

Dating 71

Chapter 71

In the days that followed my meeting with Aaron, I was feeling so all over the place. How could Aaron make that ask of me. He wanted me to keep this secret relationship that Aaron and could enter into. He wanted to me to try to convince Liam to join the family. *Www.NoVe(1)W6Rm.Com*

It all felt like such a betrayal because of course if I told Liam Aaron's proposal, he would say absolutely not. Liam knowing that Aaron was using me to try to get Liam to come into the Winslow family fold would only make Liam more adamant about giving a big FU to Aaron and the Winslows,

Each day passed in a blur of classes, assignments, and trying to avoid Liam. It wasn't that I didn't want to see him—my heart ached every time I ignored his texts or dodged his calls—but I needed time to think, to figure out how to navigate this new reality Aaron had thrust upon us.

There were so many times that Liam almost caught up with me and I just didn't know what to do. During our English class, instead of sitting in our normal corner of the room, I sat right up front and by the time Liam walked in class, there were no seats next to me.

I could see Liam frown in my direction at the weird decision that I had made to sit in this new spot. After class, Liam walked up beside me and grabbed my hand.

"Ella, what was that about?" he said, a goofy smile on his face.

I tried to play dumb. "What was what about?"

The new seat choice, baby. Liam said.

I nodded, "Oh, yeah, for some reason my eyes were feeling a little blurry so I decided to get a little closer to the front so that I could see what Prof. was writing on the board.

Liam looked at me skeptically, as if he didn't believe me. And why would he? It was the most insane sounding lie I had told ever. My eyes felt blurry! What kind of nonsense was that? But I just couldn't come up with something that sounded more plausible.

Liam, of course, noticed. He always noticed. He just didn't say anything then. *Www.NoVeLw@R(m).(c)om*

Later in the afternoon, he caught me as I was about to slip away from the courtyard where we usually hung out. I had seen him coming and I was quickly packing up my bags because I thought he hadn't seen me yet. But he was too quick.

"Hey, Ella, wanna come to my game tonight?" he asked, helping me pick up the last textbook around me.

I forced a smile, guilt gnawing at me. "Tm really sorry, Liam. I have a ton of homework, and I'm working on my new story. Maybe next time?"

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face fell, but he nodded, trying to hide his disappointment. "Yeah, sure. Next time."

This dance of avoidance continued for days. I buried myself in the art department, spending hours sketching and writing, trying to drown out the turmoil inside me. But every time my phone buzzed with a message from Liam, or I saw him in the hallways, my resolve wavered.

I was hiding out here because it was a place that Liam would never think to come and find me. I didn't really have anything to do wit art except for sometimes when I wanted to sketch what I thought a character might look like, I would.

Liam didn't know that I sometimes came here to get help from this nice professor who would quickly teach me how to get what was in my mind on the drawing page.

Finally, one evening, as I sat in an empty classroom working on a drawing. Liam found me. His sudden appearance made my heart leap into my throat. How the hell did he know that I was here? How the hell did he know about the art department?

"Ella," @@Ŵ.noVêŁ@o@Ml.©OM

he said, his voice a mix of frustration and hurt, "what's going on! Why have you been avoiding me?

I stared at him, my brush frozen mid—stroke. "Liam, I..." —

He stepped closer, his eyes searching mine. "Are you trying to break up with me?"

The question hit me like a punch to the gut. Break up with him? The thought had crossed my mind, maybe all this guilt and anxiety and stress that

I was feeling ever since Aaron asked me to work with him to get Liam to join the family, would finally stop.

But the mere idea of losing Liam made my heart shatter into a thousand pieces. Tears welled up in my eyes as I shook my head,

"No, Liam, I don't want to break up with you," I choked out "I've been avoiding you because... because Aaron found me."

Liam's eyes darkened. "What do you mean? What did he say!"

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I took a deep breath, trying to steady my trembling voice. "He wants me to convince you to join the family. He said that if you don't. Arthur wil take over, and it will be dangerous for you. For us

Liam's expression hardened, a mixture of anger and betrayal "And you considered it, didn't you? You thought about working with him behind my back."

Tears streamed down my cheeks. "Liam, I was scared. Aaron made it sound like joining the family was the only way to keep you safe. I didn't know

what to do

He took a step back, pain etched across his face. "I can't believe you would even think about it. After everything we've been through, how could you trust him over me?"

"I don't trust him" I cried, "I love you, Liam. I was just trying to protect you. I didn't want Arthur to hurt you."

Liam's jaw clenched, and he shook his head. "I can take care of myself, Ella. I don't need Aaron, and I don't need you making decisions for me behind my back,"

With that, he turned and walked out of the room, leaving me sobbing and feeling more lost than ever.

I couldn't believe what had just happened. I went to see Monica in a panic. She was in our dorm room, studying, but when she saw my tear—streaked face, she immediately pulled me into a hug.

"What happened?" she asked gently.

I told her everything—about Aaron, his plan, and my fear of Arthur, Liam's rage at my betrayal. Monica listened, her face growing more concerned with each word.

"Ella," she said when I finished, "you have to be careful. The Winslow family is not only powerful but also very manipulative. Aaron is using your love for Liam against you."

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"I know," I whispered, my voice raw, "But I didn't know what else to do. I was so scared."

Monica squeezed my hand. "You have to talk to Liam. Tell him everything. He needs to know what Aaron is planning. Keeping secrets will only tear you two apart."

"I tried," I said, fresh tears spilling over. "He walked away. He feels betrayed."

Monica sighed. "Give him some time. He's hurt right now, but he loves you. He'll come around. Probably. Hopefully."

My stomach clenched at Monica's uncertainty. I couldn't bear the thought of Liam never forgiving me for betraying him. I wasn't sure that I could

even go on

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