

16 | Ombudsman

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21

This chapter is for every single reader who connects to this story!

27

Chapter 16: Ombudsman

138

I don't know why Tamara, the runway model and summer camp beauty queen, was yelling at me for stealing her man.

23

Firstly, that's not my style.

140

And secondly, I am just about the most unpopular girl at this camp. It's giving me wayyytoo much credit. I couldn't steal a hamster away from its running wheel.

171

"You two are no longer a thing?" I asked her.

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It's news to me.

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Her hair was frizzy like she forgot to straighten it this morning. And her eyes were puffy like she'd been crying. She still looked gorgeous though. But damn Luke for making girls suffer. This is exactly the kind of thing I was used to hearing about him.

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Heart breaker.

116

He changes girls like he changes moods.

176

Oh, and that brings me on to my third (and most important) reason why I don't like being accused of stealing anyone. It makes people sound like property.

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"You are a whore-" Tamara pointed at me.

285

I cut her off immediately. I guess Luke's right. I'm a PG person and I like to keep things that way.

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"This seems like a decision made by two independent adults, so I don't think I'm needed here," I said, picking up my book from the lounge chair.

246

I was about to head inside when Austin Taylor walked out of the cabin with a bowl of fruit loops in his hand. When did he even get here?

292

I took a couple steps back.

2

"I smell DRAMA cooking out here," he greeted everyone, and then casually mentioned, "You've run out of honey by the way, Millie. Might want to restock."

271

I blinked at him. "Do you live here now?"

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He has inventory check on lock.

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"I swing by when there's nothing on TV," he shrugged, "Who knew this cabin in the middle of nowhere is the center of so much action."

100

Where was Luke?

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He must have left while I was asleep.

2

"Who are you?" Tamara asked, toning her anger down now that there was another attractive guy standing in between us.

175

"What a question," Austin chuckled, eating another spoonful of cereal, "You must be Tara."

257

"Tamara."

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"Right."

23

These boys.

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"I'm glad you've both met," I said, remembering to pick up Luke's speakers, "Now if you'll excuse me, I have nothing better to do but even that is better than staying out here."

119

"Where are you going? I am not finished with you," Tamara ordered me.

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"Weren't you dating Luke?" Austin asked, not liking her tone either.

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Tamara lowered her voice, "I am dating Luke. She is trying to get in between us."

27

"There is no us."

223

Everyone turned around to find Luke, walking up the steps to the cabin with Malik beside him. He was in black shorts and Jordan PSG sneakers. He had sunglasses and a shirt on - which is a surprise, I was starting to think he was allergic to shirts.

267

Malik was bouncing a basketball. He ran towards me and threw it at me, "Catch!"

22

I couldn't. It bounced against my arm and he caught it. "Haha! You can't catch! You also snore when you sleep."

294

Luke picked the ball out of Malik's hands and held it out of reach, "We had a deal, remember? If I played ball with you, you wouldn't give her a hard time anymore."

2K

Malik must have come back early and found us on the lounge chairs. It was nice of Luke to take him out so he wouldn't wake me up.

21

"Yeah, yeah," Malik sulked, "Sorry Millie."

24

Luke gave him the ball back and Malik ran into the house, passing by Austin like a whirlwind. Austin kept his cereal bowl out of harm's way.

236

"Hey man, when did you get here?" Luke asked, surprised to see him.

11

Apparently, no one invited Austin.

201

Tamara cleared her throat, impatient at how everyone was ignoring her. She was used to being the center of attention.

149

She and Luke might be made for each other after all.

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Luke finally paid attention to her. "Did you forget something?"

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"I didn't come to see you. I came to see Millie."

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"And I still don't understand why," I replied, "Your relationship is between the two of you, not me."

248

"You've weasled your way into his life so don't pretend like you're little Miss Innocent right now. The whole camp knows you've been trying to poison his mind against me."

264

She used the word weasel, just like Stacey and her friends did at the camping trip. They must have gossiped about me and that this was part of a plan to gang up on me.

26

"I really haven't," I said, "It's true I'd like to poison him, but those reasons have nothing to do with you."

269

Luke and Austin both smiled at that.

280

Tamara got more agitated, "So you admit to trying to-"

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I interrupted her again. I was not willing to be dragged into their drama. "I'm sorry you two have broken up. It seemed like you had a... passionate relationship. If you're looking for a counselor or third party mediator-"

206

"Shut up! I want you to apologize and undo whatever you've done to make Luke want to break up with me. We were perfectly happy without you."

235

"Don't swear at her," Luke intervened, ending the argument as she immediately piped down, "Don't blame her for what happened between the two of us. This was my decision and you can yell at me, but leave her out of it."

1,1K

His tone was not the usual sarcastic, cocky one. It was serious.

23

What happened between the two of them? What did I miss?

158

I could see the tears well up in her eyes and it made me sorry for her. I knew what heartbreak felt like. I'd experienced it myself before the summer began.

163

"Counseling isn't such a bad idea," Austin said, "We could elect an ombudsman."

247

"A what?" I asked. It sounded like an SAT word.

207

"Guys, why don't you go inside," Luke told us, before facing an emotional Tamara by himself.

25

I didn't need to be told twice. I ran in there and only came back out to drag Austin inside. He was eating cereal like it was popcorn... ready for the drama.

271

While Tamara and Luke handled the heavy questions outside, I focused on what really mattered...

2

"Can you bring more fruit loops next time you come?" I asked Austin, staring at the empty box, "All our visitors keep eating my cereal."

118

And when I say our visitors, I mean Luke's. No one visited me.

28

"How about you branch out a bit, try something new?"

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"Like Special K?"

210

"Like Luke."

28K

Whaat?!

20

I wish I was drinking something just so I could spit it out. WHAAT. Since when was cereal a pseudonym for boys?

260

Austin saw the blood rush out of my head and chuckled, "Just putting it out there. I haven't seen a girl handle him like you do. You call him out on his BS. He's protective around you and mostly he's himself around you."

250

"You know what else is BS?" I answered my own question right after I asked it, "This whole conversation."

144

"You think a guy like him could never fall for a girl like you?"

264

Wow, Austin coming out with all my insecurities.

24

"I don't think that," I said. I know that.

23

"Good. Otherwise you'd be really discrediting him. Luke Dawson is a lot of things, but shallow ain't one of them."

213

A/N: Who wants a bestie like Austin?? Who already has one?

1,7K