

Keily Book 2: Dating My Enemy |

Navigating College Dreams

Navigating College Dreams

We were in my bedroom, sitting on the bed, close enough to touch. I had one leg crossed over the other and my laptop on my lap.

James was close enough that I could feel his breath on my neck. He gave me goosebumps. The soft glow of the computer screen illuminated his eager face. Beautiful. But I couldn't stare at him the whole time, even though I wanted to.

I looked at MIT's website open before us. We looked at admissions requirements and campus amenities. "Okay, so we need to submit our transcripts by next month," I murmured, scanning through the checklist with furrowed brows. "And don't forget about the recommendation letters."

James nodded, his gaze fixed on the screen. "Right, and we'll need to start looking into housing options too. I heard there are some pretty cool dorms on campus." Together, we explored the virtual landscape of MIT.

This was so exciting! From cutting-edge research facilities to cozy student hangouts, I marveled at the possibilities that lay ahead. "We definitely need to check out that coffee shop," James exclaimed, pointing to a cozy cafe nestled in the heart of campus.

"I didn't know you were a big coffee drinker," I said. "I'm not. But it looks like a good place to study." I grinned, already envisioning late-night study sessions fueled by caffeine and friends. "And we can't forget about the library," I added, pulling up images of towering bookshelves and sunlit reading nooks.

"I have a feeling we'll be spending a lot of time there." As we immersed ourselves in planning and dreaming, the outside world faded away, leaving only the promise of a bright future ahead. "Do you know what I'm most excited for?" James asked.

"What?"

"The college parties."

I eyed him. Going to college, for me, was about studying and getting a good career. Not once had I thought about parties. "There are so many college parties," he continued, eyes sparkling with excitement.

"Think about the booze, the dancing, and the late-night gatherings. We'll make friends for life there." As he spoke, I couldn't help but feel a pang of anxiety flutter in the pit of my stomach. As much as I wanted to share in his excitement, the thought of navigating those social situations filled me with a sense of dread.

The image of myself, awkward and out of place, among the throngs of beautiful, confident students, loomed large in my mind. My gaze drifted to my reflection in the mirror, and all I could see were the flaws and imperfections that seemed to scream out at me.

My body felt like a prison, trapping me in a cycle of self-doubt and insecurity. How could James, with his easy charm and magnetic personality, possibly want to be seen with someone like me? As James continued to talk about college, I found myself retreating further into my own thoughts.

How could I find a way to belong in his world? Was I just a burden holding him back from truly experiencing all that college had to offer? I did always try to support him, to take into consideration what he wanted and needed. I cared so much about his happiness.

But what if he found someone better? Someone who wasn't fat? I might not have the perfect body, but I did try to be a good girlfriend in all the ways I could be. And James had never claimed otherwise.

The more I dwelled on these thoughts, the more suffocating they became. They wrapped around me like a vice, squeezing the air from my lungs. I wanted to be someone who could share in his excitement, who could embrace life with the same fervor and enthusiasm.

I had to stop doubting myself so much. I had to start focusing on a more positive mindset. I was panicking over being seen with him at a college party, when it wasn't even time for the New Year's Eve party yet.

A knot of anxiety gnawed at my insides. The New Year's Eve party was something I didn't want to think about. But the more I tried not to think about it, the more I thought about it. "Hey, Keily, you seem a bit distracted. Is everything alright?" James's voice broke through my thoughts.

"Yeah, everything's fine," I replied, the words sounding hollow even to my own ears. I tried to brush off his observation with a forced smile, but James wasn't one to be fooled by surface pleasantries. He knew me too well, could read me like an open book.

"Tell me what you're thinking..." he tried.

"Nothing," I said quickly.

But James wasn't about to let it slide. With a gentle touch to my cheek, he made me face him. His eyes bore into mine with unwavering intensity. "Keily, I know you. I can tell when something's bothering you," he said softly.

"You can tell me what's wrong."

I hesitated. But the look of genuine concern in James's eyes was all it took to break through my defenses. "It's just... the New Year's Eve party," I confessed, my voice barely above a whisper.

"What about it?" he asked.

I took a deep breath, trying to find the courage to voice the thoughts that had been plaguing me since Addison told us about the party. "I'm going as your date," I finally admitted, the words tumbling out in a rush.

