

## Keily | Try Not to Get Jealous

### Keily

### Try Not to Get Jealous

“Bad guy” by Billie Eilish was blasting on the radio, and Addison and Sadhvi were swinging to the beat in the backseat while doing their makeup.

I was driving Addison’s Volkswagen to James’s house.

After the game, they’d met me in the school’s parking lot, showered and all dressed up. Most of the others had already left for the party, so they’d decided to do their makeup on the way.

Addison was in a bright-yellow crop top and parallel cotton pants. Unlike other times, today she was going for a cute look, and it was working.

Sadhvi wore a figure-hugging knee-length dress, showing off her petite and toned body.

*“I’m the bad guy... Duh!”* Addison and Sadhvi shouted with Billie on the radio.

I giggled. The high of our team’s victory had yet to simmer down.

“So, what time do you want me to haul you two in the car and drive home?” I asked, looking in the rearview mirror and seeing both applying mascara.

Last time, we’d ditched the party earlier than expected, so I wasn’t aware of how long Aunt Clarissa would allow us to remain out.

I’d already told my parents I would be spending the night at Addison’s; so had Sadhvi.

“We’ll party all night, sweetie,” Sadhvi chirped.

“We need to be home before one o’clock,” Addison said. Auntie was really generous.

I saluted before looking at the clock on the dashboard. It was past eight.

"We're going to be drunk together, Addy. Can't we make the most of the night?" Sadhvi protested. "It's been so long since we did that. And it's James's house!"

"My mom will chop me into pieces if we're one minute late."

"She won't know. She'll be asleep before midnight."

Addison huffed. "Somehow, that lady always knows. I don't want to take any chances. She's already started bugging me about college and future shit.

"And if that isn't enough, Dad's been throwing subtle objections about me 'wasting too much precious time on friends,'" she said, mimicking Uncle's voice.

I glanced at the rearview mirror to find Sadhvi pouting.

"I need to get back in their good graces," Addison finished.

"I thought your parents were cool," Sadhvi whined. "Unlike *mine*."

"But they're still my parents. They can only be cool for so long."

"I think one in the morning is a pretty good stretch," I offered, sending a smile through the mirror to lighten the mood. "We'll have fun. And it's not like you want to crash at James's house for the night. He'll kick us out or make us sleep in the garden, if he's being generous."

"As much as I dislike James, his parties are awesome," Sadhvi popped open something. "Plus, he's got a big house. I'm sure he can spare a guest room for his friends like last time."

"Honestly, I wouldn't mind sleeping in his beautiful garden," Addison said.

I raised an eyebrow at them. "I don't get it. We dislike James, but we're also his friends?"

"I guess we're frenemies," said Addison thoughtfully. "I mean, I don't want him to die. Maybe *sometimes*, but I don't really mean it."

"That sums it up," Sadhvi agreed.

I chuckled, even though it didn't sum up *my* feelings for James. I wished it were that easy.

Hating him wasn't difficult when he acted like such a jerk. He hadn't changed at all, but something in me was changing and seeing him today, at the game, had made me realize that.

Addison and Sadhvi went back to their makeup, jumping to the songs and arguing about random stuff in between, leaving me to my own thoughts.

The feelings about James I'd discovered an hour ago and was trying to ignore had finally reached the front of my mind.

I despised him.

However, all the stolen glances, his intense eyes, and that big, genuine grin that he'd thrown my way across the field when we won tonight...

He'd been looking at me, and when I'd stood up and applauded with the others, something had lit up his face, as if my approval mattered.

As if I mattered.

The moment between us had felt special—until I realized what a mess I'd gotten myself into.

*I like him.*

*There, I admitted it.*

*I like James Haynes.*

And I hated myself for it. I hadn't known I was so easy that I'd melt at a smile. Like, what the heck was wrong with me, falling for the guy who bullied me?!

A guy who, at every chance, body-shamed me, reminding me how I wasn't good enough?

