

## Keily Book 2: Dating My Enemy |

### Popcorn Predicaments

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We were studying. The soft glow of my desk lamp illuminated the room, casting a warm ambiance over the clutter of textbooks and papers strewn across my bed.

James sat next to me. His brow furrowed in concentration as he flipped through his notes, his muscles tense with the effort of balancing his academic responsibilities with his rigorous workout routine.

“Okay, so for the English essay, we need to analyze the symbolism in *The Great Gatsby*...” I trailed off, glancing up at James, who seemed lost in thought.

“Sorry, Keily,” he muttered, running a hand through his hair. “I can’t seem to focus tonight.”

I sighed sympathetically, understanding the immense pressure he was under. “It’s okay, James. You’ve been working so hard lately, both with your workouts and trying to catch up on schoolwork. Maybe we should take a short break.”

James nodded gratefully, leaning back on the bed with a sigh of relief. “Thanks, Keily. I just can’t seem to shake off the fatigue lately.”

I reached over and squeezed his hand reassuringly. “You’re doing great, James. It’s not easy juggling everything, but I know you’ll get through it.”

“Does it look like you’re going to get a high enough GPA for MIT?” James asked.

“Yes,” I couldn’t help but smile, a surge of pride warming my chest. But when James didn’t return the smile, I knew something was wrong. His usual vibrant energy seemed muted.

“And you?” I probed gently, studying his expression.

“I’m struggling,” he confessed. He looked away from me. “Balancing studying and the football program is hard.”

“Are you excited to get back into football?” I asked, hoping to spark a glimmer of enthusiasm in James’s eyes.

“Yeah, I guess,” he replied half-heartedly, his voice lacking its usual fervor.

I furrowed my brow, sensing there was more beneath the surface. “You guess?” I prodded, tilting my head to catch his gaze.

James hesitated, his shoulders sagging slightly. “I mean, yeah, I am,” he conceded, but the uncertainty lingered in his tone. He wasn’t being entirely truthful.

I waited patiently, sensing he needed a little encouragement to open up. But when the silence continued, I was the one who broke it.

“You seemed to really enjoy practicing with Lucas and Chad in your backyard.”

“I do love hanging out with them,” he said. I could tell this was the truth. I could feel his mood lighten when I mentioned their names. Okay, so he enjoyed hanging out with his friends more than he enjoyed playing football for Jenkins High... I waited for him to say more.

Finally, after a moment of silence, James let out a heavy sigh. “My dad got back home from a business trip. He really wants me to continue with football.”

Understanding dawned on me as I listened to his words. “So you’re doing it to make your dad happy?” I ventured, already knowing the answer but wanting to hear it from him.

James nodded, his expression weary. “Yeah, pretty much,” he confirmed, his shoulders slumping.

“Have you talked to your dad about how you feel about football?” I inquired gently, hoping to encourage James to share his thoughts and feelings.

James shifted uncomfortably in his seat, his gaze fixed on a spot on the floor. “Not really,” he mumbled.

I could sense that this was a sensitive subject for him, one that he wasn't quite ready to discuss. But I couldn't help but feel a pang of concern, knowing that he was struggling with his father's expectations.

"It might help to talk to him about it," I suggested softly, reaching out to place a reassuring hand on his arm. "He might not realize how much pressure you're feeling."

James let out another heavy sigh, his shoulders slumping even further. "I know," he admitted, his voice tinged with frustration. "But I just don't know how to bring it up. Every time I try, it feels like I'm letting him down."

I nodded in understanding, silently urging him to continue. "It's like he's living vicariously through me," James continued, his words spilling out in a rush. "But football just doesn't mean the same thing to me as it does to him."

"It's okay to have your own dreams, James," I reassured him, giving his arm a gentle squeeze. "You don't have to live up to anyone else's expectations but your own."

"I don't want to talk about it anymore," James said.

"Then let's take a break," I suggested with a smile, eager to lighten the mood.

"Aren't we already taking a break?" James asked, a hint of confusion in his voice.

I couldn't help but giggle at his response. "We've been working hard. Why don't we go catch a movie?"

