31 | The Grotto

Picture above: me writing a chapter, but spending most of the time drinking chocolate milk (on Instagram @NatalieloKCorner)

Chapter 31: The Grotto

Lake Dawson was trying to convince me that there's a party inside Austin's cupboard.

And this is why magic never dies.

"You've lost it. I always knew this day would come, and I am here to help." I told him, generously a wing my services.

All I had to do was call in the men with white coats.

Lake shook his head, not entertaining me. "Just get in."

I stared at him like he was crazy. "Nuhuh! I mean... NO. You're not going to lock me into a f*king cupboard. It's the most childish bully move."

We nerds know how this game is played. It ain't my first rodeo.

"I'm not locking you in a cupboard, Millie." Lake sighed in disbelief that we were having this conversation, but I was already a- on my own tangent.

"Give me a stick and call me Harry Potter! I waved my hand in the air and pronounced Harry's name in a super British accent.

You know, I ain Harry Potter (well in a cupboard) under the stairs...

"Maybe if you look in the cupboard, you'll find a broomstick, Harry."

Lake played along, opening the door for me himself.

I gasped. I stared over his shoulder and double gasped. The cupboard was actually a basement door, with tile torches that lined the steps on either side, leading down into darkness. Heavy music pumped through the floorboard and voices wa-vd up towards us.

"Is this a cult?" I whispered, thinking back to the old lady that greeted us, "Was Gloria trying to fatten us up?"

Everything about her little tea sandwiches and jumping jimmy references suddenly seemed very creepy to me now.

"And she took our shoes!" I gasped, convincing myself that we were about to be taken.

Lake gave up on me and went in. I didn't even notice that I was holding onto him as he walked down the stairs ahead of me. I was gripping his broad shoulders, terrified.

He didn't say anything. The flames from the torches cast shadows on the wall behind us. He was quiet, and as I lowered my hand from his shoulder to his bicep, I felt his muscles flex under my touch. He tensed

I almost stopped on the step I was on. Did he just react to my touch?

He stopped and I felt the music vibrate through the floor. There were people down here.

"LIKE! Finally here!"

A boy with a shaved chest approached us, pointing at Lake. He had a gold, family crest signet on his ring finger. He pushed people out of his way.

Lake ignored him.

I think he expected Chad to keep moving, but the guy stopped in front of us and they fist bumped. I looked at him up close. His shaggy hair was shoulder length and he had a short bubble beard.

Lake brought the attention on me. "Have you met Millie?"

Chad looked over to me like I was an insect stuck to his foot. "What's this?"

"I don't know how to answer that." I answered, "But my name's Millie."

"I don't get it," Chad said.

"It's a simple name."

"No, I don't get it. You two. Like, why is this a thing?" he asked, pointing from Lake to me.

Neither of us responded. I don't think we knew how, we'd never rehearsed it - and luckily Chad was a bit too drunk to focus. His mind had already moved on

"Let's get you a beer." Chad suggested like it was the best idea he'd had all night, "I know you've all about the beer."

He led Lake through the grotto and I followed. The floor was wet with a shallow pool. I now understood why Gloria took our shoes. We waded through the light pool, surrounded by others splashing each other as they danced. The lighting was dim. Rocks on the ceiling were illuminated by high strung torches.

There was heating that made people strip. Music that blasted through the grotto. No food, only alcohol.

I started to sweat in my turtle neck.

"Lake!" a stunning girl called for him, as she waded towards us in a bikini and tanning.

He placed one hand so ly on her lower back and kissed her cheek. "Bianca, this is Millie. We were at summer camp together."

Lake was smooth. And polite with these girls.

"Hi." I squeaked. Bianca was beautiful and I could tell she liked Lake. Or

"First time in the grotto?" she asked, her dark hair wrapped in loose curls on the top of her head.

"I definitely didn't expect this," I admitted.

Can we talk about this for a second? Austin had a GROTTO in his damn basement. It was like the playboy mansion in here.

"Austin's parents are kinky," she laughed serenely, before focusing her attention back on him, "Luke why don't you join us. One's here too."

Before he could react, I encouraged him, "You should go! Have fun! I'll get a drink."

It was nice of Luke to invite me here, but I wasn't a part of his crew. He was introducing me to them but I could tell they weren't that interested. I didn't want to be a burden. This was already an incredible experience and I was grateful for it.

He gave me a confused look, wondering why I wanted to get away. But he didn't push me. He let me go.

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I didn't have a plan. I wasn't sure what I was meant to do. What do you do at a party when you know no one?

Any tips?

Anyone??

Everyone here was a senior at my high school. I think I was the only junior, as if that made any d- erence. Even if we were in the same year, this was a crowd I would never have met. Di- erent social circles... aka they have one.

I wandered deeper into the grotto. Aimlessly. The heavy beat of the music was amplified by the cave walls, echoing in my ear drums.

