

## Dating 136

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By the end of the weekend, Liam had come rushing over to the house the day that our transfer papers were cleared from Eastwood Academy. It had been made official, at that point.

I was sort of hoping for a lot of the uncertainty to fade away but it only seemed to become more compacted. My mom, on the other hand, was beyond thrilled and excited about this new opportunity for me. She had heard many positive things about Eastwood when it came to its specialty programs and ongoing opportunities.

This i

incredible news, you two!" she exclaimed. "We should have a party to celebrate!"

That following weekend, we were having a small get-together at our house. It turned out to be three of us, Liam's family, Monica, and Peter.

Everyone was decently spread about the living room and kitchen, chatting away about the upcoming transition. Liam's parents were both thrilled and a little concerned for the well-being of their son. I wasn't entirely sure if Liam ever told his adoptive parents how he came to get enrolled in such a prestigious school.

Then again, I didn't pay too much mind to the idea. It was, undoubtedly, clear that Liam's mother was still not a hundred percent okay with me being with Liam. I'd occasionally catch her glaring at me from across the room and purposely ignore her for the sake of eliminating any awkwardness.

I rolled my eyes and sat down next to Monica. Peter, Noah, and Liam were well enrapt in their own conversation about Liam joining another hockey team.

Liam, surprisingly, shook his head. "I think I'm going to hold off on any sports, at least for the first term. I need to get a feel for what the place is like and how most of the people are."

From what I gathered, Eastwood Academy was known to be one of the most prestigious schools in the country. Oddly enough, I had little to no fears when it came to handling myself academically.

However, when it came to any social affairs...I was at a bit of a loss.

Although recent events have been proving this theory false, I still believed myself to be human. With that in mind, I had a dark feeling that many of the other students were going to have a problem with that.

I was already well-anticipating that I was going to be looked down

upon

I'll just do what I've been doing for nearly all my life and just keep my head down.

Liam must have sensed my worry. He casually reached over to rest his hand over the top of my thigh and gave it a slight squeeze. "Everything is going to work out just fine."

I wanted to believe him, but only time would tell.

As the evening drew on, Liam pulled Noah aside for a brief moment to talk about the hockey team's future. Noah's expression was filled with questionable uncertainty.

"I've already spoken to the coaches, and we all agreed that it should be you who takes on the role as the new captain," he said. Noah looked like he was at a loss for words. "S-Seriously?"

Both Liam and Peter nodded their heads.

"I know you have it in you. You're a good player," he told him.

Peter wrapped a loose arm around Noah's shoulders, "And hey, with enough practice you may even become a great player one day," he joked.

We all broke out into light-hearted chuckles. As I got up to freshen up my cup, I heard Noals call out from behind me.

"Ella? Can we talk for a quick second?" he asked

surprised to see a solemn expression take over his face when Noah had been so excited and happy just moments ago. "Alright." I agreed.

10:37 AM

Chapter 136

"You know, I've been doing a lot of thinking since we broke up months ago," he started. "I wasn't too happy about the idea of you and Liam getting together...Part of me thought that I could somehow win you back but I was wrong. You and Liam. Well, I think you're good together. I don't know, I guess I've just been reluctant to let you go."

Any anxiety that I'd been unknowingly harboring inside of my chest was gradually dispersing.

"I kind of hoped that we could have worked things out in the end. But I know that I mistreated you and missed my opportunity."

I found myself oddly at peace with this situation and gave Noah a real smile. "Thank you. I wish you the best with your new position on the team and I want to let you know that I commend you for wanting to do better."

"I was sort of hoping that you would have taken notice of me now that I'm dressing better."

"I had noticed. Which reminds me, how were you able to afford clothes like that?"

Noah sheepishly told me that it was Arthur who'd been paying him.

My whole body went stiff. "But why?"

"Don't tell Liam this, but I was sort of informing Arthur of your whereabouts while we were at the Golden Fawn."

I was stunned beyond belief. It made so much sense and was incredibly disturbing to know.

"What? But, why would you agree to that?"

Noah became noticeably shy. "I honestly needed the money because I knew it would make me appear less like my old self. I'm sorry."

I forced a smile. "Thank you for telling me, Noah."

Without another word, I slipped outside to get some fresh air. That was a lot to take in.

"So, I suppose congratulations are in order. I've just been told that you will be accompanying my dear brother to his new school." A low voice calls out.

I turned my head to see Arthur standing in a black button-down dress shirt no more than ten feet away.

What the hell?!

"Oh, for Christ's sake. What did Noah tell you where I friggin' live now too?" I scoffed.

Arthur grimaced. "Goddamn little snitch. Alright, yes. I used him to find out where you were before."

"Why?"

He shrugged his shoulders back. "Because I saw an opportunity and I took it."

"You really didn't need to come all the way out here to say any of this to me, you know. You do have my number," I told him.

I watched a knowing smirk gently play on his lips. "You're right. But I didn't just come out here to talk. I... Wanted to see you. How are you feeling?"

I really didn't think it was possible to become any more shocked after what Noah had told me yet there I was—at a complete loss for words.

"I'm alright now

"What brought it on?" he asked with interest.

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I bit the inside of my cheek, contemplating whether or not I should even be talking to him about this.

"I don't even know, honestly

Arthur narrowed his eyes and stepped closer. "I heard you, you know."

My brows drew together. "What do you m-

10:37 AM

Chapter 136

"I heard the growl you let out," he stated clearly. My heart hammered frantically in my chest. "I'm starting to really question. your background, Ella. Because no real human possesses the ability to do that."

Out of the corner of my eye, I caught sight of that same dark figure I'd seen back at the stadium. I physically flinched and let out a sharp gasp, causing Arthur to reach for me.

"Ella? What is it? What's wrong?"

"I...No...I-It's not possible."

"Tell me what you saw."

"The man from the cabin," I whispered. "He's back."

"Listen to me," he said firmly. "I promise that I will not ever let him get to you again." W̄w̄©.℄c̄vℓW̄o(r)m.com

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