Were Lola's silly words getting to me? Had she made me think James was attracted to me, and I was reciprocating his feelings?

Or maybe I was so desperate that I would jump on any guy who gave me attention—even in his sick, twisted way.

Or did I just have some kind of humiliation kink?

I mentally rolled my eyes. At this point, I wouldn't have been surprised. But even with kinks, I'd rather have fulfilled them with someone whom I trusted and consented to.

Not an asshole who degraded and disrespected me when I obviously hadn't asked.

*I hate him. I hate that asshole!*

I loosened my grip on the steering wheel when I noticed I was clutching it too tightly.

*Keep yourself under control, Keily.*

I didn't want to see James right now after coming to terms with my feelings and dealing with this jumble of emotions, but as luck would have it, I was driving to his house.

To his party.

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My mouth hung open as I drove through the large metal gates.

Before, I'd only had a glimpse of James's lavish home from the outside, and now entering it, I felt as though I was stepping into a modern castle.

In the middle of the driveway, the white statue of an angel with spread wings was actually part of a big fountain.

A well-lit lawn surrounded the paved way, and the cream-colored house—no, the palace—stood proudly at the end.

Suddenly, I felt embarrassed for letting James visit my tiny house for the project. My place was very inadequate compared to his.

My family wasn't poor by any means, but damn it if James wasn't rich—filthy rich.

Maybe the difference in our status was another reason why I shouldn't harbor any feelings for him.

I parked the car along with others crowding the driveway. We got out, and the music from inside the house blared.

“They already started, huh?” Sadhvi commented as we reached the stairs leading to the open front door. Loud shouts, chatter, and laughter could be heard over the music as we ascended.

Less than an hour ago, all the kids had been at school, yet the party was in full swing like it had been going on for hours.

When I stepped inside, my eyes widened in awe and darted in every direction to take in each detail. There were two sets of stairs at the front, leading to opposite corners of the hallway upstairs.

The furniture in the living room was antique and expensive. Vases, paintings, and sculptures that decorated the large room looked too expensive to touch. Everything screamed luxury and money.

People were evenly spread out with drinks in their hands and moving in and out of multiple rooms attached at the sides.

“Lucas and the others must be in the game room,” Addison said and started walking toward one of the side rooms. Sadhvi and I followed.

“Or they could be dipping in the pool in their underwear,” Sadhvi quipped.

“Nah, it’s too early for that.”

“Do you guys do that?” I asked, concealing my nerves. Bad memories of my past resurfaced. Lucas had mentioned the swimming pool, but nobody had told me this could turn into a pool party.

“Sometimes—especially when we’re shitless drunk.” Addison smirked, unaware of my anxiety.

“Which is, like, most of the time,” Sadhvi added.

I gulped. Thank God I wasn’t drinking tonight.

I didn’t have to worry about my intoxicated self skinny-dipping in James’s pool and flashing everyone my hideous flab.

One time was enough to scar me for life.

We reached the games room, and I was stunned once again by the amount of wealth these people possessed.

Table soccer, a pool table, Ping-Pong, and lots of other stuff that I couldn't even name were here. It was a perfect man cave.

A fifty-inch plasma TV hung on the opposite wall, and a guy and a girl were playing some shooter game on it, sitting on the recliner in front.

I trudged behind Addison carefully, because the lights were dimmed to match the ambiance.

"You girls took your time." Lucas appeared in a black shirt and blue jeans, with a drink in his hand. He looked at me. "James was worried you'd ditched us."

There was a slight teasing in his tone. Or maybe I imagined it.

"We wouldn't *dream* of ditching," Sadhvi replied.

"And like he cares," said Addison, rolling her eyes.

"Of course he does." Lucas took a sip from his cup. "You guys are friends. He's just not very vocal about it."

"Maybe he should be," my cousin retorted. "He'd be surprised what good communication can do." She cast a quick glance at me.

