

Broken | 31: The Last Play

Broken

31: The Last Play

My hands curl into tight fists. I really want to punch Leah's smug, annoying face. It would feel so good.

But then what if I got kicked out of the game and miss watching Mason play the rest of the game. She's not worth it. Not today.

"Seriously, Leah?" I sigh.

"Seriously, Leah." She mocks, rolling her eyes.

Skye storms over, eyes blazing, and says, "Back off, Leah."

"Oh, hey, it's the other loser-traitor," Leah says. "You two are both pathetic, I mean you can't even support your own school, you have to run off and hook up with Greendale scum."

Leah's sneer melts into a smile as she pretends to be sympathetic.

"I mean I guess I get it though, no one at Ridgewood would touch either of you two ugly bitches so you had to settle for scummy Greendale assholes who have no standards. My heart goes out to you, really."

Leah clutches her heart like she's in a cheesy soap opera. The crowd snickers at her.

"You are ridiculous." I snort, shaking my head, not believing how immature and cruel Leah is.

"She's right though, Lily," Olly says as he walks up, bumping his shoulder against mine as he joins Leah. He wraps his arm around her and kisses the top of her head.

I'm surprised they didn't start making out.

"I mean look, you had the best quarterback in the whole state and you couldn't even keep me satisfied so you *had* to settle."

I screw my face up and look to Skye to hear if she's hearing what I'm hearing, and judging by her expression, she is.

I put on a serious expression, shifting into *game mode*, just like Mason.

"But you're not playing in the state finals, in fact you got knocked out..." I draw out, pretending to count on my fingers. "That's right, you finished sixth." Oliver's face grows dark at my words, clearly pissed I'm reminding him he failed.

I raise an eyebrow and tilt my head. "And, while we're comparing, Mason isn't just better on the football field, he's a state champ in the bedroom too. I'd maybe give you a participation trophy in that department."

The crowd erupts with laughter and whistles. Phones are still out. I hope they're capturing how red Olly is turning.

"You're a fucking bitch," he spits out.

"Yeah, but at least I know my friends are actually friends." I snap back.

"And friends that actually care about her," Skye adds, glaring at him.

"Unlike you," Gemma says, suddenly appearing on my left. "Your friends only pretend to like you."

Tayla joins her on my right and continues, "You're like a souvenir, something they don't really use and only keep you around because they feel bad throwing you away." Damn, I didn't know she could be so savage!

"Yeah, well, well." He stammers over his words.

"You're pathetic and need to grow up." I state before turning on my heel.

They need to grow up and realize that this high school rivalry is stupid.

I link arms with Gemma, Tayla, and Skye, and we walk away together, heads high. People in the crowd cheer and clap as we go.

Behind us, I hear Leah yelling at Olly, her voice shrill with anger. I can't help but laugh. But I don't look back. I'm not giving them any more of my energy.

I settle into my seat as the band finishes the halftime show. My stomach twists with anxiety. Dad notices and throws his arm around my shoulders, pulling me into a hug.

“You okay, kiddo?” he asks, his voice low so only I can hear.

I nod, but it feels shaky. “I’m nervous,” I admit. “It’s a lot.”

He squeezes my shoulder. “Me too. But if there’s anyone who can pull off a come-from-behind win, it’s Mason. The kid’s got heart—and grit. He doesn’t back down.”

I lean into him, watching the team regroup on the field. “Yeah, I know.”

The first few minutes of the second half are chaotic. Mason can’t seem to get his rhythm back—he keeps missing his passes.

Then, after a whistle, one of the defenders from the other team barrels into him from the side in a nasty cheap shot. The crowd erupts in boos, and I leap to my feet in shock.

Mason stays down for a second, clutching his ribs, and when he gets up, there’s fire in his eyes. But not the good kind.

He’s hurt, and worse, he’s furious. The next time he takes the field, he’s not thinking—he’s fuming. He shouts at a ref and nearly gets into a shoving match with a linebacker.

And then, on a run he fumbles. Before anyone can react, the other team scoops it and runs it in for another touchdown.

On the sideline, Mason is a storm. He’s pacing and ranting.

He throws his helmet to the ground, eyes blazing. Liam rushes over to calm him down, but Mason shoves him away.

Not even the coach can calm him down—Mason is yelling at him. He’s seeing red. I’ve never seen him like this before.

Dad leans forward, his jaw tight. “He needs to calm down,” he mutters. “You can’t win when you’re that emotional.”

Gemma hugs her arms around herself. “Once he gets like this, it’s almost impossible to talk to him. He spirals.”

“He used to be like this a lot before Lily,” Tayla adds, her voice soft.

I don’t wait to hear anything else. I leap from the bleachers and sprint down the stairs, dodging people as I go, my heart pounding harder than it ever has.

I run until I reach the sideline, grabbing the chain-link fence and shaking it. “MASON!” I shout, but he doesn’t look. He’s still pacing, seething.

“Mason Cooper!” I yell, louder this time, and his head finally snaps in my direction.

His eyes lock with mine and I reach through the fence, curling my fingers, waiting. For a second, I think he won’t come. But then he does.

He steps closer, eyes still wild, but not quite as furious now. When our fingers link through the metal, I take a breath and say, “Look at me. Just me. Forget the crowd. Forget the scouts. Forget the coaches. Forget everything. Right now it’s just you and me.”

His breathing slows and his eyes soften.

“Whatever happens in this game, I’m here. After the whistle blows, win or lose, I’ll be waiting. I’ll still love you. Nothing will ever change that.”

He blinks slowly, the fire in his eyes finally cooling, and he nods, gripping my fingers tighter.

A small smile tugs at the corner of my mouth. “And since you’re gonna have me either way, you might as well go out there and win the fucking state championship.”

