

Dating 95

Chapter 95

The wind rustled the leaves of our tree, the golden sunlight filtering through, casting playful shadows on my notebook. Liam and I had claimed this spot as our unofficial study haven. Today, though, my mind was a thousand miles away from the chemistry equations in front of me. I kept stealing glances at Liam, who seemed equally distracted.

"Hey, Ella," Liam said suddenly, breaking the silence.

I looked up, my heart doing a little flip at the intensity in his eyes. "Yeah?" *wurw_@oVeflw.rtm.c@M*

"Do you want to come to Thanksgiving dinner at my place?"

I blinked, not sure I heard him right. "Are you serious?"

"Of course," he said, his tone casual but his eyes searching mine.

My heart stuttered. Thanksgiving dinner with the Gravens? This wasn't just any dinner; it was a declaration. He was ready to make our relationship public with his adopted parents. "Liam, that's a big deal. I've never been to an official family event with you guys."

He shrugged, trying to play it cool. "It's just dinner. My family will be there, and I thought it'd be nice if you joined us."

I felt a mix of excitement and terror. "Okay. Yeah. I'll come."

When I got back to my dorm, the reality of what I'd agreed to hit me like a freight train. "Thanksgiving with Liam, Monical!" I shrieked, flinging myself onto my bed. "What am I supposed to wear? Should I bring a dish? Does his family even like humans?"

Monica, ever the voice of reason, tried to calm me down. "Okay, breathe. First, clothes. Think 'fall chic' but comfortable. You don't want to look out of place, but you also don't want to feel like you're attending a royal ball."

I nodded, trying to absorb her words. "Okay, fall chic. Got it."

"Second," Monica continued, "a dish is always a good idea. It shows you care. Maybe a family recipe? Something that screams 'home.'"

I brightened a little. "I could make my mom's famous apple pie. Everyone loves apple pie, right?"

"Perfect," Monica said with a grin. "And as for his family, well, that's the wild card. You know they're werewolves, but beyond that, it's a mystery. Maybe Liam can give you some intel?"

I nodded, still feeling a bit of panic. "I'll ask him."

Desperate for intel, I turned to Liam's social media. Liam's family photos were scarce, and the few that existed revealed little. His parents had an air of distant authority, and even though I'd known the Gravens family for years, I never got very close to Liam and Noah's parents.

Suddenly, a familiar face popped up—Ava. She was tagged in a photo with a group of werewolves, all sporting smug smiles.

A sinking feeling washed over me. Could Ava be invited too? Conflicted, I confronted Liam.

"Is Ava going to be there?" I asked, trying to keep my voice steady.

Liam's face hardened. "Absolutely not. She's gone forever after what she did." *www.fioV@IŴoRmm.c(©)M*

Relief washed over me, "Okay. Good."

Back in my dorm, Monica rallied. "Okay, listen up. We need a game plan. First, charm offensive. Be polite, make eye contact, and smile disarmingly. Second, deflect any awkward questions. If they ask about your family, keep it vague. Third, stick by Liam. If things get hairy, he'll be your shield."

I nodded, feeling a bit more prepared but still incredibly nervous.

The following days were a blur of classes and worry. I couldn't shake the feeling that this Thanksgiving dinner was going to be a turning point. Liam's family had always been a mystery to me.

Sure, I'd spent time with Liam and Noah, but their parents were a different story. Reserved, imposing, and shrouded in an aura of authority that made me feel like an outsider even in casual encounters.

I couldn't help but replay the moments when I'd seen Mr. and Mrs. Graven from a distance. They always carried themselves with such poise, their expressions unreadable. It was clear they loved their sons, but there was a strictness in their demeanor that was hard to overlook. And now, I was about to step into their world, not just as Liam's friend but as his girlfriend.

In between my anxiety, flashes of my past kept surfacing. I remembered mom's warm, chaotic Thanksgiving dinners, where everyone laughed

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loudly and no one cared if the turkey was a bit dry. My mom's apple pie, the one I'd be making for the Gravens, was always the highlight. The thought of bringing a piece of my family's tradition into their immaculate home filled me with a strange mixture of comfort and dread.

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Monica, ever the supportive friend, tried to distract me with shopping trips and movie nights, but my mind always drifted back to that upcoming dinner. I even tried practicing small talk in front of the mirror, but it felt forced and awkward. How was I supposed to act natural in front of people who could literally smell fear?

Finally, I decided to text Liam, hoping for some insight.

Ella: Hey, you got any tips on surviving Thanksgiving with your family?

Liam: Just be yourself. They'll love you. I swear.

Ella: Easy for you to say. You're not the human trying to impress werewolves.

Liam: True, but they're not as scary as you think. Just relax.

I sighed, appreciating his attempts to reassure me but feeling far from relaxed.

Desperate for even more information, I did what any rational person would do: I continued to stalk the rest of the Gravens family on social media. It was a frustrating exercise. All their profiles were mostly private, with only a few tagged photos available for viewing. Each picture seemed more confusing than the last, offering little insight into their personalities.

One photo stood out—a candid shot of the family at a summer barbecue. Liam and Noah were goofing off in the background, while their parents watched with amused smiles. It was a glimpse of normalcy that I clung to, hoping that beneath their stern exteriors, the Gravens had a softer side.

Just when I thought I couldn't dig up anything more, Ava's face popped up in a photo. She was standing with her arms around Liam's parents.

A wave of unease swept over me. I hadn't known that she was that close to his family. What if she was invited to Thanksgiving by Liam's mom and he didn't know? The thought made my stomach churn. I had to know for sure.

"Is Ava going to be there? Seriously, just tell me," I asked Liam again the next day, trying to keep my voice steady.

Liam's face hardened. "I already told you Absolutely not. What's gotten into you, Ella?"

I frowned and nodded, "Okay. Good."

But even with Ava out of the picture, the anxiety didn't fully disappear. I kept thinking about the unknown variables, the potential for disaster. Monica's game plan replayed in my head like a mantra. Charm offensive, deflect awkward questions, stick by Liam. It sounded simple enough, but in practice, it felt daunting.

As Thanksgiving approached, I was a bundle of nerves. Each day brought me closer to the dinner that could make or break everything. I couldn't imagine my life without Liam. He had become so entwined with who I was. But would that matter once his parents realized we were together?

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