

LIP GLOSS AND JOY STICKS

Written by

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INT. CONVENTION CENTER - BATHROOM - DAY

SULEI KALIMA, 16, Hawaiian with long, braided hair, braces herself against the countertop and stares into the mirror.

SULEI

You're fine. You'll be fine. Just place. That's all you need. Just place. Place. You can do this.

She turns on the faucet, then splashes her face with water.

HALLWAY

Sulei steps out of the bathroom into a LARGE CROWD. Her arms cross around her stomach.

Sulei squeezes past a few guys in the crowd.

SULEI (CONT'D)

Excuse me...

Her shoulders slump. She tightens her wrap around her waist.

Sulei bumps into TUCKER ANDERSON, 17, muscled, blonde, pretty boy. Sulei raises her hands in apology.

SULEI (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry!

Tucker laughs.

TUCKER

You look lost.

SULEI

Oh. Yeah. I'm looking for the sign-in booth? For the tournament?

TUCKER

Sure thing. I can take you.

Tucker smiles at Sulei. He leads the way through the Crowd.

TOURNAMENT SIGN-IN BOOTH

Dividers create a line in front of a small table. An ATTENDANT, 20s, lanky with pimples, sits behind the desk. Several GAMERS wait in the line.

Tucker motions towards a sign on the desk. The sign reads: "Tournament Contestant Sign-In".

TUCKER (CONT'D)
Here you go, m'lady.

SULEI
Thanks.

TUCKER
Any sign of your boyfriend?

SULEI
What boyfriend?

TUCKER
Your boyfriend entering the
tournament.

SULEI
I don't have a boyfriend.

TUCKER
Then what're you -- Wait. You? Oh
please. You're a contestant?

SULEI
Yes. Yes, I am.

Tucker laughs.

TUCKER
But wait! There are no bedazzled
controllers. And, what're you going
to do if you break a nail?

Sulei crosses her arms around her stomach and avoids Tucker's
gaze. Tucker rolls his eyes and laughs.

TUCKER (CONT'D)
Oh, come on. You're joking, right?

Sulei glares at Tucker.

SULEI
The only joke here is you.

Tucker raises his eyebrows.

TUCKER
Oh. So that's how it's going to be?
This is a man's game, little girl.
Go back to the kitchen.

Tucker leaves Sulei in the middle of the hallway alone. A
CROWD OF GAMERS walk around her.

INT. CONVENTION CENTER - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Sulei, Tucker, and the OTHER TOURNAMENT PARTICIPANTS stand in a line behind a large blue curtain.

ANNOUNCER, 30s, wears a blue suit, stands before them with a clipboard in hand.

ANNOUNCER

Okay, y'all! When we say your name, you're going to walk to the X on the floor, stand there, acknowledge your fans, and then exit out the opposite side. Any questions?

The Announcer adjusts the microphone on his suit coat. A few of the Participants exchange looks.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

No? Great! Let's get this started!

The Announcer leaves through the curtain.

MAGGIE, 24, wears all black and a green lanyard, holds her hand to her headset. The badge on her lanyard reads: "MAGGIE BELL, Stage Crew".

Maggie motions for the first Participant in line to go through the curtain.

Sulei pulls a tube of lip gloss out of her pocket. She dabs her bottom lip and rubs it in with her lips.

Maggie signals for the next Participant to go.

SCOTT, 20, in a fedora and suspenders, points at Sulei. JOE, 16, a lanky Asian in a beanie and baggy hoodie, chuckles.

SCOTT

Check out the babe.

JOE

She won't last. She's too hot to be a gamer girl. She's only here because of dumb luck and C-cups.

SCOTT

Exactly. Quota requirements.

JOE

She'll be out in the first round.

Sulei wraps her arms around her waist.

Maggie taps Sulei's shoulder. Sulei turns around.

MAGGIE
You're up next. Ready?

Sulei nods. She tightens her wrap around her stomach.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
C'mon, girl! Smile! There's a huge crowd out there waiting for you!

SULEI
That's what I'm afraid of...

Maggie pats Sulei's shoulder and gives Sulei a thumb's up.

MAGGIE
Here we go.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
Our next contestant is our token femme fatale. Sulei Kalima, gamer tag Hawaiian Punch!

Sulei puts her hand on the blue curtain and closes her eyes.

