

## Dating 98

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### Chapter 98

I couldn't shake the memory of Ella's tears as I pushed through the biting wind toward the rink. The disaster at Thanksgiving hung refused to leave my mind, but I swear, I had to stay focused. Aaron had drilled it into my head—hockey first. Arthur was counting on me to fuck up big time. I wouldn't give him the satisfaction.

The frozen lake at Camp Fang glimmered under the weak winter sun. This wasn't just any training camp; it was a trial by fire. Only the strongest came out on top. As captain, the weight of the team's expectations was all on me. I scanned the faces of my teammates—the seniors, the nervous rookies, and Noah, my beta brother.

Coach's voice cut through the cold air, barking orders with the same ruthless precision that we were by now used to. "Push harder! No one wins by holding back!" His glare was a constant reminder that weakness wasn't an option.

Days bled into nights in a haze of grueling drills and punishing scrimmages. The ice became our battlefield, and each morning we faced it before dawn, blades scraping in a symphony of determination.

One particularly brutal session left me collapsed on the bench, gasping for air. Noah approached me, his face etched with concern, but I waved him off. Even though I had forgiven him for what he did to Ella, I still couldn't completely trust him.

I couldn't afford to let my guard down around him, not with the championship on the line.

In the communal cabin that night, rumors spread like wildfire. Arthur's team had a secret weapon—a freshman with speed and a slapshot that could really screw us over. There was so much tension around, we tried not to buckle under the weight. The rivalry was going to reach a boiling point. I could feel it.

The days at Camp Fang dragged on, each one more taxing than the last. The match against Arthur's team loomed. But I tried to keep everybody's spirits up during the training sessions.

I noticed Noah hunched over his phone one afternoon, a frown creasing his brow. He looked up then and his eyes flashed with...something. He shoved his phone into his pocket, and I knew better than to ask. Clearly, he had a secret he didn't want to tell me.

The wind whipped us hard as Coach blew his whistle, signaling the end of another punishing practice session. My muscles screamed, but I couldn't let up. Not now. Not with the thought of Arthur waiting for me at our upcoming match. wW@.nô©Lworm.cô@

As I trudged off the ice, I found Noah standing by the rink, his gaze distant. "You okay?" I asked, my voice strained.

He nodded, but something in his eyes told me otherwise. "Yeah. Just... thinking."

"About what?"

"Just...everything," he said, his voice heavy with unspoken words.

I looked at him hard, "We need you focused, Noah. We can't afford any distractions. You've seemed a little distracted lately."

Noah glanced at me, annoyance in his eyes. "I know, Liam. But I'm not going to fuck up again, okay. Just... calm down."

I wanted to believe him, I swear I did.

The tension in the cabin that night was palpable. Conversations were hushed, the air thick with anticipation. The match against Arthur's team was around the corner and the pressure was...a lot.

Later, as I lay in my bunk, the exhaustion weighing heavily on me, my thoughts drifted back to Ella. Her tear-streaked face haunted me. I had promised her everything would be okay, but could I really keep that promise?

A memory flashed before my eyes, a different kind of cold wrapping around me. It was the game that Noah had completely betrayed me and sabotaged me the last time we played against Arthur and his team. I still couldn't believe he'd done that to me. But I tried to remind myself that I had to let it go. So I closed my eyes and fell into a deep sleep.

The next morning, I caught Noah staring at his phone again, a conflicted look on his face. "Who are you texting?" I asked, trying to keep my tone

casual.

He looked up, startled. "No one. It's nothing."

I frowned. "Doesn't look like nothing."

He hesitated, then shoved his phone into his pocket. "It's personal, okay?"

I didn't press further, but I felt uneasy. What exactly was he hiding? And what if jeopardize our chances in the match? The memory of his betrayal

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was still too fresh, too painful.

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As we suited up for another practice, the tension between us grew. Shit, I needed to focus, to keep the team together, but the doubts wouldn't leave

me alone.

If I lost to Arthur and his team, I risked losing Ella. This game meant everything. It was more than just a win or loss—it was about protecting my mate. Protecting what Ella and I had built.

Coach's voice broke through my mind. "Get your head in the game, Liam! We don't have time for daydreaming."

I nodded, forcing myself to push the doubts aside. But as we skated out onto the ice, I couldn't help but glance at Noah, wondering what secrets he was keeping.

During our water break, I found myself next to Peter. He was one of the few people who knew everything about me and Ella. He gave me a knowing look. "How's Ella?"

I sighed, taking a long gulp of water. "She's... it's tough. My mom really tore into her at Thanksgiving. I'm not sure if she'll ever want to come back." wWw.No(v)eIworm.cô@

Peter patted my shoulder. "She's tough. If anyone can handle your mom, it's Ella. Just keep showing her that you're worth it."

I nodded, "Thanks, man. I just... I wish things were easier, you know?"

"Yeah, I get it. But nothing worth having comes easy." Peter shrugged then. And I knew he was right.

As we headed back to the cabin after practice, I noticed Noah lingering behind. He had his phone out again, his expression a mix of frustration and worry. "Noah!" I called out.

He jumped, quickly putting his phone away. "What?"

"Seriously, who are you texting? Is it something we should know about?"

He looked torn, like he wanted to tell me something but couldn't. "Just drop it, okay?"

I stared at him, trying to read his expression. "Fine. But if it affects the team..."

"It won't," he said, cutting me off.

I nodded slowly, but the doubt remained. What was he hiding? And why was he acting so weird?

Later that night, as I lay in my bunk, I heard whispers from the corner of the room. I recognized Noah's voice, low and urgent. He was talking to someone, but I couldn't make out the words. Curiosity got the better of me, and I strained to hear.

"...can't keep doing this. It's tearing me apart," Noah was saying. There was a pause, then, "I know, but what choice do I have?"

My heart pounded as I tried to piece together the fragments of his conversation. Who was he talking to? And what was he so desperate about?

When he finally hung up, I pretended to be asleep as he climbed into his bunk. The room was silent except for the soft sounds of my teammates breathing, but my mind raced. What was Noah hiding? And why was he acting so weird?

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