

## Keily | His “Treat”

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His “Treat”

“W-what?” I stuttered. My whole body went clammy, and my stomach fluttered unnaturally at his closeness.

“You’re dumber than I thought.” He let go of my bag, and I stumbled before regaining my balance. “Didn’t Lucas invite you to join us for *ice cream*?” He said *ice cream* like it was the dumbest thing.

*Do you even want me to join you?* I wanted to ask, but I wasn’t about to give him the satisfaction. “I’m not going.”

Without looking back, I took a step forward but was dragged back again by my bag. James had pulled harder this time, and I tumbled backward, my backpack landing on his chest.

His arm immediately wrapped around my waist to rescue me from falling farther, causing my head to drop onto his shoulder.

I looked up and he looked down, our wide eyes meeting each other’s.

My stomach wasn’t just fluttering; it was full-on somersaulting, and tingles pricked all over. I was too aware of the parts where our bodies touched.

*Isn’t there any angle he doesn’t look perfect from?*

As if he’d heard my thoughts, James’s eyes went back to their normal size, and his lips quirked up into a teasing smirk.

“Trying to kill me, Piggy?” he said. His fingers on my belly twitched, and I was instantly reminded that he could feel my flab.

I narrowed my eyes at him, ignoring the stupid nickname. “You pulled me.”

“With all that weight, you should be able to withstand some push and shove. I’m too young to be squeezed to death under you.”

“Real mature,” I snapped, immediately pulling away from him and standing face-to-face. The world would end if every sentence out of his mouth didn’t have to insult me. My cheeks were hot, but it wasn’t embarrassment this time.

“Just let me go,” I said.

His black eyes stared back intently, making my knees buckle. I realized how much taller than me he was when I had to crane my neck.

“I can’t do that,” he said.

“Why?”

“Because I’m having fun.” His smirk returned. “You’re like my little pet that I can’t leave alone.”

I gaped at him. *Unbelievable.*

“And also, you’re coming with us to the ice cream parlor. I can’t have Lucas mad at me because of you when our game is just two weeks away.”

I clenched my fists. “Do I get a say in this?”

“No,” James answered, grabbing my hand and starting to drag me toward the school doors as if it were an everyday thing. I yanked my hand back, but he was stronger. *Typical.*

“Seriously?!” I protested, digging my shoes into the floor and using my *weight* to stop him, meanwhile ignoring how warm his fingers were wrapped around my wrist.

But my strength was nothing compared to his. James was a football player, and his training showed when he kept on walking without even looking bothered by my feeble attempts.

When we reached the parking lot, there was no sign of Lucas or his car, or the others who were coming. They’d already left.

I sighed with relief, but James cursed.

“Fucker left without me.”

“Good,” I muttered, tugging my wrist, but his grip only tightened.

He looked down at me. “Looks like lover boy doesn’t care about you.” He smiled, and I would have found it genuine if not for his eyes, which had a wicked glint. “But I do. Let’s go.”

My hand was yanked, and once again I was dragged, this time to a black Chevy Camaro on the other side of the parking lot.

I didn’t know much about James’s family, but to own that expensive hunk of metal, they had to be rich.

I clutched my cell phone tightly. “You don’t have to take me,” I said.

“Don’t waste time.” He sounded irritated, like everything was my fault.

I glared. “I *said*, ‘You don’t have to take me.’”

But he had already opened the passenger door and raised his eyebrows, gesturing for me to enter.

I gritted my teeth and slipped into the passenger’s seat, not because I was giving in but because arguing with James felt like arguing with a brick wall.

Once the engine started, I pulled up my phone and glared at it—anything to avoid looking at him. I sent a quick text to Addison, telling her not to wait for me.

“So, tell me, Piggy,” James said. “Do you like him?”

“What?” My phone dropped onto my lap.

“Don’t play dumb. You know what I mean.”

“Why do you care?” I snapped, turning to look at him.

His narrowed eyes were fixed ahead on the road, and his hands were tight fists around the steering wheel. He wasn’t exactly the picture of a happy person.

“You don’t have to worry about anything,” I replied flatly. “Lucas said all that because he was angry with you. I’m sure he didn’t really mean it.”

“That’s not the answer to my question,” he said. He pressed the accelerator, and we started overtaking other cars on the road.

“Why does it even matter if I like him?”

The car’s speed increased, and the buildings outside became blurred. *He’s crazy.* I gulped. I was too young to be killed by some crazy teenage boy.

“N-no!” I choked out, fearing for my life.

James looked at me, his eyes sharp and calculating, but he still didn’t slow down.

“I don’t like him that way,” I reiterated. “Seriously, don’t worry about your friend. He’ll never go for me either way.”

“Good.” He whipped back his head, and gradually the car slowed to its normal speed.

I breathed a sigh of relief.

Not a word passed between us after that, and awkward tension filled the car. At least, it was awkward for me; James didn’t seem to care.

By the time we reached Riche’s Parlor, I was ready to burst out of the car and bolt. Instead, I spotted Lucas’s and Lola’s cars parked not far from James’s.

Dread once again filled me with every step closer to the glass doors. It looked like my jittery nerves weren’t going to get a break today.

When we entered, I saw Lucas, Sadhvi, Matt, and Lola sitting in the third booth from the front, chatting and enjoying their ice creams.

Matt spotted us first and grinned, waving us over. I smiled awkwardly when the others turned their heads too.

Lucas was the one who looked most surprised by our presence—more so that James and I had arrived together. I couldn’t blame him; I would have been surprised too.

