

Dating 104

Chapter 104

[Liam's POV]

The second time I opened my eyes that morning, I reached over to find Ella only to swiftly discover that I was alone. My heart hammered in my chest and I instantly shot up straight. I scanned the room, finding zero trace of her. *wɪw@.nOv(ε)lwδrM.εo@*

What the hell?

I grabbed my phone and sent a quick message to Ella in hopes of some kind of explanation. What we went through—including Arthur—was nothing short of traumatic. There wasn't a single doubt in my mind that Ella was still battling through her shock. *wɪw.r.η(ε)vrél(w)orM.εOm*

I had every intention of talking things through with her once she and I got some decent rest, but apparently, she had other ideas.

A few minutes had passed and still no reply. It wasn't like her to not respond to a message. I tried calling her at least twice, but she never answered any of my calls either. The muscles in my stomach clenched as I told myself not to panic.

She shouldn't be alone.

I quickly got out of bed and threw on a fresh pair of clothes. I honestly needed a shower, but I had to find out where Ella had gone off to more.

Grabbing my phone, I left the room only to run into Noah. He shot me a perplexed look. His eyes widened when he lowered his gaze to see my hands.

"Dude, what the hell is that on your hands?" he asked. "Is that...Blood?"

I glanced down and silently cursed myself. Son of a bitch! It was blood. When I'd used that dagger to stop the man from strangling Ella, I hadn't realized just how much of his blood had ended up on my hands and clothes.

The deal of secrecy that I had placed between Arthur and me rushed to the forefront of my mind. I wasn't about to bring Noah in on any of it, especially because of how little information we had.

I cleared my throat and gave a short shrug. "Oh, it's nothing," I said. "I went a little too hard at the gym earlier."

Noah returned my comment with a weird look and shook his head. "I still don't know what you see in boxing, man."

With that, he turned back into his own room and I was in the clear to move forward. I headed directly for Ella's dormitory. As soon as I got to her room I banged on the door and waited tensely. I tried to hang on to what little patience I had left.

For some unspoken reason, my anxiety spiked when I saw that it was Monica who answered the door and not Ella. "Where is she?" I questioned pointedly.

Monica raised a brow and placed a hand on her hip. "Well, hello to you too." Her voice dripped with sarcasm. "Jesus, you look as horrible as Ella did earlier." *wɪw.NovElwσRm.εom*

I took in a deep breath and fought to keep calm. "Monica, where is she?"

"She went home," she said. "Now are you going to tell me exactly why the two of you came back to school so damn early?"

Did that mean that Ella hadn't told Monica anything about last night?

"What did Ella say before she left?" I asked evenly. I tried not to feel hurt over the fact that she left school without so much as sending me a message, to let me know.

Monica crossed her arms over her chest and huffed. "She claimed that you guys cut your weekend short because she thinks she's coming down with some kind of head cold. Which, by the way, I think is complete bullshit."

I glanced down to check my phone and was shocked to see a new message from Ella. Although, it didn't exactly make me happy.

Ella: Sorry for leaving so early. I need some time alone to think things through.

Being alone was the last thing that she needed. But I was left with no choice. I had to give her space. *wɪwW.©(ε)V(ε)Lwσr@.c(ε)M*

[Ella's POV]

I truly didn't know what possessed me to think that going home for the remainder of the weekend was a good idea. Not only was I greeted by a frightened expression from my mom, but I was also whacked with a list of questions as to why I was home and not with Liam.

Knowing that my mom was just as good at reading me as Monica was, I pressed my luck by telling her the same white lie I told my friend. I was

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battling a head cold—nothing more. The only problem was I actually felt like I was literally coming down with something.

A few days had gone by since I first came home and I still hadn't returned back for classes. I should have known that nightmare was only going to be the first of many to follow after it. I had become so terribly sleep-deprived that I barely had the ability to function properly, much less focus on schoolwork.

"All you need is rest, Ella," my mom told me.

But that was the problem. I couldn't get any proper, real rest because every time I closed my eyes all I kept seeing was that man and his murderous dagger. It was the same horrible nightmare on repeat.

My head ached horribly and the pit in my stomach grew bigger the longer I tried to think on the whole matter. But it was no use. I wanted to reach out to Liam but I couldn't find the energy or the will to put this on him as well.

Sometime around the third day of my homestay, I heard someone knocking loudly on the front door as I lay in bed. I heard my mom answer the door with a tone of pleasant surprise. Minutes later, I was facing a very displeased—looking Liam and a worried mom.

Oh, boy. I could already tell that this wasn't going to end well.

"I'm just going to give you two some privacy," my mom said before closing the door behind her.

Liam openly glared at me while crossing his arms over his chest. "Care to tell me why the hell you've been ignoring my messages and missing classes for the past few days?"

He must have noticed the terrible state I was in because his stern look instantly fell. His demeanor softened and he quickly came to my side. He reached out to cup my cheek in his hand.

"Jesus Christ, Ella. When was the last time you got any real sleep?"

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I let out a humorless laugh. "Since before the trip the cabin." Liam grimaced. "Since then, it's been nothing but the same nightmare. I don't know what to do, but I feel like I'm moments away from breaking down."

"Come here," he whispered. Liam purposely pulled me against him and had us lying back on the mattress. "Do you think if we stay like this it might help?"

"God, I hope so." Without another thought, I allowed myself to melt into his chest and take in the familiar scent of him. It didn't take long for my exhaustion to pull me under. Something had to give. Without any real sleep, there was no way I was going to last.

"I promise...I promise that when you wake up, we're going to talk it all out," Liam murmured.

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