STAGE

An "X" made of marking tape marks the floor center stage. The Announcer stands at a podium to the side of the stage. Behind him, a projection of a tournament bracket fills the wall.

A LARGE CROWD cheers from the audience.

The blue curtain shuffles.

The Announcer motions towards the curtain.

More movement behind the curtain.

The audience hushes.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)
Hawaiian Punch?

The Announcer forces a nervous laugh.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)
Don't be shy! Your fans await!

Sulei stumbles out from behind the curtain. Maggie closes the curtain behind Sulei.

She stares at the crowd, wide-eyed. Silence fills the room.

Sulei's FOOTSTEPS ECHO through the auditorium as she walks to the "X" center stage.

She stands on the "X" and stares into the bright lights. She shifts her weight from one foot to the other.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)
Sulei "Hawaiian Punch" Kalima!

Minimal, sporadic CLAPS.

MONTAGE - THE TOURNAMENT

-- Sulei takes a pink controller from Maggie. Forces a smile.

-- Tucker waves and flexes. The Crowd cheers.

-- Deep in concentration, Sulei mashes buttons on her controller. Behind her, Tucker does a double take.

-- On screen: Sulei moves up on the tournament bracket.

-- Sulei walks down the hallway. GAMERS hoot and holler. She wraps her arms around her waist and walks away from them.

-- Joe and Scott high five each other. On screen: Both of them move up on the tournament bracket.

-- Maggie rushes up to Sulei. She jumps up and down.

-- On screen: Sulei moves up on the tournament bracket.

INT. CONVENTION CENTER - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Sulei enters through the curtain. Maggie rushes up to her.

MAGGIE
You made the semi-finals!

SULEI
I... placed?

Maggie nods.

MAGGIE
Not only that! But, I think you can win the whole thing!

Sulei's eyes go wide.

SULEI
No way. Really?

Maggie nods faster.

MAGGIE

The semi-finals are a tag team match. And, you're going to be paired with the best guy here!

SULEI

Who?

Maggie smiles.

MAGGIE

Mister Hot Sauce himself.

She motions towards Tucker.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Tucker "Mr. Hot Sauce" Anderson.

Tucker looks over his shoulder, right at Sulei.

Sulei's shoulders slump.

Tucker walks towards Sulei and Maggie.

TUCKER

Well, look who it is.

He smirks. Maggie smiles.

TUCKER (CONT'D)

Looks like they're trying to give me a handicap to even the odds, pairing me with you.

Maggie glares at Tucker and puts her hands on her hips.

MAGGIE

Excuse me?

Sulei balls her hand into a fist.

TUCKER

But don't worry. I'll get us to the Finals. I could win this match by myself. And I plan on it.

Tucker turns around and walks away. Maggie takes a few steps after him. Sulei grabs Maggie's shoulder.

SULEI

Stop. It's not worth it. I placed. That's all I wanted.

Maggie stomps her foot, and then turns to face Sulei.

MAGGIE

But it's not okay! You're amazing.
You have the skill to beat every --

SULEI

-- I know.

Maggie motions towards Tucker.

MAGGIE

So, own it! Don't let these boys
walk all over you. You got this!

Sulei nods. Maggie smiles.

STAGE

Sulei and Tucker stand on one side of the stage. The Announcer stands center stage on the "X". A television faces away from the audience in front of the Announcer.

A projection of the tournament bracket fills the wall.

On the other side of the stage, Scott and Joe chat inaudibly.

ANNOUNCER

And here we are, ladies and gentlemen! The semi-finals!

The Crowd cheers.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

This round will be done as a tag team match, and the winning team will go on to a one-on-one match to determine this year's champion!

Sulei and Tucker exchange a look. Tucker winks.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

Let's hear it for the Blue Team!
Scott "Pickle Pie" Richardson and
Joe "Aqua Frisbi" Wu!

A spotlight shines on Scott and Joe. On the projector: "BLUE TEAM: AquaFrisbi and Pickle Pie".

Scott bows. Joe punches at the air, then back flips.

The Crowd cheers.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)
 The Red Team! Tucker "Mr. Hot
 Sauce" Anderson and Miss Sulei
 "Hawaiian Punch" Kalima!

A spotlight shines on Tucker and Sulei. On the projector:
 "RED TEAM: Mr. Hot Sauce and Hawaiian Punch".