“Come,” James ordered as he walked to the counter. I rolled my eyes but followed. “What do you want?” We stood before the glass freezer containing buckets of different flavored ice creams.

“Blueberry.”

“And...”

I shot him an annoyed look. “One scoop of blueberry is fine.”

James almost rolled his eyes. “You’re getting two scoops. Do you want both of them to be blueberry?”

“No, I’ll have only one scoop of blueberry.” I didn’t mind having two scoops, but I also didn’t want to give James more leverage to comment on my eating habits.

“Who are you trying to fool?” James shook his head before calling the man behind the counter. “Two scoops of chocolate chip and rocky road, and another with two scoops of blueberry.”

“Make it blueberry and mint,” I corrected quickly. James wasn’t going to listen, so I might as well get what I liked.

“Weird taste,” James muttered, but I noticed a hint of a smile on his lips. When I saw him taking out his wallet, I searched for my pouch inside my bag too.

Today, I was dressed in a knee-length summer dress with no pockets; therefore, my backpack carried everything from my cell phone to money.

I still had a cardigan to cover the flab underneath my arms, but I’d been feeling bold this morning and decided not to wear any leggings. Maybe all of James’s comments about me covering myself up all the time were getting to me.

“Don’t bother. It’s my treat,” I heard him say as he finished paying the man.

“But—”

“Just enjoy your ice cream, Piggy.” He handed me my cup and headed where the others sat with his rocky road and chocolate chip.

“I thought you two weren’t coming,” Sadhvi said as we took our seats.

Her long, black curls swayed on her shoulders as she moved her head, looking between James and me.

She was on the school's cheerleading team with Addison. From the little interaction that I'd had with her, I gathered she was outgoing and bubbly, completely the opposite of Lola.

"We were," James replied, shifting back to get comfortable. I was sitting next to him, and the little movement caused our thighs to brush against each other, making the hem of my dress ride up.

I blushed like my overreacting self. It seemed James noticed it too, because I caught him staring at my thighs, probably with disgust. *I shouldn't have worn this dress.*

Immediately, I pulled it down, and James whipped his eyes back to Sadhvi, clearing his throat. "Who told you we weren't?" he asked, eating a spoonful of his ice cream and turning to glare at Lucas, who sat in front of us.

"I did." Lucas glared back, licking the big chocolate scoop on his cone. Everyone else looked at them silently, biting down on their treats.

"So, you decided to leave Piggy hanging after begging her to join us."

Lucas's glare dropped, and he moved his head to look at me apologetically.

"Keily, I'm sorry. You left Calc so abruptly, I thought I'd upset you with...what I said." His cheeks tinted a little. "I didn't wait, because I thought you weren't going to come."

"You guessed right. I wasn't. I was kind of embarrassed," I replied honestly, the burden on my chest lifting. "But James insisted, so I tagged along."

That wasn't honest. I'd been literally dragged here, but I didn't want to humiliate myself. "I'm sorry for storming off like I did. I hope I didn't make you uncomfortable."

"Absolutely not," he said, smiling. His smile made me smile back, relieved that our friendship hadn't been ruined.

"You have every right to be angry with me, by the way," he continued. "I was an asshole for not even texting you that we were leaving."

"You're right, you are an asshole," James interrupted before I could answer. "And she should be angry."

Lucas's smile turned into a scowl as he faced James. "And who are you to speak? It's your fault that this even happened. You were fucking bullying her!"

"What I do with her is none of your business. It's between her and me," he retorted nonchalantly, taking another bite of his rocky road.

"Can you believe this motherfucker?!"

*Not again.* Wasn't James here to make up with Lucas?

"Stop it, you guys," Lola muttered. "The girl you're fighting for looks terrified of both of you."

Instantly, every pair of eyes at the table was on me, and my face burned with the attention. I realized I'd just been watching them fight in silence.

Lola was wrong. I wasn't afraid of them, but seeing them angry at each other because of *me* was horrible.

As much of a jerk as James was, he was Lucas's close friend, and I didn't like being the cause of their fight.

"I'm sorry," Lucas sighed.

James just leaned back, his gaze lingering on me with an unreadable expression.

Matt and Sadhvi took charge of returning the table's mood back to jovial by talking about the upcoming football game.

They somewhat succeeded, and James and Lucas commented here and there, but I noticed they still stole glares at each other from time to time.

My mint ice cream had melted into the blueberry before I even noticed. Nevertheless, I gulped it down, savoring the sweet taste.

It was approaching 6 p.m. when everyone decided to head back home. Lucas, James, and Matt were already outside.

"Keily, wait!" Sadhvi called from behind me as I was about to push the shop's door open.

“No, Keily. Go,” Lola, who was standing beside Sadhvi, said.

Sadhvi frowned, but Lola continued, “She’s just going to ask you stupid questions about what Lucas said in school that made you both embarrassed. And everyone can see you don’t want to talk about it right now—except her.”

“Uh...” She was right. I didn’t want to tell Sadhvi about that. I shot her an apologetic look before walking out.

“Keily, let me drop you home,” Lucas offered when we girls reached them.

“She’s coming with me,” James interrupted before I could accept. “I brought her here, and I’m dropping her home.”

Once again, the two were in a glaring competition until, suddenly, something akin to realization flashed in Lucas’s eyes.

He looked between James and me thoughtfully and finally backed down.

“Whatever.”

I frowned, confused, as James opened his car door for me.

*What just happened?*