

## Keily Book 2: Dating My Enemy |

### Gossip Gossip

It's finally here. The NYE party that I've been dreading.

I had tried on a million different outfits. Then I had looked at myself in the mirror, from a million different angles.

I'd decided on a dress that hugged my curves in all the right places. It showed off my cleavage.

I'd paired it with delicate heels that added a touch of elegance. I'd scrutinized my reflection a million times, adjusting and readjusting until everything was just right.

With my black hair cascading in loose curls around my shoulders and my makeup meticulously applied, I couldn't help but feel a surge of confidence. Despite the nagging doubts that lingered in the back of my mind, I tried to push them aside, focusing instead on the promise of a fun-filled evening ahead.

But now that we were here, I caught sight of my reflection once more—this time in a window. The familiar pang of self-consciousness washed over me.

The dress was a bit shorter than I'd anticipated, and it accentuated the parts of myself I'd rather keep hidden—the cellulite on my thighs.

I tried to shake off the negative thoughts, reminding myself that I looked good, that I was worthy of feeling beautiful and confident. But no matter how hard I tried to silence the voice of doubt in my mind, it persisted, whispering cruel reminders of my flaws.

Taking a deep breath, I forced myself to focus on the positive. I was at a party with my beautiful boyfriend at my side.

I looked away from the window and focused on James instead. He exuded an effortless coolness that turned heads wherever he went.

I couldn't help but feel a surge of pride mingled with a twinge of apprehension. His jeans hugged his muscular frame, the leather jacket adding a rugged edge to his ensemble, and his slicked-back hair gave him an air of undeniable confidence.

But as we made our way through the crowd, I couldn't shake the feeling of eyes upon us, scrutinizing my every move. People looked at James, their gazes lingering on his chiseled features and magnetic presence.

And then, inevitably, their eyes would drift to me, and I couldn't help but feel a pang of self-consciousness in comparison.

I pushed the self-consciousness aside. If these people took some time to get to know me, they might even like me.

They'd realize that there were more serious things in life than the size of one's jeans. Like, the size of one's heart was much more important! And I did have a big heart...

As we walked, I found myself lifting my head. Okay, I wasn't as cool as James but, then again, no one was.

I caught sight of Lucas pouring himself a drink. He looked so lost in his thoughts.

This was the perfect opportunity to get him back for all the times he scared me at school.

"Follow me," I told James. "I'm going to scare Lucas."

I sprang into action, jumping out with a playful "boo!" that caused Lucas to startle so abruptly that he spilled his drink all over the counter.

"Keily! Look what you made me do!" Lucas whined, shooting me a mock glare as he scrambled to salvage what remained of his drink. "I thought we only scared each other by the lockers."

"You thought wrong," I laughed.

But James, who had followed me, couldn't resist teasing him further. "Ooh, you better not waste it," he joked, a mischievous twinkle in his eyes.

"I'll lick it up then," Lucas suggested playfully.

“Do it!” James said, all serious.

“Don’t encourage him!” I chided James, with a playful roll of my eyes.

I couldn’t help but feel a surge of warmth at the sight of the two of them together, laughing and joking like old times.

As Lucas licked the spilled alcohol off the counter with exaggerated gusto, I wrinkled my nose in disgust. “That’s gross, Lucas,” I scolded, though the corners of my lips twitched with amusement.

But James, ever the daredevil, egged him on.

“You missed a spot!”

Lucas licked the counter clean.

“Now that calls for a toast!” James said.

Lucas poured three shot glasses full and we raised them together.

“To friendship,” he said.

“To friendship,” James and I repeated. I swallowed. It burned all the way down my throat.

“Whoo!” Lucas said, slamming his shot glass on the counter.

As I looked between Lucas and James, the memories of past conflicts and drama faded into the background. There had been so much drama between them.

It had all started when Lucas had shown an interest in me. James and Addison didn’t like that because they were convinced that Lucas and his ex-girlfriend, Myra, would make up and get back together.

They’d broken up because he thought she cheated on him—she didn’t. And it was clear that they still cared about each other.

But Lucas got irritated with James picking on me. He had decided to flirt with me and I flirted right back.

The tension between James and Lucas had reached a boiling point. Lucas had even punched James...

In the end, James and I had gotten together. Lucas and I remained friends. It seemed that he and James were finally moving past their drama.

"You started drinking without us?" Addison asked as she walked over.

Sadhvi and Lola trailed behind her, followed by Max, Keith, and Axel.

"Plenty more where that came from!" Lucas declared, reaching for the bottle and pouring generous shots for each of us.

With a chorus of cheers, we raised our glasses in unison, downing the fiery liquid in one swift motion. The burn of the alcohol ignited a fire in my throat, and I could feel the warmth spreading through my body, threatening to go straight to my head.

"Let's dance!" Sadhvi exclaimed. She grabbed Addison's hand, pulling her towards the dancefloor.

With a laugh, we followed suit, the pulsing beat of the music guiding our steps as we joined the throng of dancers. James's hands found their way to my waist, pulling me close as we swayed to the rhythm of the music.

Closing my eyes, I let myself be swept away by the moment. The feeling of James's body pressed against mine sent shivers down my spine.

Lost in the music and the warmth of his embrace, I let go of all worries and insecurities. I allowed myself to simply be in the moment.

Feeling the heat of the crowded dancefloor press against my skin, I couldn't help but notice a bead of sweat trickling down my forehead. Ugh. It would smudge the carefully applied layers of makeup.

"I need to go to the washroom," I told James.

He let go of my hips. I made my way through the crowd and into the washroom, where the music was much quieter.

I washed my hands and used a paper towel to pat the sweat on my face dry. Then I went into one of the toilet stalls and closed the door.

I heard the washroom door open and girls walked inside. As I sat down on the seat, it was impossible not to eavesdrop.

“James is such a talented football player,” one said with a lovestruck voice.

Okay, she was talking about my James. I hadn’t expected coming in here only to hear gossip about him... but now I had to listen to every word.

“But now he’s going to that snooty school? He’s throwing away his future as a star,” she continued.

Okay, MIT wasn’t the best school for football players. But it was also none of their business where James went or what he did.

Bitch.

Another voice chimed in, “And did you see his girlfriend? She’s... well, let’s just say she’s not exactly what you’d expect.”

Ow.

A surge of anger bubbled up inside me as I listened to their words, the implication clear: I was dragging James down. I was holding him back.

“Maybe James isn’t as smart as we thought,” a third voice added, the words like a knife twisting in my gut.

They giggled about the last statement. Screw them. Who were they to judge me? What made them so much better?

I kicked open the toilet stall and strolled out. They went so quiet that it felt as if I was standing in a graveyard.

They looked at me with wide eyes. I swear the one girl even looked like she was about to bolt.

I stared them down.

No one spoke. My chest was rising and falling with each breath, but I felt like they were holding theirs.

“Do you have something that you’d like to say to me?” I asked.

They shook their heads.

“I thought so,” I said.

They were just a couple of cowards. They liked badmouthing me and gossiping, but now they couldn’t even look me in the eyes.

I finally left the washroom.

Almost immediately I saw my friends. They were still on the dancefloor.

As I watched James laughing and enjoying himself with my other gorgeous friends, a wave of insecurity crashed over me.

They were all attractive people. They were swaying to the beat. They were laughing and having a great time while my heart was in shambles.

Did I truly belong here?

Next Chapter

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