

## Dating 106

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[Ella's POV]

As soon as I returned back to campus, I'd thrown myself deep into my studies. Doing my best to listen to both Liam and my mom, I tried to put my focus on my finals. Each day became easier and soon enough, we were all quickly approaching winter break.

I couldn't wait for some much-needed writing time and a chance to truly relax. While the idea of starting my very own book series excited me, I was still trying to figure out how to end my first story.

It has to be captivating, yet hopeful. Intriguing--yet, daring. The ending needs to be enough for the reader to want to come back.

I knew pondering

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matter in the middle of one of my classes was not the wisest decision. The last thing I needed was getting called out by another teacher for not paying attention.

The bright side of being this close to finals, a lot of what was being discussed and covered was purely review. Nearly everyone was up to their eyes in notes and hand-made study guides. With all this attention being redirected elsewhere, many of the other students seemed to have forgotten the whole mess between Ava and I.

I was more than glad to see that I was no longer at the top of people's interests. If they weren't focusing on finals, then most likely they were consumed with the upcoming hockey matches. Speaking of hockey, my own mind continuously wandered to Liam. Once finals were over, there was a very unlikely chance the two of us would have any real-time to see each other much.

According to what Monica told me through Peter, the team was set up to head to some kind of luxury resort to train for the season. I tried not to let it bother me but, deep down, I was heavily upset by the fact.

Then again, maybe a break from each other would prove to be a good thing. Although he and I have been through some incredibly rough situations, there was still that ugly cloud of doubt that would hang low over my head.

Thoughts that Liam and I weren't possible as a real couple still pinched like a permanent thorn in my side. I felt like no matter what trials we'd face there was always going to be something said about us.

Even though Liam was persistent in his reassurance that we would handle any and all challenges together, there would always be that continuous strain of doubt.

What if he does find someone who's better suited to him? There's no way he's going to want to keep being with

someone like me.

So, yeah. Part of me felt saddened that he was going to be away at training camp for the main duration of the break. But I remembered what Aaron had told us that we'd gone to speak with him. It's imperative that Liam win the match against Arthur.

But it sure as hell didn't sit right with me that Liam's own Dad was willing to place so much pressure on him, having not even been a real father figure in his life.

Nonetheless, I admired Liam's determination and dedication that he was willing to put into winning those matches. No matter the outcome, I was prepared to sit through them all and make sure that Liam knew I supported him.

It was the final day before winter break, Everyone, including myself, had just finished through the last of our finals and were eagerly waiting to be let go by our teachers. The room was abuzz with excitement and the usual gossip.

Liam handed in his completed final and returned to his spot next to me. "How do you think you did?" I asked quietly. W.Worm.com

"Honestly, who the hell knows?" he muttered. "I'm just glad it's friggin' over."

Out of the corner of my eye, I noticed Liam reaching into his bag. He'd taken out an elegantly printed envelope and placed it in front of me. "What's this?"

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He gave me a sly smirk and jutted his chin out, gesturing for me to open it.

I secretly hoped that it wasn't some sort of holiday invite to another family gathering. After our recent visit to the Winslows as well as the catastrophe that was Thanksgiving, I was deeply uncomfortable with the possibility of having to bear another family get-together.

"It's an invitation to stay at the hotel where the hockey camp is being held," he explained.

My eyes light up with surprise and excitement. "You want me to go with you?"

He nodded with a smile. "Absolutely. There's no one else I would want by my side as I end up physically battered and utterly exhausted to properly function," he joked.

I felt

my cheeks blush. "Well, it would give me a good opportunity to get some research done for my book," I commented.

Liam's smile deepened, causing a warmth to spread through me. "And perhaps you and I will finally get a chance to have some time together."

I playfully rolled my eyes. "Liam, we see each other nearly every day."

He came in close to whisper into my ear while dragging his finger over the top of my thigh. "You know what I mean," he hummed.

When I made it home, I told my mom about the invitation to the exclusive hotel and truthfully I couldn't tell who was more excited.

"It was very sweet of Liam to think of inviting you," she said with a knowing smile. "I hear that the Golden Fawn Hotel is known for its romantic atmosphere."

I rolled my eyes and shook my head. "It's also known for its impressive hockey rink which is where Liam will be spending the majority of his time during the break," I pointed out.

"Mmm hmm. Okay, dear. Whatever you say."

And with that thought in mind, I went off to pack my bag and make sure I had everything together before Liam planned to pick me up the following morning. W.Worm.com

"Oh my God," I hissed under my breath. "How the hell is the team able to practice in a place like this?"

The Golden Fawn Hotel was stunning beyond words and without a doubt one of the most elegant places I had ever been thus far. Its decor reminded me greatly of how the Winslow Estate looked.

Liam appeared far less impressed and was probably looking forward to settling into the rooms. "One of our team's sponsors chose to personally fund our stay here," he told me. "Of course, I expected nothing less from Aaron's bank accounts." W.Worm.com

My eyes nearly bugged out of my head. "You're telling me that your father is the one who's been secretly sponsoring your team?"

That bit of information shouldn't have come as such a shock yet it did. Did Arthur know that his father was secretly supporting his brother's team?

Liam and I made our way to the reception desk to checkin. Once we had our keys we set off to find our rooms. It came as no surprise that the hotel had booked our rooms directly next to each other's.

Liam, himself, couldn't appear more pleased if he tried.

Much like the main lobby, the rooms were, of course, beautifully decorated for the winter season and felt welcoming.

Glancing around, I was happy to see that my room had a nice large bed as well as a private bathroom and my own

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writing desk. However, out of the corner of my eye, something caught my attention.

"Liam, what is that?" I asked.

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