Things had changed. No more Miss Nice Girl. No more Miss I'm-sorry-

mean, isn't that the most absurd thing you've heard all day? I say 'all

for-breaking-your-laptop-so-I'll-do-anything-to-make-up-for-it. I

**Chapter 38: Birthday Blues** 

**194** 

38 | Birthday Blues

gnome.  I was over this kid. Luke Dawson had the world at his feet. Now I've	.849 65
stood up.  I've stood himup  Though it's not like he'd notice anyway.	45         45         45         46         48         48         48         48         48         48         48         48         48         48         48         48         48         48         49         40         40         40         40         40         40         40         40         40         40         40         40         41         42         43         44         45         46         47         48         49         40         40         41         42         43         44         45         46         47         48         49         40         40         40         41
My phone buzzed for the eighteenth time. Luke was persistent. I tried to block the image of him in my mind. His dreamy blue eyes, his charming playful smile	å
No! I snapped out of it. Let the boy sweat. It's not like he sweats enough in basketball. AmIright?  I pulled up to my house and parked in the driveway.	ੜਾ ਕੀ
"Were you picking up the newspaper from the front porch?" my mother asked as I walked in, pouring oat milk onto her granola.	đ
She handed me a pop tart.  "Uh, not really. I was actually at a basketball game today," I answered looking for an envelope in the kitchen cabinets.	්a් l, a්⊤
Flora laughed from the table, "I'm telling you mother. She's becoming a pathological liar."  "Why is what I'm saying so hard to believe?" I asked, finding a stack of	374 a
envelopes next to the scissors.  I grabbed one.	at at
"Why aren't you eating breakfast?" Mum asked me.  "I ate at the Co ee Bean."  "She's trying to lose weight mum. She can barely fit into her jeans,"	á á
Flora said, "That's why she wanted to borrow my clothing, and rip it."  "Skipping meals is not the path to popularity," my mother told me, obviously willing to believe anything Flora said.	u
There was nothing for me to say. At least Cinderella had a fairy godmother, a prince charming and friends (even if they were mice).	139 108
Me? I have the Co ee Bean and  Luke. My phone was buzzing again, and I clicked ignore.Luke was not giving up.	a° a°
I'm sure he's won his game by now. I'd said my part to him and he can hang out with his groupies in peace. Why did he care about reaching me now, when he never had before?	å
I le the kitchen and overheard them say, "She'll never be normal."  "Enough about her. Matt is taking me on another date today mum, but I really need to get closer to Luke or Austin. Actually, there's a	192 d
	888 588
** School was the usual parade of edgy fashion decisions and social	a⁰
media profiles. I squeezed through the swarm of students in the halls, struggling to make my way through. I pulled the envelope out of my bag and walked past Luke's famous locker.	å
Without him there, it was preserved like a shrine. Some fans loitered around it. Most would pass by and stare. So I had to be extra discreet when I slipped the envelope through the thin slot of his locker.	aa⁵
At lunch time, I stood in line for food like most of the student body.  Julia was next to me, chatting about my birthday. She had made	a <sup>r</sup>
reservations at a French restaurant in town and was asking if I knew what kind of food Luke eats.  "I'll pre-order his favorite apps," she said, holding her pink planner in	213 a
her right hand, "Wait, look! The boys are coming."  We turned around to see Luke, Austin and Chad walk past. They skipped the line, confidently walking to the front. Austin's loud voice	<b>a</b>
was making a joke that the guys laughed at. No one stopped them. If anything, people parted forthem.  Julia and I waited our turn. By the time we reached the food, there	a <sup>7</sup>
was very little choice le . I got a chicken sandwich and chips.  "Millie! Jools! Over here!" Unity called out to us, waving from her table.	a⁴ a⁵¹
I froze, "Did they say my name?"  This was the first time anyone had asked me to sit at a table during	a³
Julia nodded, ripping the plastic wrapping around her Mrs fields' cookie open. She liked to eat dessert first.	<i>2</i> 51 <i>d</i> 55
I followed her to the LUCKY table. Yoona made room for me. She was showing Khloe a new K-Pop band and they were skimming through every song in the album. I sat between her and Cearra, who	
