

As I entered the common area, I found a scene so cliché that it felt like home:

Half eaten snacks, opened bags of chips, pizza stacked on the table and most of all, dudes huddled around a screen, staring at the game as if its outcome would change their lives. I understood that well enough. The two people with controls were FinalAttack and GlitchKing, which meant that this game was a prelude to when they'd meet on the world stage. I was surprised they'd let their opponents get a sneak preview of what they'd do in the tournament but I guess they were getting a preview too. It was fair enough, and fun enough too. When GlitchKing finally won, the dozen guys leaning forward on their couches erupted as if it was the coolest thing in the world. And it was a good combo. But my enjoyment of it was somewhat cut short when the first of them noticed me, and when his friends all turned to see what'd made his jaw drop.

I still wasn't exactly sure how to act as Minnie, since my only experience was as CutieClutch. I was good at putting on a show, teasing dudes and giggling like an idiot but just hanging out in a casual setting, off camera?

I awkwardly waved, hoping I wasn't being weird. "Hey?"

The way they gawked at me made me realize that I couldn't be weird though. Not to them. They'd laugh at every joke, excuse every bit of awkwardness. I was *the* girl. Not a girl, since these were probably the type to make broad generalizations while saying the word 'women' in a derisive tone. No, I was *the* girl. The gamer girl, the chill girl, the girl that actually hung out with them and didn't care about how much they smelled. Half of them were looking at me like they were about to pull out wads of cash to buy my bathwater.

And they were *still* staring.

It was weird. It'd been like 15 seconds and I was starting to feel uncomfortable. Was this dress too tight and small? Sure, I was showing off my legs but I didn't exactly have a ton of options! And I already greeted them. It was their turn to talk!

Nope, still staring.

Were all dudes this bad? Was I just too cute? Was I blushing? No, I was just going red in the face with awkwardness, but I hoped they wouldn't think I was blushing. None of these guys were worth blushing about, even if it wasn't for the fact I liked girls. And liking girls meant I understood why they were looking at me and why most weren't looking at my face...

Gross!? Seriously, someone say something!!!

"Hey guys, I got next" began a voice as it entered the room, trailing off when it saw the scene. He seemed as confused as I was until he looked up and realized it was me. It must not have just been my body, but my persona. I'd have bet that everyone in this room had watched CutieClutch videos, and that a good percentage of them had searched for them with only one hand on the keyboard...

I grimaced my cute little face at that thought.

"CutieClutch, right?" asked the newcomer. He seemed a bit more confident than the others, even if he was built like a stick. It was a tall stick, at least, so tall that you might not notice how greasy his high-altitude black hair was. I recognized him too, and took a cautious step forward to extend a hand.

"Yep! You can call me Minnie if you want!"

I cringed at my own voice, only realizing as it left my lips how perky and peppy I sounded. All my experience as Minnie was on camera and I might have to unlearn all the eagerness I'd Pavloved into this body.

"RigRanger07" he grinned, taking my hand and-

Did that motherfucker just kiss it!?

I stared down, eyes bugged out of my head as I watched him pull his lips away from the back of my hand. The grin on his face told me that it wasn't sincere but something would have been better if he was a real m'lady idiot. Instead, he looked up to me as if he wanted to see me upset, as if he was messing with the new girl that didn't belong.

Oh, it was on...

"RigRanger07. Oh yeah, you have second place in all those world records" I jabbed, knowing that he'd be well aware of who had first. The smugness drained slightly from his face.

"And you sell kneesocks on your twitch, don't you?" he shot back. By now the guys had broken from their shock and awe to take interest in the jabs between us, and I just gestured to the tv.

"I think they just finished their game. Want to see if Miss Kneesocks can beat you?"

They must have felt odd seeing such assertiveness from a tiny thing like me. Even I felt weird giving it, as if I was pushing too much anger through too weak a conduit. They weren't getting all of it, and stuff that should have registered as rage was

probably only coming through as 'moxie.' Still, I was ticked. I didn't care if I seemed like a lion trying to growl in a housecat's body. I was going to try.

