

Dating 97

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Chapter 97

The blood roared in my ears, drowning out the clatter of silverware and the strained conversation I could hear coming from inside the house. Mrs. Graven's vicious words echoed in my mind, each syllable a sharp blow.

Seriously, how could she say all of that? Her words had cut deeper than I thought possible. I had known this dinner would be difficult, but I never imagined it would be like this.

A figure materialized in front of me. It was Liam, concern etched on his face. He reached for me. "Ella,"

I recoiled, flinging his hand away. "Don't touch me!" I cried, my voice raw with emotion. "The whole thing was a nightmare. Your family hates me, and frankly, I don't blame them!"

"Ella, it's not like that," Liam said, his voice desperate. "My mom... she doesn't know what she's talking about."

I shook my head, tears streaming down my face. "No, Liam. She knows exactly what she's talking about. She made it welcome here."

pretty clear that I'm not

Before he could respond, the front door opened, and his parents emerged. Noah and my mom followed close behind, worry etched on their faces. *www.loveletterm.com*

My mom rushed to my side, wrapping her arms around me. "Ella, honey, are you okay?"

I nodded, though the tears kept coming. "I just... I just need a minute."

Liam's father stepped forward, his expression stern. "What's going on here?"

Liam turned to his parents, his face a mask of anger. "Mom, you owe Ella an apology."

Mrs. Graven bristled. "Apologize? To that... that..." she sputtered, her eyes darting between me and Liam.

"To Ella," Liam cut her off with a growl, his voice leaving no room for argument.

For a moment, Mrs. Graven looked like she might refuse, but under Liam's intense gaze, she sighed, her shoulders slumping. "I apologize for my outburst, Ella. It was....uncalled for."

I looked at her, the insincerity in her apology stinging almost as much as her original words. I barely managed a nod, my mind reeling. The tension remained, thick enough to cut with a knife. *w@W.loveletterm.com*

I couldn't believe I was in this situation. Maybe I should have turned down Liam's invitation. The depth of Mrs. Graven's hatred for me hurt more than I expected.

My mom gave me a reassuring squeeze. "Ella, let's go inside. We'll get through this, okay?"

Liam stepped closer, his hand outstretched. "Come on Ell, please."

I hesitated, my heart pounding. Could I really go back in there? The thought of facing Mrs. Gravens again made my stomach churn, but Liam's- pleading eyes and the warmth of my mom's embrace gave me the strength to nod.

"Okay," I whispered. "But only if she promises not to attack me again."

Liam turned to his mom, his gaze hardening. "Mom?"

Mrs. Graven's lips pressed into a thin line, but she nodded reluctantly. "I'll behave."

Taking a deep breath, I reached for Liam's hand. As our fingers intertwined, a spark of hope flickered in my chest. Maybe we could get through this. Maybe there was still a chance for us. With a final glance at my mom, who gave me an encouraging nod, I started back toward the house, Liam by my side.

The walk back felt like a march to the gallows, the weight of what had just happened pressing heavily on my shoulders. Inside, the dining room was eerily quiet, the tension from before now a thick, almost tangible presence. As we entered, all eyes turned to us.

I took my seat, feeling the burn of Mrs. Graven's gaze on me. Liam sat beside me, his hand never leaving mine. The clink of silverware resumed, but the atmosphere remained strained, every word and gesture weighed down by the earlier confrontation.

I glanced at Liam, his jaw tight and eyes filled with determination. He was trying so hard to keep things together, to protect me from his family's hostility. My heart swelled with love for him, but also a deep sadness. Was this what our future would look like? Constant battles and barely concealed disdain?

Mrs. Graven broke the silence, her voice strained but controlled. "So, Ella, what are your plans after graduation?"

The question, though innocuous on the surface, felt like a challenge. I took a deep breath, trying to steady my voice. "I'm applying to sever

universities. I want to study creative writing"

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Chapter 97

"Creative writing," she repeated, her tone neutral. "Interesting choice." *www.loveletterm.com*

I nodded, bracing myself for another cutting remark, but it didn't come. Instead, she turned her attention to Noah, asking him about his latest project. The conversation drifted away from me, but the underlying tension remained, a constant reminder of the fragile peace we had managed to

achieve.

As the meal progressed, I found myself drifting into my thoughts. Memories of happier times with Liam played in my mind, each one a stark contrast to the cold reality of this dinner. I remembered our first date, the way he had made me laugh.

The countless nights we spent talking about our dreams and fears. The way he always knew how to make me feel safe and loved.

But now, surrounded by his family's barely hidden animosity, those memories felt like a distant dream. Could we really overcome this? Could our love withstand the constant pressure and disapproval from those closest to him?

Liam squeezed my hand, drawing me back to the present. I glanced at him, his eyes filled with concern. "You okay?" he whispered.

I nodded, managing a small smile. "Yeah. Just thinking."

"About what?"

"Us," I said softly. "And if we can really do this."

He frowned, his grip tightening. "We can, Ella. I know it's hard, but we'll get through it. Together."

His words gave me a glimmer of hope, but the doubt still lingered. As the evening wore on, I couldn't shake the feeling that this was only the beginning. The road ahead was going to be long and difficult, and I wasn't sure if I was strong enough to handle it.

When dinner finally ended, I felt a wave of relief wash over me. Liam stood, helping me

P and I clung to his hand as we made our way to the front

door. Mrs. Graven's gaze followed us,

her expression unreadable.

"Thank you for having us," I said, forcing myself to

meet her

eyes.

She nodded stiffly. "You're welcome." *www.loveletterm.com*

As we stepped outside, the cool night air was a welcome change from the oppressive atmosphere inside. I took a deep breath, trying to clear my mind. Liam wrapped an arm around me, pulling me close.

"I'm sorry," he said, his voice filled with regret. "I never should have put you through that."

"It's not your fault," I replied, leaning into him. "I just...I don't know if I can do this, Liam."

He stopped, turning me to face him. "Ella, I love you. And I know this is hard, but I need you to trust me."

I looked into his eyes, seeing the earnestness and love there. Despite everything, he believed in us. And maybe, just maybe, that was enough.

"Okay," I whispered, my voice barely audible. "I trust you."

He smiled, a genuine smile that made my heart flutter. "Thank you."

I just really wished that I believed the lie that I had just told Liam, the love of my life.

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