James's expression brightened at the suggestion. "That sounds like a great idea," he agreed, the tension in his shoulders easing slightly.

With a shared grin, we gathered our things and made our way out of my room, our worries momentarily forgotten. I was excited for this spontaneous date!

James drove us to the cinema. The gentle hum of the engine filled the car, a soothing backdrop to the anticipation building between us. I couldn't help but smile as he placed his hand on my thigh, his touch sending a shiver of excitement coursing through me.

But as his hand began to wander, creeping higher and higher, I swatted it away with a playful laugh, feeling the heat rise to my cheeks. "What's that for?" James asked.

“You’re driving!” I exclaimed, trying to suppress the flutter of arousal that his touch had ignited. “You need to focus on the road.”

James’ hand went to my thigh again. I pushed it away. “Not now!” I told him.

James feigned a look of sadness. His lips turned down in an exaggerated pout. Despite my best efforts to maintain my composure, I couldn’t help but laugh at his antics.

Before long, we arrived at the cinema. With a sense of excitement bubbling inside me, I eagerly unbuckled my seatbelt and followed James out of the car.

As we stood in the parking lot, James surprised me by walking around the car and stepping towards me with purpose. In one swift motion, he closed the distance between us. Before I could react, I found myself pinned between his strong frame and the car.

My breath caught in my throat as his lips met mine. The world around us faded away, leaving only the intoxicating warmth of his embrace and the electric thrill of his touch.

The kisses became heated quickly. Desire coursed through my veins as I surrendered myself to the intoxicating whirlwind of sensation. But just as I felt myself losing control, James pulled away with a mischievous smile, leaving me breathless and wanting more.

“Not now,” he teased, stepping back with a playful twinkle in his eyes. Despite the frustration bubbling inside me, I couldn’t help but laugh at his antics.

“You jerk!” I exclaimed, though there was no real harshness to my words, only affectionate exasperation.

We shared a laugh as we made our way inside the building, the tension between us lingering in the air like a sweet promise of things to come. As James headed towards the ticket counter, I made my way over to the food stand. My stomach was already grumbling, and I looked forward to eating some movie snacks.

As I approached the counter, I couldn’t help but notice the stark contrast in size between the large and medium popcorn buckets on display. The difference was considerable, but what caught my attention was that the price

was almost the same for both sizes. The large was only two dollars more than the medium.

It didn't take long for me to make the economical decision—I opted for two large popcorns without hesitation. After all, why settle for less when you could get more for almost the same price?

With a satisfied smile, I collected the oversized buckets of popcorn and made my way back to James.

“Thank you,” James said and kissed me on the cheek. He took his popcorn.

“Thank you,” I repeated, feeling my face flush where his lips had touched me.

After giving our tickets to the ticket taker we made our way to the cinema. James held open the door for me, and I walked into the dimly lit room.

We ran into Chad. What was he doing here? What were the chances that we'd run into him of all people? I suddenly felt faint.

Before saying anything, he smirked as he glanced at my large popcorn. I instantly felt self-conscious, a flush creeping into my cheeks despite my efforts to brush off his judgmental gaze. Not once did he look at James's popcorn, which was the same size as mine.

“Hey, Chad!” James greeted. “I didn't think I'd see you here!”

“Hey, James,” Chad replied, “It must be our lucky night. I'm here with friends from school. They are sitting in row B. I was just running to the restroom.”

“No way!” James exclaimed. “We are in row A.”

“So we'll be sitting right behind you!” Chad exclaimed.

“Great!” James said.

“I hope you plan to share some of that popcorn with me,” Chad teased, looking at me now. My heart sank.

“Of course. Just tap on my shoulder when you want some,” James replied, missing the taunt.

“Will do. I'll see you in a sec,” Chad said, before hurrying off to the restroom.

As James and I found our seats, I couldn't shake the feeling of unease that lingered in the air. The realization that Chad and his friends were seated right behind us sent a chill down my spine.

Chad returned from the bathroom and sat down behind us. The music stopped. The lights went off.

This was going to be great.

Next Chapter

[Continue to the next chapter of Keily Book 2: Dating My Enemy](#)