Tucker flexes for the audience. Sulei forces a weak wave.

The lights illuminate the stage. The Announcer raises his
 arms. Tucker, Sulei, Scott, and Joe approach center stage.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)
 Players. Get ready!

Sulei takes her controller. Tucker nudges Sulei and smirks.

TUCKER
 You're not going to need that.

Sulei tightens her grip on the controller.

A countdown appears on the projector.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
 Ready? Three... Two... One...

The countdown reaches zero.

EXT. GAME WORLD - BRIDGE - DAY

A rickety bridge, made of logs and rope, connect two
 mountainous plateaus. It hangs over a dense, tropical jungle.

Tucker, with sword on his back, wears a bun, red grieves, and
 no shirt. He pulls the sword off his back.

Across from Tucker, Joe scratches two daggers together. He
 wears a blue scarf double his body length and a corset.

Sulei holds a trident and stands behind Tucker. She wears a
 large, red ribbon in her hair and a pink skirt.

Scott waits behind Joe. He cradles a glowing blue orb against
 his belly and wears an oversized cap.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
 Go!

Tucker charges towards Joe. He slices his sword with heavy
 swings. A red trail follows the arc of the sword.

Joe hops back. Avoids Tucker's swings. Dashes forward. Stabs Tucker with both of his daggers.

Tucker laughs.

TUCKER

Gotcha.

Tucker grabs Joe. Throws him into the air. Raises his sword. Joe lands on it. Slides down the blade.

AUDIENCE (V.O.)

Ohhh!

Tucker swings the blade. Joe flies off the sword. Joe stumbles to his feet.

JOE

To you!

SCOTT

To me!

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

There's the trade off!

Scott charges Tucker. Chucks the ball at him. The ball glows. Smacks Tucker in the face. Tucker falls to one knee.

SULEI

Tag me in!

Scott throws the orb towards Tucker.

Tucker laughs.

TUCKER

Whatever you want.

Tucker backflips. Sulei races underneath him...

Right into the glowing orb.

The glowing orb SHATTERS. Shards rain down onto Sulei.

Sulei screams.

SCOTT

Should I take it easy on the girl?

Scott raises his arm. The shards of his orb fly towards him.

She spins her trident. Faster. Faster.

Scott's glowing orb reassembles itself.

The blur of Sulei's spinning trident flashes neon green.

Tucker races past Sulei. Jumps. Kicks Scott in the face. Runs back to the plateau behind Sulei.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
Hot Sauce takes the kill!

Scott collapses.

The green beam shoots out of the blur of Sulei's trident.

Sulei turns to face Tucker. She glares at him.

SULEI
What was that? I had him!

TUCKER
Better watch out. You're wide open.

A dagger stabs into Sulei's back. A second dagger.

Sulei's eyes go wide. She collapses.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
Hawaiian Punch is down!

Tucker rushes past Sulei's body. He winks.

He swings his sword overhead and slams it into Joe.

Joe collapses.

INT. CONVENTION CENTER - STAGE - DAY

Tucker kisses the air towards Sulei.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
The final blow! Red Team wins!

BACKSTAGE

Sulei looks straight ahead with a blank stare.

Maggie rushes in and hugs her.

MAGGIE
You won! You're in the finals!

Maggie grabs Sulei's shoulders.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
You're gonna win the whole thing!

Sulei covers her mouth and pushes past Maggie.

BATHROOM

A toilet FLUSHES.

Sulei exits a stall and wipes her mouth. She turns on the faucet. Runs her hands under the water.

She stares at herself in the mirror and washes her hands.

SULEI
What was that!

She runs her hands through her hair.

SULEI (CONT'D)
Okay, Sulei. You're fine. You'll be fine. You placed. That's all you wanted. You placed. You don't need to win. It's just a game. Go out there. Have fun... Just have fun.

She undoes her braid.

HALLWAY

A small group of GAMERS circle around Tucker.

Sulei leaves the bathroom.

GAMER 1, 20s, with a neck beard and greasy hair, WHISTLES at Sulei. He slaps her butt.

Sulei turns to glare at him.

Tucker shoves Gamer 1's shoulder. He glares.

TUCKER
Hey, scumbag, show some respect.

Sulei looks at Tucker.

