

## Keily | Here's Your Candy

### Here's Your Candy

"Do you want to ditch them and go somewhere else?" James asked me.

We were all crowding tented jewelry and handicraft stalls that stood adjacent to a lane.

Addison and Lucas were busy arguing over some wooden sculpture next to us. Lola was with Matt, looking at jewels in the stall ahead, and the rest were meandering nearby at other tents.

I looked at James, finding his eyes staring back intently. "It's not very nice to bail on your friends," I said.

"Well, I'm not very nice," came his reply. "You should know that by now."

I couldn't hold back a smile. "But I am."

"Maybe you shouldn't be. You'll miss out on lots of good stuff." His hand grabbed mine, pulling me into him so his other hand could scoop around my waist. "So, what do you say? Wanna leave?"

I broke my gaze from him to glance at the others. I knew the girls wouldn't mind us leaving.

They themselves had bailed on me twice at parties. No hard feelings. Now that I was in their shoes, I understood. "But if we break away, it'll be hard to find them later."

"I have a fix for that." He grinned, stealing my breath away.

You couldn't say no to that face. So, I nodded.

He called Lucas. "Keily and I will meet you all in the parking lot at eight," he told him, and then we were off to nowhere.

"So, what do you want to do now?" I asked him. Our hands were clasped together as we walked. From anyone's perspective, we looked like a couple. Maybe we were—*sort of*.

“What about that?” He tipped his chin at the bumper cars arena.

I grinned against his mischievous grin. “Sure. Let’s go.”

We bought the tickets and got in cars at our turn. James’s car was red; mine was yellow. The operator turned on the electricity, and the fun began.

I was avoiding bumping into others, rather unsuccessfully, and I was moving slowly when I was violently shoved into the wall.

I glared at James, who had smashed his car against mine and had an evil smirk on his face.

“I thought you were done bullying me!” I admonished him, and his lips only stretched further.

“It’s hard to fully reform when I get such cute reactions out of you.”

My eyes narrowed into slits to compensate for my burning cheeks at his remark.

James backed away, only to smash my car again a minute later. And then again. By the fourth time, I was dying to take my revenge.

After a few minutes, I had learned the controls better, so I braced myself as I spotted him coming for me.

I swiveled my car at the last second, missing his by an inch and making him crash against the wall. I shoved him further by driving into his car.

I grinned. “Do you concede now?”

“I never concede.” He glared, barely containing a smile. His red car pushed against mine, moving both of us. I pressed the accelerator to push back, causing a standstill.

“You’re getting bad,” he commented.

“Someone told me not to be so nice,” I chuckled and rotated my wheel 180 degrees to reverse. And then we were back at it again, chasing each other off and bumping into others.

Once we were out of the arena, we were both breathless and laughing.

“That was fun,” I said

James nodded. “Want to do it again?”

“No, let’s try other rides,” I suggested, pulling him through the crowd.

We first went for the swinging pirate ship, and I was glad I hadn’t had a heavy meal at home. I would’ve definitely thrown up otherwise.

Then we rode the Wipeout and next jumped on the Twister.

When others sitting around us whooped and hollered, I couldn’t contain myself either. It was exhilarating to just shout out and feel like a child again. Hearing James’s wholehearted laughs was a big plus too.

James sat next to me on the Twister. Once the seats started rotating, his arm sneakily came up to wrap around my shoulders. My heart raced and goosebumps erupted throughout my body.

I peeked at him and saw a small smile on his lips. When the Twister reached its top speed, my body gravitated toward him. He held me flush against himself for the whole ride.

It was the best ride ever.

“I think I’m going to pass out,” was my first sentence after getting off the Twister. Everything was spinning, and my legs felt wobbly. I held on to James’s arm for support.

“Okay, no more rides,” he concluded.

I didn’t miss him slowly pulling me closer. If he thought he was being slick, then he was wrong. The good thing was I didn’t mind.

“Hey, we didn’t go on the Ferris wheel,” I reminded him. “It’s the highlight of every fair and carnival.”

“Let’s get something to eat first. I’m hungry.” He dragged us to a candy stand. I didn’t object; I was famished too.

