, the only way to get complete confirmation is to "confront the messy reality" and have a dreaded conversation.

Growing up, I learned quickly that society tends to separate friendships from romantic or sexual relationships in clear-cut ways. "Friends" are supposed to be platonic, and "lovers" are supposed to be something more. But as I navigated my own queerness, particularly within the realm of sapphic relationships, I found that the boundaries weren't always so easy to distinguish. In fact, they were often downright porous. For many of us, the "best friend" label isn't just a description of closeness, but a shield—an easy way to keep the complicated feelings of attraction at bay, even when there's something more stirring underneath.

In a way, calling someone my "best friend" or friend has always felt like a subtle form of code-switching—a way of adjusting my own narrative to make the relationship fit into a socially acceptable box. When you're attracted to your best friend—whether you're conscious of it or not—the term "best friend" or even just referring to someone as your "friend" can become a buffer, a way to protect yourself and the other person from the complexity of desire, and the awkwardness of explaining being in an undiscussed in-between "situationship" stage, a way to avoid that conversation with other people that you haven't really had with each other yet. But over time, you tend to realize that the "best friend" label can only carry that weight for so long. Without signifying something like this this attraction may fade, or it may carry on for one person while the other moves on. Emotional intimacy and physical closeness

tend to overlap in ways that are hard to ignore. It's easy to mistake a long "platonic cuddle" or a lingering look for something harmless—after all, we're just close friends, right? But in those moments, I tend to question: What if it's not just friendship? What if the attraction is real, and we're simply afraid to admit it? A late-night conversation about vulnerability would inevitably lead to long silences, and we'd find ourselves on the couch, curled up together, our hands touching lightly. There were times when I'd think, "Is this just what good friends do?" or, "Am I just reading too much into this?"

While as hard as you may try to diminish the romantic feelings, it becomes consistently more difficult over time, and so you stay wondering if this attraction is real or if all of it is in your head. Is this person actually sending me these signals, or am I just craving something that's not there?

In the end, the journey of figuring out where we stand, what we want, and how to define our relationships is just part of the process, and while it may end with you in a relationship, a continued friendship, or losing a person altogether, it's all a part of growing and learning how to navigate your own desires and boundaries. The connections we make—whether they evolve into something more or remain rooted in friendship—teach us about ourselves, our capacity for love, and the importance of being honest with what we need from those around us.

If you're stuck in this "situation" of a relationship, the best thing to do is communicate your position and feelings. If you're unclear on what your position and feelings are the first thing you need to do is distance yourself from the situation altogether. Take time apart to reflect on your feelings, it's hard to fully think clearly and understand how you feel with continuous confusing activity from the other person. Decide how you feel and communicate, while yes the idea of losing this person is scary, the emotional clarity will be worth it.

Regardless of how your situation ends, these experiences allow you to better understand your personal wants, needs, and boundaries, and communication preferences. Experiences like these have given me the better judgment to fully understand what i'm willing to "put up" with and my personal emotional diligence, bettering my mental health and expectations for future relationships.

Ballad of a Loser Lesbian

Mimi Birnbaum

It was always the little touches that meant the most. The insignificant grazes as we walked side by side, the times you would nervously fiddle with my fingers as you spoke. Each time I would stop breathing, as if the moment needed silence to survive,

terrified to move for fear that you would stop.

"I'm just a touchy person" you'd say.

I would nod, even as my throat locked tight around the things I wouldn't say.

"Friends" I thought, lighthearted, easy, like it didn't break me to admit. Your touch lingered in ways you'll never know. To you, it went unnoticed.

To me, it was everything.

And so, I let your hands shape me, pressing hope into the folds of my skin.

I let them leave without protest, because we both knew they never meant to stay.





## An Embarassing Ode to Her Company on a Night Drive

Kaiva Yanoski

Quickly determining the carpool itinerary, she told me I'd be dropped off last. It was impractical for me to be the last stop - we lived on opposite sides of the city. I selfishly let her mistake go uncorrected. I thought of the ten extra minutes where only she and I drove through the mellowing city, half lit by buzzing street lamps and warm kitchen windows. I wanted the simple joy of her company and the night breeze flowing through her car windows.

She would always attentively listen to me. Her brilliant, curious eyes affirmed my words. It made me believe that, once left alone, those eyes would look straight into my soul and see the infatuation that I thought I hid so well.

From the back seat, I watched neighboring suburbs fade into my familiar city. I observed the ever-changing scenes outside instead of indulging in the sight of her. It was a vulnerable act to glance in her direction. I couldn't casually admire her being, her mere subtleties so profound in my eyes. Her charm could reach me from any distance, reddening my face, chopping up my words.

I saw strip malls become single-story houses, though I wished to admire her eyes instead. The single-story houses elongated into four-story duplexes, and I longed to witness her mannerisms which arose in passionate conversations. The four-story duplexes abruptly ended at the corner store, and I thought about the simple motion of her hair, tucked behind her ear and cresting at her shoulders. The Delaware Avenue mansions appeared in the blink of an eye, and I felt that nothing could entertain me more than simply her.

The time had approached for us to wish a good night to the final person to leave before me, the lucky one who called shotgun first. The seat emptied and she invited me to join her up front. I slid into the chair and awkwardly smiled at her. I felt horribly self conscious and foolish despite wanting this moment so badly.

"What's your address again?" She typed it into her phone.

I watched her turn towards me, lightheartedly exclaiming, "why didn't you tell me we passed your house!" I was reassured by her laugh. Her authenticity and warm nature never made me feel punished for getting caught up in my whirlwind of emotions. I felt safe despite my stupid decision to make more time with her.

The ride back was as serene as I'd hoped it would be, though I continued to look out the passenger window, understanding it was best to keep these tender feelings to myself.