"You, beat me?" he scoffed, looking like he was going to reach out and tousle my pretty blonde hair. I gave him a look that said I'd bite his hand if he tried. So, throwing his hands up, he walked over to the couch.

"Yes. Me. Beat you" I answered, walking over to the spot that GlitchKing still occupied, seeing him look up at me and practically watching the sparks of short circuiting neurons behind his eyes. After about ten seconds to process what I was waiting for, he quickly scuttled aside.

"Any handicaps? Special rules? Are you going to get mad if I trashtalk?" teased RigRanger, picking his fighter.

"No. Are you going to get mad when you lose to an E-girl?" I replied.

Oooooos filled the room as the guys finally remembered they were capable of making noises. Ranger looked a bit annoyed by that but I turned my attention to the game. No more looking at him. No more thinking of myself or the way these people looked at me. I was going to win.

The battle began as I tuned out all else, forgetting the world and zeroing in on the game. I checked my stats, tried to read his next moves and mashed the buttons with a speed and a precision that not even new hands could ruin.

He was good, maybe the best person I'd ever played against, but I was so good that I'd forgotten this game could be hard. Now that it was, it just made me more focused. I hadn't had a challenge like this in a long time and soon enough-

Victor!

Round one went to me.

Ranger shifted in his seat as if the position had been the thing to mess him up, and skipped through the stats so hard and fast I thought he might damage the controller. But now we were on to round two, and I was grinning like an idiot. I really was THE girl. Maybe this weekend wouldn't be so bad.

As the second game began, he started out with enough fire and focus to give him an advantage. I guess he was mad at losing to a girl, even if it was only the first round. But if I won this one I'd win the whole game, and he seemed deadset on making sure that didn't happen.

The worst part was: he was good.

I hate to admit such a douche had the talent but he knew what he was doing and had all the right instincts. The guys were so entranced by the gameplay that they were finally looking at the screen instead of me, though a few of them glanced back at my body as if to ask "*Is that girl playing this well?*"

I was, but it wasn't enough.

He eeked out a second round victory and I sat back at "**Victor!**" echoed throughout the room. Okay, round three. This one's for all the marbles.

"Why don't we make this one interesting?" he asked, taking his time through the game stats this time.

"What? That combo wasn't interesting?"

"No" he said, shaking his head. "Interesting as in if I win, you come back to my room?"

The guys once more gave a chorus of Ooos as I just rolled my eyes. “No way dude.”

“Oh, she’s scared! The E-girl knows she can’t beat a real gamer!”

“I am a real gamer!” I shot back.

“Then why are you scared?”

“First off, the fact that girls are scared to be in a room alone with you should say something. Second: no! Just no!”

“Fine, what about this! You lose, I get a pair of your panties?”

I narrowed my eyes. What the heck was wrong with this guy?

“Fine. I’m sure they’ll look good on you. But if I win...”

I trailed off. I wasn’t sure what I wanted from this guy, if anything. Respect? Sure, but you can’t really win that in a bet. An apology? Duh, but it wouldn’t be sincere...

“If I win then you have to post a reel on your instagram saying I’m a better gamer than you.”

He shrugged. “No problem. You won’t win anyway.”

“Shut up and press start.”

Everyone held their breath as the last match began and it took me a moment to realize I was holding mine too. I was focused, honed in, ready to go with nothing but victory on my mind. It was close as could be but I could feel the advantage. I was a half second before him, a millisecond quicker, twelve steps ahead instead of eleven, just a bit better as we neared the end...

It was going to be a matter of small percents, a close, hard fought victory that could be pried away at any second but I was winning.

Then, he slapped my controller out of my hands.

Victor!

“What the fuck!!!” I exclaimed as he jumped up to celebrate.

“Hey, I told you I’d win!”

“That’s not fair, that’s-”

“Oh, is the little E-girl gonna whine? There’s no judges or refs here. This isn’t a sanctioned game and the bet said nothing about being fair. Now...”

He extended his hand. Boy, I wanted to bite it...now that I think about it, my mind had been on biting a lot. I suppose it’s what your body defaults to when it knows it’s too weak to punch.

“What? You want me to shake that?” I asked in my high pitched voice.

