



17 | Girls Still Have Cooties

Chapter 17: Girls Still Have Cooties

I was trapped inside Apple cabin at Camp Beaver Hill. That sounded like a barbie movie gone wrong.

Austin Taylor poured the last of my cereal into his bowl, reminding me again that we had no honey.

"I'll write you a shopping list of all the things you can bring next time you come," I offered him a spoon. Honey Nut Cheerios would be the first on that list.

He narrowed his eyes at me but accepted.

Outside the cabin, Luke was still talking to Tamara. I was so relieved to not be him right now. Before she ambushed me, I had no idea they'd broken up. When did he even have time to do it? And why?

I tried to remember what happened. We went camping, there was a bear, Luke and I had a talk at night and then I went to sleep. The next morning...

The morning of the camping trip

I bathed myself in bug spray last night. I should've worn ear plugs for the animal sounds, borrowed an adult sized sleeping bag and brought more clothes-

Oh wait, no, a bear atemy clothes. So that was unexpected.

Good times.

"Thirty minutes until we reach Camp Beaver Hill! Well done campers. Good things come to those who sweat!" Mr Woodhouse yelled out motivational quotes as we trekked through the forest, "Hustle for that muscle!"

It's like a Barry's Bootcamp session up in here.

When my body shouts stop my mind screams never...

Mr Woodhouse woke us up with a giant horn this morning. I'm not making that up. He was still afraid of the bear we'd seen yesterday and wanted to get everyone out of the forest asap. A crew of counselors stayed behind to clean up, but the rest of us were on our way back to hot showers and microwaves.

The bear may have been a blessing a er all.

"One look at you and you'd scare o any bear," Stacey muttered to me as she passed by, shoving me with the back of her bag as she went, "Human and animal repellent in one."

Ever since Luke spent time with me last evening, the girls had gotten even meaner.

It didn't seem fair. I rubbed my arm where she'd hit me, grateful that I hadn't knocked into any of my campers. When they heard about me getting lost in the forest yesterday, they insisted I walk near them.

Can you imagine how clumsy I must be if 8-year-olds are protecting me?

"Is it true Luke saved you yesterday?" Alicia asked me.

"Sort of," I answered awkwardly.

"Did you two kiss?"

"No of course not! No! What?! No!" I spluttered.

Don't 8-year-olds think girls have cooties? Is that no longer a thing? Because I'm 16 and I've barely gotten over that phase.

"I knew that," Malik answered, "Cos he kisses Tamara."

Oh wow. No one's fooling that kid.

Luke was back at the campsite with Tamara and the other "responsible" counselors who could handle carrying extra weight and making their way through the forest without adult guidance. You can see why I wouldn't make that cut.

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When we got back to the cabin, I struggled to get them to shower. I failed and let them eat out our cupboards instead. It's all about compromise... jk, I had no power with them. We had cookies and a jar of peanut butter.

The kids demolished that.

While they wreaked havoc in the kitchen, I went to take a shower myself. I folded my clothes by the bathroom sink and a \$1 bill fell out of my bra. I stared at it for a few seconds, wondering where it came from.

Without any obvious answers, I took a shower and changed into fresh clothes. I checked my phone and saw 1 message. Julia! She'd finally responded to my text from a few days ago. I went to my room to read it.

Made any friends with people your age?

I read her text and re-read it. I remembered how we used to stare outside my window at Luke Dawson as if he was a Greek god on earth. What would she say if she found out everything that has happened since?

I texted back: I saw a bear.

Random but... I wasn't quite ready to say anything yet. It didn't feel like Luke was someone I should boast about. He gets that everyday from people. I wanted to respect him for him – and not for his name.

Suddenly, I heard the front door slam shut and screams of excitement from the campers. I came out of my room and saw him at the front door, the kids swarming around him on a sugar high from all those cookies.

He had an extra glow from being under the sun all day. He swung his bag o his shoulder and looked at me. "Do they come with an o switch?"

Today

I was lost in my memory, trying to remember what I could have done to cause any waves in Tamara's perfect life. I couldn't think of anything that included her. They must have broken up back at the campsite. But why would that be my fault?

The front door opened and Luke walked in with a tired sigh. He'd just finished speaking with Tamara.

"How'd it go?" Austin asked, sliding a beer along the counter to Luke.

Luke caught it in his le hand, but didn't crack it open. "It's hard to break up when you were never really together."

"That's unfair," I said in her defense, "You were sleeping together."

Please don't ask me why I'm defending the girl who called me a whore. I just really sympathize with girls who've been mistreated by jerks.

"When we first started, she said we were just hooking up. She's going to Miami Dade in the fall and wanted to keep her options open. I agreed with that," he argued back.

"And then she changed her mind, didn't she?" Austin guessed, speaking like someone who had to go through that himself.

Why am I not surprised that a player is defending another player?

"Yeah," Luke answered. But didn't say anymore.

He didn't look happy. I could tell he didn't appreciate me siding with her.

"I can't support you on this," I told him. "She had real feelings for you and you used her. You like to play with girls. That's your thing."

Austin choked on his fruit loops.

"How do you know what my thing is?" Luke fired back, "You barely know me."

Ouch.

I can't lie. That hurt.

"It's been a week and a half," I muttered, "But I know your type."

"I didn't take you for a stereotype," Luke answered. There was a tense silence.

Austin slurped his cereal milk.

Luke looked down at his hands and said, "And I was trying to defend you by the way."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

Austin recused himself from the conversation; he was suddenly intensely interested in the kitchen tiles.

"Nothing." Luke shook his head, "Forget I said anything."

Oh no. I was not going to forget a t.h.i.n.g.

A/N: Tried a bit of time travel in this chapter lol. Hope the flashback wasn't confusing!

And thank you to @NIKIbookgram for the fun poster! Millie & Luke & the electricity in between.