

A little while ago, omgthatistrandomasked me for longer chapters. I'm delivering on that now. So get settled, grab a hot coco and some snacks and keep giving me that feedback - I try to incorporate all as I go.

Chapter 26: Leave

I stared up at Luke. The boy I lived with this summer in a small cabin by the lake.

He was sexy. I'd forgotten just how hot he made me. His steamy blue eyes contrasted against his dark hair and tanned skin. I traced his chiseled bone structure with my eyes, going all the way down to his smooth, pink lips.

He licked his bottom lip and smiled.

I let my eyes travel further down. A white shirt covered his broad shoulders. The sleeves were pushed up to his elbows, revealing his toned and strong arms. His jeans hung around his waist, secured by a leather belt, and his white shoes were unscathed.

"You ok, Minnie?"

I struggled with the two versions of him: the Luke everyone idolizes and the Luke I knew this summer.

This was Luke. Just Luke.

"Maybe she's mute," a girl said behind me.

I held onto my plate of BBQ pizza like my life depended on it. I didn't belong here.

He radiated calm. His gaze was steady and peaceful. I used to relax in it, but now that serenity was impenetrable and intimidating.

"My record's clean. I haven't run over anything since your laptop," I reported.

Did I just say that? Giving him a status report like he's a traffic controller... What was I doing?

He raised a dark eyebrow at me.

"Well done," he drawled. Sarcasm dripped off his perfect lips.

He didn't tolerate this. I could tell he was annoyed by my change in behavior. He liked it when I was myself around him. Now he could tell I was treating him differently.

He looked into my eyes and then stepped away from the doorway.

That move was a clear sign:

Leave.

**

I wanted to bury my head in my locker like an ostrich. I groaned inwardly, pulling out a textbook for my AP Comparative Government class. I kept replaying my embarrassing encounter with Luke in my mind.

Julia and I had lockers near to each other. I glanced over at her now, chatting with Cearra and Lexi. They had spent lunch together and it seemed to be going well.

"Why are you still friends with her?" Lexi asked, pointing at me in a not-so-subtle way.

Julia answered awkwardly, lowering her voice so I couldn't hear.

"Isn't she the girl Kaden dumped?" Cearra asked loudly.

Yes, that's me.

Suddenly, Khloe came running towards them, "Luke's coming!"

Lexi reacted quickly. She took off her jacket to reveal more cleavage.

The girls around us were getting excited. Apparently, last year he spotted a girl in the hallway and took her on a couple dates. She's graduated now but it was her 20 minutes of fame. Everyone wanted to be the next her.

The doors swung open and Luke stepped out. He barely noticed that all the attention was on him. He had his entourage with him and laughed at something one of them said. It was a deep, contagious sound.

I recognized his black gym bag slung across his shoulder. And I recognized Austin among the guys. It was comforting. A reminder that this was the Luke I knew. He was the same.

...He drank my coffee, I ran over his laptop. He saved me from a bear, I saved him from a gang of angry gamblers...

I'll make this right again. I can do it. He's totally approachable.

I stepped forward and waved at him.

Luke saw me and our eyes locked. I felt the rise in my chest from a quickening heartbeat. He was walking towards me...

And then he walked right past.

I looked stupid. Like a right fool. My hand slowly lowered to my side, rejected.

Khloe laughed out loud, "Someone's been dreaming too much over summer. Luke would never look twice at her."

And that made me angry. Because Luke had looked twice at me – we had matching bruises after the beach fight for God's sake! After all I'd done for him; taking care of the campers, cleaning the cabin, handling all his BS - he didn't have the decency to say hello.

Jerk.

I grabbed my textbook and slammed the locker shut.

"You're embarrassing me," Julia whispered, appearing beside me to calm me down, "Please stop."

"I was born like this."

It was an over dramatic response but at least it's paying respect to a good song #LadyGaga #bornthisway.

**

I sat in my afternoon AP Comp Gov class. I had chosen a seat towards the back, to the side, near the radiator – somewhere out of the way. Students started to file in, carefully picking their chairs for the semester.

