

Dating 96

Chapter 96

Liam arrived at my dorm right on time, his car looking polished and ready for what felt like a monumental occasion. As I climbed into the passenger seat, my nerves kicked into high gear. I smoothed my dress for the hundredth time, feeling every wrinkle like it was a glaring imperfection. *(w)w.w.©eveℓwoŔM.c©M*

"Hey," Liam said softly, reaching over to squeeze my hand. "You look amazing."

"Thanks," I murmured, forcing a smile. "I'm just...nervous."

He chuckled, his thumb rubbing comforting circles on the back of my hand. "Don't be. It's just dinner."

"Just dinner," I repeated, trying to convince myself. But it felt like so much more. This was my first time meeting Liam's parents in an official capacity. It would be Liam and his whole family, in their home, on a holiday. The stakes felt incredibly high.

The drive to the Gravens' house was mostly silent, the weight of my anxiety filling the car. Liam tried to make small talk, but I was too lost in my thoughts to contribute much. When we finally pulled into their long driveway, I took a deep breath, trying to steady my racing heart.

"Ready?" Liam asked, giving me an encouraging smile. *wWw.(n)evℓwōŔm.cóm*

"As ready

as I'll

Liam walked me

be," I said, my voice shaky. *wWw.nó©ℓWōŕm.©Om*

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inside, his hand warm and steady on my back. The Gravens' house was the same as it always was but this time, for some feeling, I felt instantly out of place. gave me a quick tour, pointing out various rooms and family heirlooms, as if I'd never been there before.

We made our way to the across his face. He

room, where Noah was lounging on a plush sofa. His eyes widened when he saw me, a look of surprise flickering his brooding intensity turning into genuine curiosity.

"Ella," he said, nodding in acknowledgment. "Didn't expect

to see

here."

I tried to decipher his expression, but it was like trying to read a

Foreign

language. Was he happy to see me? Annoyed? Indifferent? I couldn't tell.

"Yeah, Liam invited me," I said, hoping my voice sounded more confident than I felt.

Before Noah could respond, the front door opened, and my mom burst in, all smiles and cheerfulness. She looked out of place amidst the Gravens' reserved elegance, but her warmth was a welcome contrast.

"Hello, everyone!" she exclaimed, giving me a tight hug before turning to Liam. "Thank you so much for inviting us."

Liam's parents appeared in the doorway, their strict demeanor making my mom's excitement seem almost jarring. Mrs. Graven, with her perfectly styled hair and sharp eyes, forced a smile that didn't quite reach her eyes.

"Welcome," she said, her voice as stiff as her posture.

"Thank you for having us," my mom replied, her cheerfulness undimmed by the cold reception.

"Shall we sit?" Mrs. Graven suggested, her tone leaving little room for argument. We all moved to the dining room, the tension in the air thick enough to cut with a knife.

The aroma of roasted turkey and simmering gravy hung heavy, a stark contrast to the icy atmosphere gripping the room. I perched on the edge of my seat, feeling like a lone human island in a sea of werewolves. Liam, handsome in a button-down that strained against his broad shoulders, sat stiffly beside me.

Across the table, Noah with all his intensity. So much more awkward than the friendly demeanor Noah had had the last time I saw him. The air crackled with unspoken words and years of resentment and hurt.

Mrs. Gravens forced a smile "So Ella, it seems like you've been spending a lot of time with Liam." There was disapproval simmering in her gaze that nobody missed.

My mom, sensing her distaste for humans, said, "Well I'm happy Liam and Ella are spending more time together."

My face burned. "Yes, Mrs. Graven. We've been working on our chemistry project."

Studying?" she interrupted, raising a perfectly arched eyebrow. "Is that what they call

I swallowed hard, trying to keep my voice steady. "Yes, we've been studying together and-"

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these days?"

Mrs. Graven's lips pressed into a thin line. "I see."

A nerve-wracking silence greeted every attempt at conversation. I tried to joke about burnt turkey stuffing, my voice room. Noah's mother, was a woman with a perpetual frown etched on her face, sniffed disdainfully.

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echoing uncomfortably in the *wWw.novdWōŕM.c©M*

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Chapter 96

"Food is not to be trifled with, dear," she said, her tone icy.

The weight of her words settled heavily on my chest. I glanced at Liam, seeking reassurance, but he was staring at his plate, his jaw clenched. I felt a wave of unease wash over me. I tried to recall a happier time, a simpler time when Liam and I would laugh and talk for hours without a care in the world.

Suddenly, Liam's father cleared his throat. "Liam, Noah, it's nice to see you two getting along a little bit more these days."

Liam and Noah glanced at each other, their expressions a mixture of shock and confusion. It was true; they had been bickering less recently. But the tension between them was still palpable. I remembered a time when their relationship was almost non-existent, strained by secrets and lies, and wondered if I was the cause.

Mrs. Graven growled, her eyes flashing. "They would have always been close if Ella, the whore, hadn't driven a wedge between them. She's the one that had always pitted them against each other."

The words hung in the air like a slap. My heart felt like it had been ripped from my chest. I stared at Mrs. Graven, stunned and hurt. How could she say such a thing? Tears welled up in my eyes, but I refused to let them fall.

The room seemed to spin around me, and I felt a sharp pang of betrayal. Was this what they really thought of me? Did they see me as a homewrecker, a destroyer of bonds?

"I-

I-I

"I

stammered, my voice breaking.

Mrs. Graven's glare intensified. "You're nothing but trouble, Ella. Ever since you came into their lives, everything has been chaos. You don't belong here."

The tears I'd been holding back spilled over. I jumped up from the table, my chair scraping loudly against the floor. "I'm sorry," I whispered, my voice trembling. "I'm so sorry."

Without another word, I ran outside, tears streaming down my face. The cold night air hit me like a physical blow, but I didn't stop. I needed to get away, to escape the suffocating tension and the cruel words that had pierced my heart.

I found myself in the Gravens' backyard, the moonlight casting eerie shadows on the manicured lawn. I sank to the ground, hugging my knees to my chest, and sobbed. All the fear, the anxiety, the feeling of not belonging—it all came pouring out.

How had everything gone so wrong? I had wanted to make a good impression, to show Liam's family that I was worthy of him. But now, all I felt was humiliation and pain.

Mrs. Graven's words echoed in my mind, each one a dagger to my heart. "You don't belong here." Maybe she was right. Maybe I was just fooling myself into thinking I could fit into Liam's world.

SEND GIFT

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COMMENT