

## My Chosen Family

I have had several close friends over the course of my life; some men, some women, and some in between. Choosing one to call my family is a hard decision. After all, I tend to fall in love with my closest friends. However, if I had to select one friend that I consider part of my chosen family, it would be Miria Suriano. I have loved her for years and even though she has two partners now, I will continue to love her forever.

Although my memory is a bit hazy nowadays, I believe we originally met through D&D Club as she was the vice president at the time. We spoke to each other over Discord after my first outdoor college band concert. Miria and her friend Cole had been in the audience sitting on Alumni Quad. We talked about dozens of topics often from that day forward: games, writing, television shows, movies, and more. We also held deep conversations about love and friendship and other key elements of our daily lives. As our friendship continued, my love for her blossomed. I should mention that this was a couple of years before she transitioned. I decided to share my love with her one night. She did not reciprocate romantic feelings, but she still cared about me, which is all I really could've asked for.

I consider Miria a part of my chosen family because she is a wonderful friend and we get along quite well. Over the years, we have entrusted each other with information about ourselves that we don't really share with others, notably regarding subjects such as mental illness and gender and sexuality. She has seen the worst sides of me, but she still sticks by my side. I enjoy every moment I spend with her, especially in the freedom of summertime. Miria is special to me for a number of reasons. She's a fantastic writer who received the Olive B White Creative Writing Award for fiction. She always inspires me to write from the heart and gives great advice on how I can improve my own craft. She's imaginative and creates excellent characters for her

D&D sessions. She's empathetic and helps me unravel my emotions concerning my present school life and my future after graduation. All in all, Miria is a sweet and funny girl whom I am happy to have in my life.

Being friends with Miria has benefitted me greatly. She's helped me to understand both myself and others more. I've learned how to express my thoughts clearly, even in the midst of a psychotic episode. I am not afraid to share my feelings with those I'm attracted to now. She gives me ideas on how to approach certain conversations with friends about topics that are more sensitive. I have certain issues that I can't bring up with most people, especially my family. At least, not yet. Knowing that she will support me with my endeavors in my love life makes me happy.

Miria has taught me how to deal with conflicts. Most of my conflicts with others stem from my own maltreatment of myself. As such, Miria has tried to help me love myself more so I don't frustrate others with my own problems. She makes me want to be a better person, which has improved my relationships with my other friends and even my family. I've been more open about both my struggles and my celebrations. Of course, some things I share just with her. She always sends me great advice on anything I have questions about.

All in all, Miria Suriano is a great friend that I deeply care for and will always cherish. She no longer goes to Bradley, but I still speak with her often through Discord about anything and everything. I hope to spend another summer weekend with her after I graduate. I also hope that she will someday read my novels and poetry. She has allowed me to explore new pieces of myself without judgment. I couldn't have asked for a better friend to have in my life.