immediately shared what she was reading.  "I'm telling you, grandma chic is in." She showed me the oversized cardigans and ru led tops that models wore in the center page of her	a <sup>5K</sup>
glossy magazine.  Lexi asked to see it. Cearra ripped the page out and handed it to her.  "So Millie," she addressed me, "Welcome to our table. We figured	a å
we'd get to know you before your birthday."  All the girls stopped doing what they were doing and looked up.	ਰਾ ਰ
"So tell us, how do you know Luke?" Lexi asked.  Whispers of his name suddenly traveled through the room. I looked around and saw him enter the cafeteria. He ignored the stares,	.893
probably immune to them by now. Luke walked by himself to the drinks section and bought three bottles of water.  "He's alone," Unity whispered, nudging Lexi, "You should ask him	á
when he passes this way."  Luke didn't eat lunch with the rest of the student body. I remembered that from my first day, when I accidentally bumped into his crew	a'
having a day party in one of the classrooms.  He started to walk past us.  "Luke!" Lexi jumped up and intercepted his path, "Hi, my name's Lexi	a
We met at a party last year-" "What's up?"	a් a්¹
Luke's voice was sexy and chill. He glanced at our table and his eyes landed on me. He raised his eyebrows, "Is this your crew?"  I didn't know what to say. I was still annoyed with him. He ignored	ä <sup>71</sup>
"About that," Lexi darted round into his line of vision and obstructed	ਕ a°
"Yeah," he said half-sure, "They were pink."  He looked at me again, still unconvinced that these were my friends or that I'd be sending out pink invites to my birthday dinner.	a¹⁴ a⁰
"Are you able to make it? We reserved a-" "Sorry," he side-stepped her, "I have another thing that night."	a a
I could feel the mood at the table shi . Did Julia oversell how close Luke and I were? Wasn't it a good thing that he couldn't come? Why was I feeling a bit upset?	a°
"And Millie," he said my name and I felt myself jolt. "I got your envelope."  He pulled it out of his pocket. "And I don't want it."	a² a³°
I had been trying to pay him back for his laptop in cash.	a ä
<ul><li>**</li><li>What came first, birth or parental disappointment?</li><li>My birthday snuck up on me this year. Mum made herself a birthday</li></ul>	å å
omelet – which was a regular omelet – and my sister took my car to school, again. I got one text from Julia. It was the balloon emoji.  And that's it.	a⁴ <sup>ĸ</sup> a⁴¹
Happy Birthday, me.  I didn't expect anyone to remember and they didn't, so classes went	.893 a
by uneventfully. At lunch I texted Julia and she didn't reply. A ernoon went the same as the morning.  At home, I sort of lost myself online. I watched funny videos and	ä
episodes, which took me out of my reality. At 7PM, I got on the little bike and pedaled to the French restaurant.  I was excited. Thanks to Julia, I would be celebrating my birthday this	406 A
year with a cake and friends. I put on my nicest shirt, a blue button down, and brushed my hair into a fish tail. I couldn't contain my excitement when the restaurant came into view.	.561 .14
"Party of seven, reserved under Mademoiselle Julia's name?" the maître d' said in his three-piece suit, "You are the first to arrive,	<b>a</b> ⁴
Madame."  "OK, I'll wait."  A waiter led me to four tables that had been pushed together. White	а <sup>5к</sup> 214
tablecloths and candles covered each one. I slid into a chair and stared at the empty table. Me and all my friends.  The restaurant was mostly empty. An elderly couple was sharing a	343
lamb roast nearby and they stared at me, more sympathetically as time rolled on. I looked at them, thinking how lucky they were for what they had.	å
The waiter came by to refill my water. He'd stopped asking me if my guests were coming. I checked my phone for the tenth time. No one had messaged me, and it was almost 8pm. I'd been here an hour, and	
no one was showing up.  I started to realize what this was. No one was going to come. I had	
been stood up by the closest thing to friends that I have	408 659
Tears stung my eyes. This was so humiliating. I was stupid to ever think people wanted to celebrate my birthday with me. I was alone. I've always been alone. Why would I expect today to be di erent? It's	408 659
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"Am I the first one here?" he asked, realizing the situation.

A/N: What a sad chapter. Thoughts? Feels?

I didn't say anything.

"Well sh\*t, I'm glad I came."

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