41 | Dirt

We're at 666k readers. I don't want to be superstitious or anything... but I quickly uploaded this chapter. And it's a long one.

Chapter 41: Dirt

Chad lived in the nicest part of town. His driveway had a fountain in it and, for whatever reason, his family had imported a cactus for their garden.

We found five briefcases by the front door in di erent shades of brown. They had been flown in from Milan for Chad's dad. I was staring at them when Luke touched my arm and led me across the marble foyer. Large glass doors opened out into a luxurious garden.

I had no idea Chad lived like this.

There was a blue pool with a blowup white swan floating in the middle. His friends were sitting in the shade, surrounded by cactus trees and flowers in bright blue pots.

"You're back," Oma greeted him, as she relaxed under the shade of a fashionable straw hat, "You've been too busy for us, Luke."

I recognized Oma from school. She was a super popular senior and head of the Chemistry club. Her best friend was Bianca.

"Does everyone know Millie?" Luke asked, slowing down so that I was in front of him.

I felt exposed. All eyes on me. This was the same group I had accidentally bumped into in the classroom my first day. The one that was having a private lunch party.

"Mill ayyy come over and have a drink," Austin called out to me, raising a pitcher of spiked lemonade.

"Hi," I waved back.

I was nervous about being here, but his warm welcome was soothing. Bianca didn't say anything. She was looking me up and down, up and down, as if her eyes were locked on repeat.

Chad stepped forward, "Why do I recognize her?"

I remembered him passed out on the couch at Austin's party. His drool on Austin's pillow.

"It's hard to recognize you with your eyes open," I joked. Luke smiled behind me and put a comforting hand on my shoulder.

I tried to ignore the butterflies in my stomach, but they were dancing to their own soundtrack. His hand lowered down my back, passing between my shoulder muscles, sending chills through my spine. His touch was so and his movements were smooth.

I wanted to close my eyes and savor every feeling... but that would look weird in front of his friends.

It was encouraging to feel his support. Luke knew this was a tough crowd and wanted to be vocal in making me feel welcome. Bianca didn't get the memo.

"Can someone explain to me why a nerd's been invited? She's not even in our year," Bianca hu ed, "You're in the year below."

"But she's on a higher level," Luke answered easily, as if comebacks were second nature to him. "If you want me to stick around Bianca, behave."

O.K. Luke is not afraid to fire shots. I was starting to admire that in him.

"But we have rules-"

"Do I look like I care?"

Bianca's lip quivered. There was a very awkward silence that ensued. Luke wasn't about to back down and Bianca looked like she was about to cry. The last thing I wanted was to cause a ri between Luke and his friends.

"I'm hooked on her!" Austin exclaimed, coming over to give me a one arm hug and dispel the tension, "This girl does funny and random sh*t and calls people out on their own. It's refreshing. More lemonade?"

"She doesn't look funny to me," Bianca pursed her lips, before remembering Luke's warning, "I mean, nice to meet you."

Is it that hard to be friendly? Her instinct was b*tch mode.

"And Iam Roland Chadwick the Third," Chad extended his hand formally, "But you can call me Chad."

"Nice to meet you. I'm Millie, probably Millie the one millionth. It's a super common name."

Whydid I say that?

"Enough with the boring intros," Bianca said, li ing her shirt o , "Is anyone else going into the pool?"

She was wearing a yellow bikini underneath.

Oma was taking a selfie under a striped parasol, "Do you want a boomerang on the swan?"

"That was so 2017," Bianca complained, "It's all about the pink flamingos now-"

"That was last summer," Chad said, "But go retro. I've got a donut ring and pineapple floatie."

"Pineapple is so my aesthetic," she referred to her yellow bikini, "Are you going into the pool Millie or are you just going to watch me?"

"I'm not going to watch you," I answered, sitting down on a lounge chair beside Austin, "But thank you for the o er."

No way was I going to take the bait on that. Bianca had a perfect body and I... well, let's just say I enjoy one too many actual donuts myself. Donuts aren't my aesthetic, they're my reality.

Bianca glared at me and picked up her phone. She texted something and Oma's phone buzzed. They giggled and whispered to each other. I only caught parts of it:

"Why haven't we... her yet... Surfside Shack... Luke."

It sounded like she was talking about me and not in the good way. Luke came to sit next to me, signalling the girls to cool it.

The boys were already engaged in loud conversation and Austin was spilling lemonade over everyone as he generously refilled our glasses. Over-generously.

He filled it to the top until it flowed all over the table.

Chad raised his glass and alcohol dripped down his hand, "Get it down the hatch, boys."

They downed it in one. I stared at two other pitchers on the table. Already empty.

Was this what a casual weekday looked like for them? Poolside drinking and tanning. Uploading pictures on Instagram that get close to 2k views.

If so, it's a di erent world to mine. I focused back on their conversation and realized that it had deteriorated fast...

"-coming from him. He's got whiskers for a moustache."

"At least I don't have pubic hair on my face."

"You should transfer some of it to your head. You're seventeen and starting to bald."