I checked my email to see if I'd gotten any responses for the part-time jobs I'd applied for. I really wanted a gig at the Coffee Bean, but I didn't get it.

"He's here?" someone gasped. It sounded like they were talking about a prophet.

I looked up. It wasn't a prophet.

It was Luke Dawson.

Luke strolled in, 3 seconds before the final bell rang.

He was in this class?

Now if this was a cliché, he'd somehow end up sitting next to me and we'd be in an English class or somewhere where we'd read romantic novels and he'd say something deep and insightful...

Yeah. Not a cliché.

My life = Not cute.

He walked to the back, where a guy was already sitting comfortably in a chair. The teacher asked everyone to settle down. Everyone did, except Luke, who stood in front of this boy.

"Mr Dawson, would you please take a seat so that class can begin."

Luke did not say a single word. He just indicated 'mové with his head. The boy hesitated for a moment and then grabbed his things and stood up.

The teacher didn't want to interfere in whatever power move that was. He addressed the boy, "There's a seat in the front here for you, Mr Maxwell."

Everyone watched Luke sit down in his new chair and run a hand lazily through his black hair. Someone took a picture.

"This semester in comparative government, I will be taking you through the different political structures, policies and challenges that other countries face. My name is Mr Laghari and I will be your teacher on this journey," he said, beginning to write his name on the board.

I subtly glanced back at Luke. A girl was flirting with him and he couldn't understand what she was asking him for. She repeated it, bending forward to show off more of her-

"Mr Dawson, is there something you would like to share with the class?" Mr Laghari interrupted them.

Luke didn't skip a beat, already losing interest in the girl he was talking to. "I'm more concerned about your side of the classroom. Isn't that where the teaching is supposed to happen?"

The class laughed. What a jerk.

**

School ended, and I was one of the first out the door. I power walked across the premise to the bike stands. I was on a mission that I didn't see Luke swerve around students to chase after me.

"Minnie," he called out.

I kept walking.

"Millie!"

Go ahead, say my name. It won't make a difference.

"Hey, hey!" he jogged over. His hand touched my shoulder, making me stop. "What's wrong with you? I've been calling your name."

"Now you notice me? I seemed pretty invisible to you before."

"There's the real you," he remarked at my attitude, "Welcome back."

"Don't test me."

"You know I will."

I folded my arms across my chest, pushing aside the dirty thoughts racing through my mind. Test me, Luke.

"What do you want?" I demanded.

"Your number."

My arms dropped to my side and my mouth was slightly ajar. I couldn't hide my surprise.

"Give me your number," he repeated.

I watched him slide his hand into his back pocket and pull out his iPhone. He unlocked it and handed it over.

"Relax, I'm not flirting with you. You still owe me for my laptop and I'm going to cash in on it."

I stared down at it. After all we'd been through, we still hadn't exchanged numbers. I slowly dialed my digits and then saved it under my name. Truthfully, I never expected to be a number in his phone.

"I'll text you when I need something."

"I won't hold my breath," I growled and turned to face the bike stand.

He grabbed my wrist and spun me round. "What's with the attitude? We had a deal, remember?"

"Yeah well that deal didn't involve you being a jackass!"

"What are you talking about?"

I grabbed my bike and yanked it out of the stand. "You were a jerk to the teacher, a jerk to that boy in the chair you stole and a jerk to me. You ignored me when I tried to say hi so don't come over here to play nice when no one's watching."

"I didn't see you," he explained, trying to console me, "You're not exactly the type of girl I'm used to remembering."

"Is that meant to make me feel better?! You're a jackass, Luke Dawson!"

"OK, poor choice of wording," he admitted.

"Get over yourself!" I yelled and got on my bike.

And for the first time, he noticed what I was riding. A tricycle with pink ribbons flowing out of the handle bars. He stared down at it.

"Is that your bike?"

What a mood killer.

A/N: OK that was a long one! Fingers are tired. Please vote if you appreciate it!