

22 | Goodbye

Chapter 22: Goodbye

229

I woke up to my own sneeze. I groaned, realizing that I must have caught a cold from that impromptu midnight swim in the lake.

46

Throwing the covers off me, I got out of bed and shuffled to the kitchen for morning coffee. I paused. There was a bag of groceries on the table. And a box of Honey Nut Cheerios peeped out of the top.

173

Austin.

207

"Timer! Now!"

5

I turned around and saw Austin on the couch, surrounded by our campers. They were in the middle of a game of charades. Malik started to act something out with under 20 seconds to get it.

34

"Punching?"

2

"Exercise?"

2

They were on the edge of their seats, yelling out verbs. Malik kept repeating the same motion with his hands, shoving one hand against his clenched fist.

31

Austin yelled out, "Blow job!"

22K

"OK that's enough!" I interrupted, realizing that Austin was not an age-appropriate babysitter.

86

The kids whined, and Austin calmed them down.

3

"What was it?" he asked Malik.

2

"Pumping a tire."

50

So not a blow job then.

114

Suddenly, Luke's door opened. He walked out, holding black du el bags. They were fully packed.

57

I frowned, confused by what was happening. What did I miss? How long was I asleep?

5

"Hey," I greeted him, "What's going on?"

2

He answered with half a smile, dropping his bags by the front door, "I have my own summer camp to go to."

214

I'm sorry... what?

2

I rubbed my eyes. The events of last night had exhausted me and Luke had been through it, right alongside me. Yet here he was, looking fresh and determined.

2

"It's an exposure camp with NCAA I recruiters," Austin explained, getting off the couch and shrugging his jacket on.

38

Was he getting ready to leave? I still didn't understand anything.

4

"My brain isn't registering english, apparently. I have no idea what you're talking about."

61

"It's for basketball. I have to hit up a few college camps and an exposure camp on the east coast," Luke explained.

179

He picked up his Nike Air Max shoes by the door and threw them into his black du el bag. He ran a hand through his messy black hair.

51

"So you're leaving?" I asked.

27

I just wanted to double check.

2

Always good to double check.

25

He zipped his bag shut and stood upright. He was packed and ready to go.

5

He nodded and looked at me, somewhat sadly.

27

"I'll wait outside," Austin said, grabbing one of Luke's bags for him, "Catch you around, Millie. It's been chill."

513

The door swung shut on his way out. I stared after Austin. So that's it? I know I didn't know the guy long, but at least a hug goodbye? I

turned slowly to Luke.

33

Luke explained, "He doesn't like goodbyes."

449

A heavy silence hung in the air.

4

When I finally spoke, my voice was a lot quieter than usual. "And how are you with goodbyes?"

267

Luke looked away. The sunlight streamed in through the window behind him, with faint sounds of campers enjoying their daily activities. He stood in front of me, tall and strong. The man I had

teamed up with all summer.

41

"I can't believe I'm about to say this," I said, "but I think I'm going to miss you."

530

I sneezed.

325

He waited for me to continue.

2

"You're still a jerk and extra annoying when I haven't had my morning coffee..." I tried to find the right words, "but I had no idea that we would get along the way we did. You made my life here better. So thank you. For being patient with me."

243

I didn't know if I sounded awkward or weird or fake. I was trying to sound grateful but I'm not used to moments like this. Sensitive,

emotional moments.

88

He smiled. It was a sincere smile, with a hint of sadness. He looked so classically handsome, standing in the kitchen for the last time.

41

His lips parted and he said, "You taught me how to be a team player, Minnie."

531

I felt his blue eyes sink into me and I held his gaze.

22

That was Luke's style. Short but sweet.

58

I stepped into his arms and let them wrap around me, holding me in a safe embrace. His hands felt good on my back, as he traced along my spine and rubbed circles around my lower back. My knees weakened, enjoying every moment of his feeling.

324

He whispered into my ear, his hot breath on my skin, "I'll miss you."

4K

His breath caused stray hairs around my ear to flutter and I felt them tickle the nape of my neck. He stayed there, letting his nose brush

along my cheek.

35

"Millie," he whispered my name as if it was soothing to him.

126

Slowly, hesitantly, I raised my hands along his arms, just to feel them once. I was not as confident as he was. His hands released me.

6

"Bye."

179

I sneezed into his shoulder.

17K

**

49

A/N: Don't come at me for sending Luke away. Summer camp had to end, but the drama's nowhere near over. They are neighbors as ever.

415