GAMER #1
Oh, c'mon. What's a girl doing here other than looking for attention?

TUCKER
Looks to me like she's playing better than you.

The Gamers laugh at Gamer 1.

Tucker smirks and nods at Sulei. Sulei smiles at him.

Sulei walks down the hallway.

BACKSTAGE

Maggie rushes up to Sulei.

MAGGIE

Are you okay?

Sulei smiles and nods.

Maggie presses a button on her headset.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

She's here. We're ready.

STAGE

Sulei and Tucker stand on opposite sides of the Announcer, center stage. In front of them, the television screen displays Sulei and Tucker's gaming avatars.

ANNOUNCER

And here it is. The final round.
Players, Sulei "Hawaiian Punch"
Kalima and Tucker "Mr. Hot Sauce"
Anderson. Let's give it up!

The Crowd cheers.

Tucker winks at Sulei. Sulei smirks and winks back. Tucker does a double take. Sulei looks straight ahead.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

The rules are simple. One round.
One life bar. One chance.

Maggie hands Sulei and Tucker their controllers.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

Fighters. Are you ready?

Tucker smiles.

TUCKER

Born.

Sulei nods.

The Crowd cheers.

ANNOUNCER

Then, here we go. Three...

Tucker smirks.

TUCKER

When you lose, wanna go back to the kitchen and make me a sandwich?

ANNOUNCER

Two...

SULEI

When I win, you're welcome to go --

ANNOUNCER

One...

SULEI

-- yourself.

Tucker's jaw drops. He turns his head to look at Sulei.

EXT. GAME WORLD - OUTER SPACE - NIGHT

A lone, gray platform floats amidst the stars.

Tucker, in his avatar's clothing, clutches the hilt of the sword on his back.

Sulei wears her avatar's clothing with trident in hand.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Go!

Sulei rushes towards Tucker. Spins. Slices Tucker across the chest.

TUCKER

Hey! Not fair. I was distracted.

Tucker pulls his sword off of his back. He growls.

Sulei slides backward. She winks.

SULEI

Oops.

Tucker glares at her.

He raises his sword overhead.

Sulei charges forward. Stabs her trident into Tucker's chest.

Tucker drops his sword. He bends over to pick it up.

Sulei back flips and kicks Tucker in the face.

Tucker falls to the ground. Gets to his feet, sword in hand.

TUCKER

I thought I told you...

Tucker and Sulei clash blades back and forth.

TUCKER (CONT'D)

... this is a man's game!

Tucker raises his sword into the air. Sulei charges in. Tucker kicks her.

Sulei flies to the opposite side of the platform.

She uses her trident to help her back to her feet.

SULEI

Good move.

TUCKER

That's how you game like a man.

Sulei smirks.

SULEI

And this...

She throws her trident like a javelin.

SULEI (CONT'D)

... is how you win!

In midair, a blue whirlwind surrounds each tip of the trident. The weapon shoots through Tucker's abs.

Sulei stands.

Tucker looks down at his wound.

Sulei winks. Her trident materializes back into her hand.

Tucker ROARS. Dragon wings sprout from his back. He throws his sword, then flies towards Sulei.

Sulei front flips over the blade.

Stabs her trident into the ground.

Front flips over Tucker. Lands on his back.

She presses her hand against his head.

His body turns blue. And shatters.

Sulei lands on her feet.

She twirls in a circle, flashes a peace sign, and winks.

INT. CONVENTION CENTER - STAGE - NIGHT

Silence fills the room.

Sulei sets her controller down. The Announcer looks between Sulei and the Crowd. Tucker stares straight ahead.

Sulei turns to Tucker.

SULEI

Good game.

One person CLAPS from the audience. Another joins.

Tucker turns to Sulei. He smiles a genuine smile.

TUCKER

Same to you. Champion.

Sulei smiles. Tucker winks.

They shake hands.

ANNOUNCER

And the winner is... Sulei
"Hawaiian Punch" Kalima!

The Crowd erupts into a frenzy of APPLAUSE.

Maggie cheers.

Tucker leads Sulei to center stage. Sulei tenses her shoulders. Her arms cross in front of her stomach.

The Crowd cheers.

MAGGIE (O.S.)

We love you, Sulei! Own it!

Sulei smiles. Her arms return to her sides.

She twirls in a circle and raises a peace sign into the air.