

Sample from Act 2 of [LATEX, LEATHER, LIPSTICK, LOVE, LUST](#). Script originally written in Ink, converted to a format that shows the in-game styling more effectively.

Choices are marked with a pointed arrow in [➤ blue](#).

- ↪ I'm outside the hair salon. The ambient noise of a middling shopping centre fills the concourse below. A mother pushing her baby's pram passes behind me.
 - ↪ .god god god fuck god
- ↪ Let's get this over with. I open the door.
- ↪ There's, what I assume, a currently popular pop song playing. After rehearsing what I'm going to say at least twelve times, I approach the counter.
- ↪ "Hi!" the receptionist says with a customer service smile. "Welcome! Do you have a booking?"
- ↪ "Hi, yeah, I've got an appointment at 1?"
 - ↪ .WRONG
- ↪ "Uh— 2. Sorry. Yeah, at 2."
 - ↪ .she said booking not appointment why did you say appointment instead of booking
- ↪ "Gotcha, just give me a second..."
- ↪ She clicks and scrolls through something, chittering some kind of tune with her teeth.
- ↪ "And... what's your name?"
- ↪ I inhale. "It's L."
- ↪ "El... Elle..."
 - ↪ .here we go here we go motherfucking russian roulette baby
- ↪ "I've got..." she squints. "Elton here, is that right?"
- ↪ Fuck it. Sure. "That's right."
- ↪ "Okay great! Alice will be with you in a bit, just sit over there," she gestures to a couch with deflated cushions.
- ↪ That's actually the first time I've got a man's name.
- ↪ That's...
- ↪ That's the first time I've got a man's name.
- ↪ Normally, when I say L, it's assumed to be the quirky nickname of a woman. I've heard everything. Elle. Ellen. Ellie. Lilly. Lisa. Then I have to explain, no, sorry, it's just L, and then usually they're polite enough to keep saying L, but they always have an idea what it's short for. It's still a woman's name. It's a woman's L.
- ↪ Now I'm Elton. That's not my name at all, but it's a *man's* name. Someone on the phone assumed I was a man, and autofilled me to a man's name. My god. Is this what it feels like? To pass? To not have to be on the offensive everytime someone

refers to me? To just exist as myself? Is this it? Am I finally going to get the haircut I always wanted—

⇒ "Elton? Sorry?" the receptionist calls out, what has to be several times by now.

"Would you like a drink?"

⇒ "Uh—" I cough. "Yeah, sorry. Yeah. Just, water? That's fine?"

⇒ **#CLEAR**

⇒ I'm in the chair. I'd put my water on the counter in front me, which is just too far away to grab without moving my torso—and thus, my head—forward. The music's on a different, I am also assuming, popular pop song.

⇒ Alice (another assumption, but it's not like I'm ever going to address her by name, and I'm shocked I even remembered it) walks up behind me. "Alright, Elton! how are you doing?" She can't be much older than me, and she's been chewing gum non-stop.

⇒ .you are definitely not an elton good fucking lord

⇒ "Yeah, yeah, I'm doing good." I hate the small talk. I fucking hate the small talk.

⇒ She takes her fingers through my hair, which on a good day I would enjoy. "So, what are we looking at? What would you like?"

⇒ "I have...." Here we go. "I've got some pictures of, like, what I go for. And just trying to make— To, to look similar."

⇒ .get your phone out get your fucking phone out get your phone out

⇒ I do the hip thrust, and get my phone out. I flick through each of the photos after Discord takes a second to load them all. The hairdresser nods, politely.

⇒ Then the anime-but-not-anime boy shows up. I didn't expect him. I forgot about him. I hesitate on the picture before trying to swipe away multiple times, which doesn't work, only enlarging it slightly, and trying to swipe it away only moves it a tiny bit over to the left, and then I scramble my other fingers over and over until it skips by two pictures instead. It ends on a model hot enough it makes my stomach churn.

⇒ She continues to chew. "Okay..."

⇒ .fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck

⇒ Drastic measures. I try to remember hairdresser lingo I heard from god-knows where. Anything to make me sound competent. "I think, just, the shape is fine I just need the ends trimmed. I think."

⇒ "Okay..."

⇒ .oh mate she is so mad at you she is so fucking mad at you

⇒ I don't say anything else. I turn back and stare at myself. She starts idly toying with my hair again.

- ↪ "Alright, we can do that. Let me grab my stuff, and we can get your hair washed."
- She walks away, leaving me alone with my reflection.
- ↪ I can already feel my face going red. I can see it, too.
- ↪ **#CLEAR**
- ↪ Hair washing is a fortunate break of this process. It's the one part I enjoy, taking a break to just sit and get my scalp massaged for ten minutes. It's like ASMR but actually real. I get to close my eyes. I get to relax.
- ↪ "So, what do you do? I don't think I've cut your hair before."
- ↪ Until this. "Oh, uh, I just finished my degree."
- ↪
- ↪ "I've, I've just finished my degree?"
 - ↪ .the water she can't hear you over the water speak up speak up
- ↪ "I've just finished my *degree*."
 - ↪ .not that loud not THAT LOUD TOO LOUD
- ↪ "Ooh, you're a student," she says.
- ↪ "Y-Yeah," I say, trying every conscious effort I can to speak at a normal volume but louder than the tap but normal enough so I sound normal, "well, former. I finished my masters a month ago."
- ↪ "Okay..."
- ↪ It's the same intonation again.
- ↪ None of that interaction was wrong, was it? 'I finished my masters a month ago' is a perfectly valid thing to say. None of that was weird. Is it weird? Are we not supposed to talk about details anymore? I didn't get that memo.
- ↪ There's several seconds of silence. Just after I start enjoying myself again, she says: "Study anything interesting?"
- ↪ "Oh, it— Linguistics. My masters was in linguistics."
- ↪ "Okay..."
- ↪ Fuck. Fuck what was wrong that time? Was it masters? I said that both times. Maybe she doesn't like when I say 'masters'. I don't understand why but that's the only thing that was the same across both of them.
- ↪ "So, like," just as I'm starting to focus on her fingers working through my roots, "do you know a bunch of languages?"
- ↪ Fucking christ on a bike. "No, uh, we don't learn languages. Like, *learn* learn. We study them, like, how they're constructed. Their history. How they evolve and change. That sort of thing?" In the silence afterwards, I hastily add: "It's a common misconception, though."