“No, I want you to hand them over...”

Everyone stared. I shrunk as I realized what he was asking.

“Here? No way!”

“Hey, you agreed!”

I looked to the guys for support and found none, realizing now that I wasn’t on their team anymore. I wasn’t one of them, wasn’t part of their club or their group. I was an interloper, one strange and out of place enough to make them all stop and stare at me for half a minute in shock. They didn’t want to hear me out. They wanted to see me strip.

They’d have to settle for watching me give Ranger the finger.

“Be right back...” I muttered, heading down the hallway and quietly being thankful that they’d let me go. I didn’t realize how much tension my tiny body was holding until it

let it go, probably because I was no longer surrounded by thirteen creepy dudes who wanted me to take my undies off.

I walked into the bathroom-

And then walked right back out, letting out an involuntary squeak as I saw the stick figure on the door. No dress.

That could have been bad.

Walking over to the next one, and double checking to make sure this was the one I belonged in, I headed inside.

“CutieClutch!”

I looked to see Zara there, looking in the mirror as the door shut behind me. As embarrassing as it was to deal with her right now, some part of me felt a lot safer with her here.

“You can just call me Minnie” I offered.

“Minnie” she mused, taking a moment. “It’s a cute name. Why didn’t you use that in your gamer tag? Oh wait, let me guess...weird stalker dudes?”

“Um...right” I said, agreeing with whatever set of events she’d just conjured up in her head.

“I used to get those. And I’d imagine a girl like you would-”

“A girl like me?” I asked, raising an eyebrow. I wasn’t even a girl like me, but I was still a bit offended by it.

“Pink. Blonde. Petite. Cute” she shrugged.

“A lot of people seem to notice that” I quipped, looking back towards the door.

“Remember when you said I’d learn a few things at this convention?”

“Yep.”

“Any of them related to the guys playing games in the common area?”

As I waited for her answer, I watched her playful face grow slightly stern.

“What did they do?”

“They challenged me to a game and then knocked the controller out of my hand to beat me.”

I left out the bet, seeing how angry she already was, and was glad to see her expression soften slightly. “They’re man-children. Don’t bother with them. And if they bother you, tell me. No offense but I make a lot less of a damsel in distress than you do.”

I looked over her height, muscles and general confidence, things that ‘Minnie’ was entirely deficient in. She was right about that.

“Yeah. Thanks. Do you know anything about RigRanger07?” I asked as I headed towards one of the stalls.

“Him? King of the douchebags” she began as I got in. “Never got past the ‘pulling pigtailed to show a girl you like them’ phase and gets really angry when it doesn’t work. He’s good though, really good. Everyone has him as their favorite to win the big tournament.”

I wasn’t entirely sure how to do this but I decided to pull my dress up, feeling weird as its soft fabric dragged up my legs and hips until it bunched at my waist to form a sort of shirt. I had picked out the most plain and reasonable panties out of all the ones my fans had gotten me, but unfortunately that just meant they didn’t have lace or a hole in the backside. They were pink with a white trim and although that wasn’t my favorite, I

still felt beyond naked as I slipped them off and picked them up. Even when the dress was back down, the idea that all you had to do to see me naked was get under me was...

Shudder.

Still, I walked out, panties bunched in a hand that was hidden behind my back.

Zara raised an eyebrow. "Did you get your period or something?" she asked, clocking it immediately. I just stood there, trying to think of a lie before realizing...

My period!?

Would I get one if I stayed like this for too long? Would three days be enough for...

I felt like shuddering again, but quickly refocused on the girl waiting for an answer. "Um, no."

"Good. Because you're the best chance at beating Ranger, so we need you focused" she said, reaching out and tousling my hair, which felt...

Huh.

She didn't ask about the panties again, and I scurried out, walking past the common room and throwing them through the door before breaking off into a run. I heard the sounds of hoots and hollers behind me, so I guess they had gotten them.

I wasn't sure if I was going to get my period, or how I felt about Zara or if I was ever, ever going to be able to forget the feeling of running with no panties as the draft went up my dress, but I did know one thing.

Someone had to cut that RigRanger down to size.

And I wanted it to be me.