I stood idly at his side as James bought us candies.

It was close to 6 p.m., and the sun had almost set. Colorful lights on the stalls, stands, and rides were turned on, illuminating the whole place.

A larger crowd had also gathered now.

I noticed a boy and a girl standing not too far away at a popcorn stand, looking in my direction.

They whispered to each other and snickered while pointing at me and James, who had his back turned to us. I looked down, feeling the happiness of the whole afternoon fade away.

If they were talking about James and me, I already knew what they were saying. They were comparing us. They found it astonishing—and funny—how a girl who was overweight could be with someone like him.

Suddenly, I felt embarrassed about standing here, in front of a *candy store*, and waiting for James to bring me a *sugar-loaded* treat.

“There you go.” A big cotton candy blocked my vision of the muddy ground. James held it out to me. He had another one for himself. I thanked him and took the cotton candy.

“I have something else for you too,” he said, reaching into his pocket to pull out a small block covered in a shiny wrapper.

“What is it?”

“Hold it.” He gave me his candy and opened the wrapper to present a chocolate cube covered half in green.

“Mint chocolate.” I smiled.

“You like mint, and I like chocolate,” he said. “Why not mix it up?”

“You remember I like mint?” It came out as a question.

“And blueberry,” he completed. “It’s hard to forget such a weird taste.”

I scoffed, but inside, I was melting that he’d taken notice of my choice and had remembered.

“Better than having generic taste,” I said. “Chocolate chip and rocky road. Seriously? You’re one step away from vanilla.”

His face lit up like his day had just been made. “Beware, Keily. Your stalkerish tendencies are showing.”

I blushed. “Says you...”

Okay, I might have remembered his favorite ice cream flavors too, but my brain holding on to the memory was unintentional. *Totally unintentional.*

“I didn’t know how it was going to taste, so I got only one. Take a bite.”

He held it in front of my face with the intention of feeding me, but I handed him our cotton candies and took the chocolate cube out of his hand. I almost giggled at his disappointed face.

“You won’t mind?” I asked before putting half of the chocolate in my mouth. He shook his head, and I took the bite.

It was delicious. Minty, sweet, and chocolaty. Perfect.

“How is it?”

“Delicious,” I answered. “Here.” I brought the remaining chocolate near his mouth. His eyes brightened.

He eagerly brought his open mouth forward, but I moved the chocolate away, making him bite into the empty air. I chuckled. He gave an adoring frown.

“I’m sorry. Here.” I raised my hand and gave a look that conveyed I was serious this time. But I wasn’t. I moved the chocolate away again.

I laughed at his glowering face. *He’s so easy.*

Before I knew it, warm fingers dug into my wrist and jolted my body forward as they moved my hand toward the culprit’s mouth.

James looked into my eyes as his lips took in the chocolate, along with my forefinger and thumb. I stopped breathing.

His tongue swirled around my digits, and every fiber of my being stood at attention. He deliberately took his time wetting my fingers and then slowly let them go with a lewd slurping sound.

“Tasty.” He smirked, freeing my hand.

I was a hot, flushed, and blissful mess. I was seconds away from squealing like a crazy person. The way his eyes raked over me possessively, burning me like a hot branding iron, wasn’t helping.

“Here’s your candy.” James gave me my cotton candy back. That annoying smirk turned into a full-on teasing grin. *He’s evil.*

We headed for the Ferris wheel. I threw a quick glance at the couple who had been pointing at James and me before following him. They were now eating their popcorn and were busy in their conversation.

Apparently, James and I had been entertaining to them for only a few minutes. *And I let those people define my worth.*

It was quite a walk, so by the time we reached the Ferris wheel, our candies were finished. This time, it was my turn to buy the tickets.

James objected, but I objected to letting him pay for everything.

The line to get inside was fairly long. I was almost bouncing on my feet as the queue got shorter, excited to see the whole carnival from atop the Ferris wheel.

Whenever I went to any fair or carnival, this part was the highlight of my visit.

I looked at James to share my excitement, but my grin faltered when I saw his lips pressed thin and lines on his forehead as he stared ahead at the giant wheel.

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