The conversation had spiraled out of control very quickly. I guess that's reality. The popular boys are not always the broody, mysterious boys they're made out to be. They're goofy and immature.

And I didn't mind. Who am I kidding? I'm into it.

"Stay hydrated Millie," Austin pushed another glass of the spiked lemonade towards me.

******

I was feeling a little tipsy as I settled myself in Luke's car. I connected his phone and shu led songs on his playlist to one I like. Luke was standing outside, saying goodbye to Chad, when he reached in and put his hand on the stereo.

"Keep it on this one." He turned the volume up until I felt the vibrations in my seat. I covered my ears with my hands.

I noticed how he didn't care that I was using his phone. All he cared about was the music we listened to. His phone was on my lap and I saw some texts roll in, but I locked it, not wanting to accidentally read them.

Luke finished saying goodbye.

"I didn't know Chad lived here," I said as Luke got into the car.

Luke nodded, driving around the fountain in Chad's driveway on our way out. He reached over to take his phone from my lap and our fingers accidentally entwined. He swerved, almost hitting the fountain.

It might be the alcohol but I was having flashbacks to the last time we were in water together. It was in the lake at Camp Beaver Hill and it was night;

I remembered swimming up to him. His gray eyes shi ed color to a dark blue, matching the waves that passed him. The moonlight reflected over his skin, drowning out the color. The waves reached his chest, and I saw the upper body strength he had.

"Why do you ask about Chad?" he saw me staring at him.

"I was wondering why he goes to our school," I answered, breaking out of my embarrassing dream, "I thought everyone in this neighborhood goes private."

"He got kicked out of private school a couple years ago. So he came to ours and stayed," Luke answered before changing subject, "I'll drop you o at home before I go to basketball."

"Did you have a good time today?" he asked and his tone was suddenly serious.

It was genuine. No jokes, no smirks, pure honesty.

"Yes," I said truthfully, "Why did you invite me?"

"I want you to meet my friends," he shrugged, "I want you to be a part of my life. I'm not a bad guy, Millie."

"I never said you-"

"I want to prove myself to you."

I was too tipsy to conceal my reaction. My eyes widened, and he laughed.

"Is that so hard to believe?" he asked.

I nodded, "As a friend, I believe you. But you might be talking about something more."

Oh. My. God. Did I just go there?? Did drunk me just **go there**?!?!

He looked down with a small smirk on his lips. His hand reached out for mine and held onto it. I stared at the curvature of his features, how they complemented each other to form the kind of face love songs talk about.

His thumb stroked the back of my hand, in a so and caring way. I used to think he was stone cold. I mean, he looks like a statue of a Greek god, but stone cold in the personal way too. He used to ignore me. And now, I can't imagine a more loyal man.

"You're asking me if I'm going to date you," he whispered in a hot, deep voice.

My heart dove into even more somersaults than earlier. I really don't need cardio with Luke around.

Let's be real, I don't do cardio either way.

"I just..." I stumbled over my own words.

I was so nervous. I couldn't believe I was having this conversation with Luke Dawson. Why he would even considerdating someone like me...

"I don't play games and I'm feeling a bit confused right now," I confessed, "I'm probably out of my depth here and you're used girls with more experience than me but, like, was this a date?"

Every second longer he took to respond, made me think of my grave... and how I was digging it. Finally, Luke responded.

"This wasn't a date," he said. "When I take you on a date, you'll **know**."

I didn't let drunk me say a single word. Drunk me was already way out of control.

But I let his words echo in my delirious mind. WhenI take you on a date. He didn't say if. He said when.

******

~ POV Change~

Bianca went over to Oma's house a er leaving Chad's. The girls o en did their homework together before going out. Oma's parents were more relaxed than Bianca's.

"Luke didn't even notice my bikini," Bianca complained, unwilling to change the subject, "It's the same one I wore at his birthday party in Dubai last year. Do you remember that trip?"

Oma nodded, sitting at her dining room table. She was going through Chemistry club membership dues. "Yeah, that was incredible. Austin did a killer job organizing it."

"Luke had just broken up with his girlfriend," Bianca sighed, "I really thought we were going to get together then. But this is my last chance. We're seniors now and I promised myself he and I were going to prom together. It's our senior year. What do you think of Millie?"

"The girl from today? She's quirky."

"Do you think she's into Luke?" Bianca flicked her hair back and laughed, answering her own question, "Who am I kidding? Everyone's into Luke. The real question is if Luke's into her."

"Oh please," Oma sighed, "Let's not go into this."

"We are sogoing into this. She was giving me so much attitude today. Did you see what she said when I invited her into the pool? Anyway, I told my girls to research her. They said they found someone who has the dirt."

"Who?"

"Wait and see. She's coming over now."

"To my house?" Oma asked, putting her pen down.

"Yes," Bianca smiled, "And she'll be here any minute now."

A/N: Any guesses who it is? What dirt do they have on Millie... And how much will it hurt her relationship with Luke and Jake?

Also! My favorite quote of the chapter is hands down "Donuts aren't my aesthetic, they're my reality." **If anyone finds a meme on this, send me a PM! Please consider a vote!!**