- ↪ "Okay..."
- ↪ I am so glad the angle of my head means I don't have to look her in the eye.
- ↪ **#CLEAR**
- ↪ Once I'm back in front of the mirror, I want to return to the sanctuary of the internet, but the cape covering my hands means I can't get my phone out.
- ↪ She's been attacking my towel-dry hair with a comb and scissors. "Are you doing anything nice today?"
- **Tell her**
 - ↪ "Yeah, actually. I'm seeing some friends for..." I absolutely cannot say I'm shopping for lingerie as a man.
 - ↪ "Okay..."
 - ↪ .oh my fucking god oh my fucking god my fucking god
 - ↪ She focuses down a chunk of hair, then says: "Doing anything nice with them?"
 - ↪ Shit. Shit. "A... meal. We're going to get some food. It's, uh, one of their anniversaries. So we're celebrating."
 - ↪ "Okay..."

↪ .AUUUUUUUUUUGH

- **Don't**
 - ↪ I highly doubt she wants to hear the tale of a trans guy buying underwear with a bunch of straight women. "Oh, no, I'm just, chilling, you know."
 - ↪ "Okay..."
 - ↪ .if you throw up on her face i'm not even gonna shame you for it
 - ↪ She walks around to start on the other side. "You'll look nice for it, either way."
 - ↪ "Oh, yeah. Yeah, I hope."
 - ↪ .you hope you HOPE she's gonna make you look nice what the fuck does that say you don't think she will you don't have faith in her abilities as a working professional what the fuck are you saying
 - ↪ I inhale. "You— You will. Make me look nice."
 - ↪ .shut up shut up shut up shut up shut UP
 - ↪ There's no 'Okay...' this time. I don't know if that makes it better or worse.
 - ↪ The hairdresser hums, twisting out some fly-away strands. "Do you use any products, normally?"
 - ↪ Like fuck I do. I grab whatever's the cheapest shampoo in Tesco's. "No, not really."

- ↪ She hums. "I think this cut would look really nice with some. It has sea-salt in it. I'll show you, if you want me to."
- ↪ If I say no I could incur the wrath of someone who in one move could turn me from teenage boy into depressed lesbian. "Yeah, yeah. Sure."
- ↪ The hairdresser leaves to, I presume, get whatever that product is.
- ↪ I let out a long exhale. God, it's almost over, it's almost over—
- ↪ She walks back almost immediately and I have to squeeze out the last of it in a rush so she doesn't notice.
- ↪ It's some kind of spray, which she applies liberally over my whole head. Between bursts, she ruffles my hair.
- ↪ Again, anywhere else, I'd enjoy this.
- ↪ "Do you see now," she says, finishing whatever she's doing. "This looks much better."
- ↪ I genuinely cannot see a difference. "Oh, yeah. That looks nice."
- ↪ "Okay..."
- ↪ {Confidence > 10:.this cannot be you at this point right like this has to be her .this has to be her .you've done everything to the fucking book every single time has given you a positive response on everyone else i don't know what's going on here but it can't be you right it can't be you|else:.literally what the fuck are you doing to get her to act like this to get her to hate you so much .what the fuck are you doing .you have to be doing something you're on the same script as you are everytime is it your posture is it your face i think it's your face i don't think you're emoting correctly}
- ↪ A razor is plugged into the wall, and set on the back of my neck.
- ↪ Oh I have never had a razor before. Is a razor for men? Is that what's happening here? Have I been initiated into the world of mens' haircuts with the Holy Razor grazing my nape?
- ↪ The hairdresser clicks it off, and beams. "Alright, we're done! How's that look?"
- ↪ It looks the same.
- ↪ I generally consider this a victory.
- ↪ She does that weird shit with the mirror and I turn my head this and that way while having no idea what I'm looking at. "Yeah, yeah that looks great."
- ↪ "Lovely. Let me get a brush and I'll clean you up."
- ↪ Now that she's left, I take a proper look, but it really just looks the exact same.
- ↪ Except...

- ↳ I'm seeing the subtleties, now. It wasn't the hair I had before. It's worse.
- ↳ Round. Curls. This is bad. Is it cupping my face? Is it making my cheeks look like circles? Or is it the jawline that's doing that? I can't tell. I can never tell because I just look at my face and it's a woman's face no matter what I do. No matter what I put on or next to it never works. It never works.
- ↳ It's ruined. I didn't get misgendered once here because I looked like a man. My hair was my one tether to being a man, and now it's cut. Now I'm a woman. I'm a woman again. Fuck. Fuck.
- ↳ "Hope you enjoy the rest of your day!"
- ↳ "Fuck."
- ↳ I didn't even notice the brush on my neck. The hairdresser pauses midway through taking the cape off.
- ↳ She stares into the mirror, staring at me, who's staring at myself staring at the mirror.
- **Apologise**
 - ↳ "I'm ju— I'm, I'm sorry. I don't know. Sorry."
- **Make a recovery**
 - ↳ "...ing, yeah? I will?"
 - ↳ I smile with at least four muscles that should never be part of a smile.
- ↳ She giggles, and walks off with the cape.
- ↳ I want to disappear into a hole and never see the light of the sun again.