James's eyes widened in surprise, his lips parted slightly. "Yes, of course. I wouldn't want to go with anyone else." His words should have eased my fears, but instead, they only served to intensify them. As I looked into his eyes, so full of warmth and affection, I couldn't help but feel like maybe he should go with someone else.

Maybe he should go with a slim girl who ran track. Maybe he should go with a fit cheerleader. "Are you sure?" I asked.

His brows pressed together. "Who else would I want to go with?"

"Maybe some prettier girl..." I said.

"You're the prettiest girl," he countered. I shook my head, "We both know that's not true." My voice trembled with emotion.

"You're athletic and gorgeous and rich... and I'm... just me." James's brow furrowed in confusion, his expression filled with genuine concern. "Keily, what are you talking about? You're amazing, just the way you are."

But no matter how much he protested, I couldn't shake the feeling of inadequacy that gnawed at me from the inside out. How could someone like James, with his effortless charm and magnetic charisma, possibly want to be seen with someone like me?

As I struggled to find the words to articulate my fears, James reached out, his hand warm and reassuring against mine. "Keily, listen to me," he said softly, his gaze unwavering. "You are more than enough, just as you are. And I wouldn't want to be with anyone else."

I felt a flood of emotions wash over me. His words, so full of warmth and sincerity, wrapped around me like a protective shield, banishing the doubts and insecurities that had threatened to consume me. "Keily, listen to me. You are beautiful."

He kissed my left cheek. "You are smart." He kissed my right cheek. "And funny." He kissed my forehead and I couldn't help but laugh. "You have a light inside you that shines brighter than you know." He kissed me on the mouth. It was quick, but powerful.

Tears welled in my eyes as I listened to his words, each one a gentle reminder of the love and acceptance he offered so freely. How could I have ever doubted his feelings for me, when he saw me with such clarity and understanding?

"But James, I'm not like you," I whispered, my voice barely above a breath. "I'm not athletic or outgoing or... confident." James shook his head, his eyes blazing with determination. "You don't need to be any of those things, Keily. You are perfect just the way you are. You need to give yourself more credit."

As his words sank in, a glimmer of hope ignited within me, pushing back against the darkness of my doubts. Maybe, just maybe, I could learn to see myself through James's eyes, to embrace all the things that made me uniquely me. With a shaky breath, I leaned into him, letting his comforting presence envelop me like a warm embrace.

James's lips crashed against mine. The world seemed to fade away, consumed by the heat and intensity of our passion. My heart raced in my

chest as I leaned into him. The kiss quickly turned heated as our bodies pressed together with a desperate urgency.

Things began to escalate. His hands found my breasts and squeezed. I twisted my body toward him—making my laptop slip. It fell from the bed and crashed to the floor below. Despite the soft landing on the carpet, my heart raced with fear at the possibility of damage.

Before I could even react, James's hands were on me, pulling me back from the edge of the bed with a firm grip. "It could be broken," I gasped. "Then I'll buy you a new one," he said, his lips crashing against mine once more as he silenced any further protest with a searing kiss.

But as his hands began to wander, tracing tantalizing paths along my skin, a sudden wave of self-consciousness washed over me. "My parents are home!" I blurted out, the words tumbling from my lips before I could stop them.

James seemed unfazed by the revelation, his desire burning bright in his eyes as he leaned in closer. "So?" he murmured, his breath hot against my ear. I shook my head, my cheeks burning with embarrassment. "So, we are not doing it in my bedroom," I said firmly.

For a moment, James seemed taken aback by my refusal, his gaze searching mine for any sign of hesitation. But as I stood my ground, he relented, leaning back with a resigned sigh. "Fine," he said, his voice tinged with disappointment.

"But just know that I won't be able to think about anything else until I have you all to myself." With a smile, I leaned into him. I had no doubt that James loved me, with a depth and intensity that filled me with awe and wonder. But as I nestled against him, a nagging worry gnawed at the edges of my mind.

It wasn't James' thoughts and opinions that I worried—it was other people's. They'd think badly of me, speak poorly of me. And I didn't want to be a source of negativity in James's life.

Next Chapter

Continue to the next chapter of Keily Book 2: Dating My Enemy