Act up, you can get snatched up.

Dirty ass nails, baby girl, you need to back up

A girl crouched against the pool and started to twerk. Her movements made the water splash. Two more girls followed. Next to them, a larger crowd had formed. A lot of people in the middle of that crew, was Austin, popping bottles and letting them spray.

"Excuse me," I squeezed through a crowd to get to the bar. I could see drinks strewn across the table, with kegs on the end, "Sorry, do you mind if I have a drink?"

They ignored me. I tried to edge in sideways.

"Sorry," I apologized when someone elbowed me, "May I get through please?" They ignored me. "I'm very sorr-"

A girl turned around and to ell, "Why are you so annoying?"

A guy turned around, "Who invited you?"

They stared at me, judging me. I felt awful. I really shouldn't have come.

This was a bad idea.

"She asked for a drink. Give her a damn drink."

Everyone stared now. Who was standing up for me? I turned around and realized that it was...

cli hanger

...

Just kidding

...

It was Jake. The transfer student from my literature class.

"You vouching for her, Jake?" a girl asked.

"Yes," he said in an obvious tone.

"Didn't you hear him?" she allowed the guy next to her, "Give her a drink."

Someone else poured me a vodka lime and handed it to Jake. "Here Jake, sorry for the wait."

Jake didn't take it. He reallywanted to prove his point. "I said, give here drink."

His eyes pointed at me, forcing the guy to address me.

The guy reluctantly turned to me and handed me the drink directly. "Here you go."

"Thanks," I said, and backed out of that crowd, with a drink in hand.

Jake followed me and I realized that he expected us to talk. I turned around to face him, though I wasn't sure what to say.

My nerves started to get the best of me but then I realized how relaxed he was.

He took a p- from his jual, exhaled smoke and o-ered it to me, "Want some?"

"I don't smoke," I said, holding my drink awkwardly.

He was in a muscle tank top, and beads of sweat from all the steam trickled over his hard body. His tattoos were more visible now.

"Aren't you hot?" he asked me.

Uh, you'rehe hot one.

His eyes trailed down my body, soaking it in. My turtle neck was wet from the humidity and my sweat. It had become see-through.

"Thank you for helping me out back there. Not many people do that for me," I said honestly.

"They should. You're a good girl," he sayed, "There aren't many of you to."

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Jake had only been at the school a couple days and he already knew more people than me. When the pool turned into a jacuzzi with jet streams and bubbles, I decided to leave.

There was a bottle for DJ. Trap music transitioned to pop and then to R&B. Old school Trey Songz came on with **Na Na.**

That's when I knew it was time to go home. Trey Songz comes on when people are about to get laid. His voice always sets the mood for foreplay.

My turtle neck was getting uncomfortable. I was wearing a cami crop top underneath. Normally I'd feel uncomfortable taking it o-, but everyone was in bikinis or bras at this point. Plus, no one would remember this tomorrow.

I stretched the turtle neck o- my skin and felt damp air replace it. My crop top was already wet.

I walked through the party, avoiding the couples making out.

I had totally lost any sense of time. The grotto was like a time warp - it sucks you in. Whatever it is, it must be late. I tried to make my way to the staircase.

I followed the tile torches like glowing orbs in the distance until I arrived and stared up at the white door. My hands stretched out on the banisters for balance and I started to walk up the stairs.

"Leaving so soon?"

It was Luke. He'd removed himself from the debauchery. Water dripped o- his hair and down his body. Flashbacks to the night at the lake.

Oh this wasn't good.

With each step towards me, I saw the lusk in his eyes. His blue eyes were dark. I had seen him like that once before...

In the lake...

I forgot all about leaving. Slowly, my hand lowered from the banister, against my forehead and I stopped moving. I was too scared to. Luke Dawson was making all the moves.

"I want to say a proper goodbye. I want to show you how I could never be embarrassed by you."

His hand touched mine, and he traced his fingers down my arm and down my side. He gazed so ly at me. I felt his finger hook onto my bra, tempting me. Before he let go. His touch sent waves of desire pulsing through me. We were both wet.

"You make me better, Minnie."

I fished to push myself against him. I restrained from ripping his shirt o-. His eyes had me hypnotized. And I was weak in his touch.

I crowd it.

Slowly, tantalizingly slowly, his finger trickled down to the side of my skirt. He pushed it up and exited his hand on my outer thigh. He lowered his lips towards mine.

And in that moment, a bottle of champagne sprayed all over us.

A/N: Hey hey, if that chapter didn't get you going, what will?? Please vote if you want more like it!

What do you think of Luke??? And their chemistry??

How about Jake?? The new boy ready to spice things up...

Should he get in the way of Millie and Luke??

If you liked the chapter, join us on Instagram:

username: NatalieloKCorner

Would love to hear from you on there!