

Keily Book 2: Dating My Enemy |

Picnic with a Purpose

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The moment was magical. The sun dipped low on the horizon, casting a golden glow over the flower-filled meadow where James and I had decided to have our picnic.

It was one of those moments where time seemed to stand still, and the beauty of the world around us took my breath away. But James was the most beautiful of all.

We had settled onto the soft blanket spread out beneath us. I couldn't help but feel like we were in our own little paradise.

The air was filled with the sweet scent of flowers in full bloom, and the gentle rustle of the breeze was like music to my ears. I wished we could stay here forever.

James and I shared a picnic basket filled with all our favorite snacks. We ate peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and drank orange juice.

There were M&M's and Oreos as well. We were laughing and chatting as we enjoyed each other's company.

There was something about being out in nature, away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life, that made everything feel so much more magical. As the sun began to set, painting the sky in hues of pink and gold, James reached for my hand.

His touch sent a wave of warmth through me. He leaned in to press a soft kiss to my lips. It would have become heated if it weren't for approaching footsteps.

I pulled away. "What?" James asked.

"Don't you hear that?" I asked.

"Hear what?" His brows pinched together.

As I glanced across the flower-filled meadow, my eyes caught sight of a small figure walking alone. There were tears streaming down her cheeks.

My heart clenched with empathy as I realized she couldn't have been more than five years old. Her tiny frame trembled with distress.

"Hi there," I said.

My voice made her jump. She'd only just realized we were there. It looked like she was about to run away.

I tried to sound calm and gentle in an attempt to make her feel safe. "I'm Keily and this is James. What's your name?"

The little girl sniffed. "I'm Judy," she whispered.

"It's nice to meet you, Judy," I said.

"Where are her parents?" James mumbled next to me. His eyes scanned the meadow.

Without hesitation, I rose to my feet and approached her. Then I hunched down, making myself small to avoid intimidating her.

"Where is your mother?" I asked.

"I don't know," Judy sobbed, her voice choked with emotion as she buried her face in her hands.

Okay, she was lost. I reached out to her, pulling her into a comforting hug.

She didn't pull away. Her small body shook and shook. "It's okay, Judy," I reassured her. "We're going to help you find her, I promise."

James walked over to us. "Where was the last place you saw her?" he asked.

"I don't know!" the child wailed.

"Don't worry," I reassured Judy, my voice gentle as I wiped away her tears. "James and I are going to help you."

But despite my words, Judy's sobs continued. I knew I needed to find a way to distract her, to ease her worries if only for a moment.

“Do you like Oreos or M&Ms better?” I asked, hoping to shift her focus onto something more positive.

Judy paused, considering the question, her tears beginning to subside. “Oreos,” she decided.

“Guess what? I have some!” I exclaimed, taking her hand and leading her over to the picnic basket.

I handed her the pack of Oreos, watching as her eyes lit up with excitement. “Mom only lets me have one at a time,” she admitted, her voice tinged with sadness. “She says they’re unhealthy.”

“Mom’s right,” I agreed with a chuckle, “but I don’t mind if you have two.”

With a grin, Judy eagerly popped one Oreo into her mouth before reaching for another, the simple act bringing a sense of joy to her tear-stained face.

“Let’s see if your mother is nearby,” James suggested.

Taking Judy’s hand in mine, we set off across the meadow. We searched. “Judy, what is your mother’s name?” James asked.

“Bella,” Judy said, eating the second Oreo.

“Bella!” James called.

As Judy’s eyes welled up once again at the mention of her mother’s name, my heart ached with empathy. I knew I had to find a way to distract her.

I could bring a smile back to her face. “Let’s play a game,” I suggested, hoping to lift her spirits. “Do you know I Spy?”

Judy nodded eagerly, her eyes lighting up with interest. “Do you want to go first or shall I?” I asked.

“I’ll go first,” she declared, scanning the surroundings. “I spy with my little eye... something white.”

“Is it the cloud?” I guessed, tilting my head back to look at the sky.

Judy shook her head, her brow furrowed in concentration. “Is it the flowers?” I ventured.

She nodded eagerly, a smile spreading across her face. "Okay, your turn," she said, her eyes sparkling with anticipation.

I glanced around, searching for something to challenge her with. "I spy with my little eye... something brown," I announced.

"Is it the picnic bag?" Judy asked, her eyes alight with excitement.

I shook my head. "No..."

"The tree bark?" she guessed.

"Yes! Good job, Judy!" I exclaimed.

She grinned from ear to ear. "Bella!" James called out once more, his voice carrying over the meadow.

"Over here!" a voice responded, drawing our attention towards a nearby hill. With eager anticipation, we followed the sound of the voice until we reached the top of the hill, where we found a woman.

Judy's eyes lit up with joy as she saw her. She immediately let go of my hand and ran into Bella's open arms.

With tears streaming down their faces, mother and daughter embraced tightly. As James and I linked hands and approached them.

"Thank you! Thank you!" the woman exclaimed, her voice choked with emotion. "I'm Bella... Judy's mom."

"I'm James, and this is Keily," James introduced us with a warm smile.

"You found my daughter," Bella said as she clutched Judy to her chest.

"We were having a picnic and she found us," I corrected.

"I was so worried," Bella said. "One moment Judy and I were picking flowers, and the next she was gone."

"I'm happy we could help," James said.

"What do we say?" Bella prompted Judy gently.

“Thank you,” Judy responded with a shy smile, her voice soft but sincere.

“We’re going home,” Bella declared. “Thank you again.”

“You’re very welcome,” James said.

“Goodbye.”

Bella carried Judy away and Judy waved to me over her mom’s shoulder. I heard her say, “Keily let me have two Oreos!”

A smile tugged at the corners of my lips as I watched them go. My heart swelled with happiness.

I glanced over at James I noticed a thoughtful expression clouding his features. “What are you thinking about?” I asked.

“I was just thinking... you would make a great mom, Keily.”

A blush crept into my cheeks at his words, embarrassment washing over me like a wave. He was thinking about kids?! He wanted to have kids with me in the future.

It wasn’t something I’d given much thought to until now. But the idea of having little ones who looked like us was really cute. “Oh, uh... thanks,” I stammered.

“I mean it. You’re so kind and nurturing,” he turned to me. I’ve always wanted a big family. Lots of kids running around, laughing and playing together.

“How many kids?” I asked.

“Five,” he declared without hesitation.

“Five?!” I exclaimed, taken aback.

Five was a lot of kids... “If you really want, we can have six,” he teased.

“Two and a dog,” I argued playfully, trying to negotiate a more manageable number.

“Four,” he countered, his gaze locking with mine as a mischievous smile tugged at the corners of his lips.

“Three and I’ll let you choose one’s name.”

“Only one?”

“Yes. They get your last name, so it’s only fair I choose the first names.”

James laughed. “It sounds like you’ve got it all figured out, Mrs. Haynes.”

He winked at me and I couldn’t help but feel my cheeks flush. “Stop teasing me!” I said, smacking him lightly on the arm in mock protest.

A devilish grin spread across his face. “You better prepare yourself for the future we are about to share.”

But, I don’t think I’d ever be prepared.

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