"Congratulations on your victory," I said to Lucas, changing the subject. "You guys were really good today."

"Thanks." His eyes glinted, and he grinned. "Did you watch my touchdown throw? It was awesome!"

I chuckled at his enthusiasm. "Yeah, you were awesome."

He rambled on about tonight's game as we all settled on the leather couch in the corner. Sometime in between, Addison and Sadhvi left us to get drinks.

I stood up to join them, but Addison stopped me, reminding me that I was their chauffeur tonight.

I hadn't been planning on having alcohol, just some soft drink, but before I could say that, Addison bent down and whispered, "You better complete that kiss."

Then she walked away with Sadhvi, leaving me flustered.

Now here I was alone with Lucas on the couch, making small talk. I had to admit that over time, I'd started feeling comfortable with him and considered him a close friend.

Lucas was always very considerate of me—except for the stunt he'd pulled on Tuesday to convince James to have this party.

Suddenly, I felt the familiar sensation of being watched. I looked around until I spotted James walking toward us through the door. My stomach flipped as I saw how gorgeous he looked.

He was wearing black jeans, a white long-sleeve T-shirt that clung to his body delectably, and gray sneakers. His face was impassive, but his heated eyes on me were predatory and accusing.

I noticed a brunette walking with him. I'd never seen her at school before. She was tall, slim, and beautiful—completely the opposite of me.

Jealousy flared inside me as I looked at her standing next to James, complementing him perfectly.

I reprimanded myself, *Don't be pathetic.*

I shifted away from Lucas as they approached us. I was traumatized by the last party.

"What are you doing here?" Lucas asked, almost breathless. He stared at the girl as if he'd seen a ghost.

"James invited me," the girl replied.

James's brows knitted, and he looked at her. "Myra, you invited yourself."

He lazily sat down on my other side, leaving very little gap between us. My heart thudded at our closeness.

"I tried to make her leave, because I wanted to spare you the drama for tonight, but I forgot she could be annoying as hell—especially when it comes to you," James monotonously explained to Lucas, who was glaring at him.

He didn't sound too bothered, just mildly irritated.

"It's been less than two months, and you already got yourself a new girl, Lucas." Myra's green eyes trailed down my figure contemptuously. "You don't wait. And here I thought I was the cheater."

Clearly, she and Lucas had some sort of history, and I was being dragged into their fight.

I started, "We're just friends—"

"I'm a free man." Lucas cut me off. He stood up and glared down at Myra, who didn't look fazed by his anger. "You fucking made sure of that when I spent my whole school break trying to get you to just talk to me!"

"You deserved it!"

"Can you two take your lovers' quarrel somewhere else?" James interrupted, amused. "Blow off some of that heat that's been pent up for the last few months."

I could picture the smirk on his lips, but I didn't dare look.

Myra shot him a middle finger, and Lucas muttered a big, "Fuck off," before the two actually stormed away from us.

*Okay?*

"By the end of the night, they'll be in each other's pants," James said, his breath hitting my ear. I finally turned to him and was breathless for a moment with the intensity he was looking at me.

My face must've been beet red.

"They've been together since they were fifteen, and this fight between them isn't going to last long." His dark eyes were studying me haughtily. "I warned you not to go after Lucas. He's Myra's. Try not to get jealous of her."



*I was when I thought she was with you*, I thought and then cursed my ridiculous feelings.

"I'm not jealous of anyone," I said. "I never thought of Lucas as more than a friend."

"Good." The anger in his eyes dwindled, but his gaze remained piercing as ever. "Like I said, you don't belong with him, Piggy."

*Piggy*. I was reminded once again why I didn't belong with Lucas, or James, or *anyone* for God's sake! I was ashamed of myself for liking this devil. He was such an ass!

And staying near him wasn't doing me any good.

I stood up, ready to get away from him, but he grabbed my wrist.

"Where are you going?" There was urgency in his tone.

"Away from you."

His grip tightened. "No, you're not."

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