His grin returns—fierce and familiar.

“I love you,” he says.

“Of course you do,” I say.

He laughs and jogs back toward his team with renewed purpose.

Mason returns to the field like a man on fire, but laser-focused. Every throw is perfect.

He stays upright no matter how hard he gets hit. The entire Greendale team and crowd starts to believe again.

Mason marches them down the field three straight times for touchdowns, tying the game. The crowd goes wild with every score, the stadium rocking with cheers.

Tayla, Gemma, and I are absolutely losing it, jumping up and down, clutching hands, screaming our heads off with glee. I can barely hear myself think.

Dad, who started the day cool and confident, is now sweating through his shirt. His green facepaint has started to streak and smear, running down his cheeks.

I glance over and he gives me a sheepish shrug, fanning himself with a crumpled program. "I'm not nervous," he lies unconvincingly. "Just... enthusiastic."

With forty-five seconds left, Mason trots on the field with a chance to win the game.

The first few plays move them down the field, but the clock is headed for zero fast. Mason is shouting commands, hurrying everyone to the line. I can barely breathe.

Then it happens. The last play.

Mason drops back, scanning the field. His eyes dart around. His wide receivers are completely covered.

Before he can make a decision, the defense is on him. But Mason spins so fast he leaves the defender grasping at air. He pump fakes once, then takes off running.

Time expires—whatever happens now, this is the whole game.

I am holding my breath and can feel my heartbeat pounding in my ears. Everyone else must be holding their breath too, because the stadium is silent.

Mason's sisters, Skye, and even my dad are all hugging me somehow. Mason streaks by defenders down the sideline, then cuts toward the middle to avoid a tackle.

At the four-yard line, he slams into a defender head-on. The hit is brutal. Mason staggers, but doesn't go down. Another defender piles on. Still, Mason keeps pushing, driving his legs, dragging them both like they weigh nothing.

Inch by inch, he moves forward.

"GO MASON!" I yell!

With every ounce of strength he has left, Mason gives one last push and falls across the goal line.

Touchdown!

The stadium explodes with cheers. I sob. I laugh. I'm completely overwhelmed. He did it. He really did it. Mason won the goddamn state championship.

Mason is instantly mobbed by his teammates in a dog pile. They scream, tackle him, and slap his helmet. But then Mason shoves his way out of the pile, rips off his helmet, and takes off running toward the stands.

"LILY!" he yells as he climbs the fence like it's nothing. He runs up the bleachers two steps at a time.

My dad practically shoves me down the aisle as he yells, "Go kiss your man!"

Mason lifts me off the ground and spins me as his lips crash against mine. I kiss him back roughly, trying to make him feel how proud I am of him and how much I love him.

"Congratulations!" I squeal. "You played amazingly." I smile widely, lifting my head up so we're face-to-face.

"You look so good in my jersey," Mason says with a smile. "I wondered where my practice jersey went."

"Brittany stole it. She said I was cursing the team by not wearing it."

Mason's eyes are soft. "I couldn't have done this without you. When everything was falling apart out there, it was you who brought me back. You always bring me back."

I feel tears prickling behind my eyes and nod. Then I joke, "Well, clearly I have a future in football coaching."

He chuckles and then kisses me again—slower this time.

"Lily." Brittany's voice tries to interrupt, but Mason simply pulls me closer into him so I can't pull back.

"Mase!" Liam calls out.

"Ignore them," Mason mumbles against my lips.

I agree by simply pushing my lips back against his.

"Lily, Mason," my dad's voice interrupts, and this time I have to fight back my groan as I pull back.

"This is an old buddy of mine from college," Dad states, clearing his throat and gesturing to the man in a suit next to him.

"Hello." He smiles kindly at us.

Suddenly Mason jerks his body away from me and reaches his hand out to the man.

"Hello, sir, nice to meet you." He smiles as they shake hands.

"You're a great player." The man smiles, flickering his eyes to Dad.

"Thank you," Mason replies, looking between the man and Dad.

"I know this is a bit unprofessional to say this right now, but we would love to offer you a full scholarship to Ohio State."

Wait, what? This man is a scout?

"Are you serious?" Mason gapes.

"Of course! I know for a fact you're going to have a lot of offers, but just let me know if there's anything I can do to sweeten the deal." He chuckles slightly.

"Good to see you again, Lily." He nods before turning back to my dad.

"We'll have to catch up soon, Murray. I'm glad you finally got rid of the she-devil," the man jokes, making Dad roll his eyes and laugh too.

"Will do, Bruce. Just call me."

"What the fuck just happened?" Liam exclaims, shaking Mason's shoulder excitedly as soon as Bruce is out of earshot.

"I don't know!" Mason exclaims as they laugh and hug.

"I'm so confused right now," I tell Dad, who laughs at me.

"Bruce and I are old buddies, and he saw me sitting by you and called me." Dad begins to explain. "The second he found out you were dating Mason, he demanded I put in a good word for him."

He rolls his eyes, still smiling.

"You don't need to." Mason shakes his head.

"Ohio State has been his dream since freshman year," Liam enthuses, shaking Mason's shoulders again.

"I know!" I exclaim. "Mine too!" How perfect would it be if we end up at the college?

"Don't rush into anything, though," Dad says to Mason. "He wasn't kidding when he said you'd have a lot of offers."

"I won't." Mason smiles at him before sending me a wink.

"All right, well, you kids have fun. Call me if you need a ride," Dad smiles as he wraps his arm around my shoulder before he kisses the top of my head.

"Bye, Dad." I wave him off as Mason's arms slip around my waist, pulling me into him again.

His lips press into the skin right below my ear, sending the good shivers down the back of my neck.

“Come on, princess. Let’s go celebrate.”

Next Chapter

[Continue to the next chapter of Broken](#)