37 | Sportsmanship

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And just like that, Luke Dawson disappeared from cyber space. I was	5
in my bedroom, bed sheets tangled around me, my own alarm clock still asleep.	å
It was too early for this.	ď
I sighed and saved his number - I'd forgotten that he had mine. A er all the experiences we've shared together, this was the first time he's	
	ď
Romantic.	199 C
I got out of bed and changed clothes. I had to. I might be one of the first people to call Luke out on his BS, but I still owed him for that	
stupid laptop. Until I pay him back, I was sticking to our agreement.	
	143 -55
And I like to keep my promises. My car was in the driveway. Flora didn't have a chance to steal it this	55
morning, because I'd woken up before her. Correction; because Luke	
had woken me up. I drove along the empty streets. It was so early, no one in the	a
neighborhood was awake. I stopped o at The Co ee Bean. It opens	
at 6AM so I was there exactly when they opened shop. I waited for the co ee to brew and ordered a donut to keep me occupied. On the plus	
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I was munching my donut when Luke dropped his pin - which is good, since I donutknow where I was going ha, I crack myself up	
	606 0
Seriously though, I had no idea where I was going. Luke texting 'the	
courts' as a location meant nothing to me. I'm glad he finally clocked that. I typed the new address into the navigation system and drove	
towards the courts.	ag 3
It was in a rundown neighborhood on the other side of town. I parked on a side street and walked towards the courts. The boys were	
already there.	199 d
They played on asphalt with a hoop that had no backboard. It was an outdoor game, 3-on-3. Chalk on the ground outlined the dimensions.	27 7
None of the players were in uniform. I recognized Luke immediately.	a
He was in a gray sleeveless T-shirt that he was sweating through and navy shorts. He raised his hand to signal for the ball. Someone	
passed to him and he performed a sick layup.	176 2
There wasn't a big crowd. No surprise for 6AM, but it was a better	
showing than the 1 mum I was expecting. I recognized the coach's daughter (who I met at Austin's grotto), sitting next to her father. A	
few rows back was Austin, supportive as usual.	a
	đ
"Millie! Didn't realize you were on the clock," he said, surprised to see me. He was always high energy.	a ³
"Me neither. I foolishly thought Luke and I had a 9-to-5 business	
	3 3
I should've added that to the contract. The non-existing contract. "Dawson doesn't sleep," he said, just as Luke scored again from	đ°
	ď
"Nice jump shot," I admired as they dribbled the ball back to center.	a
	408
"So what's going on? Why are they playing so early?" "Oh, you know, Luke wants to go pro and his coach is pushing him.	a
That's the Coach down there," he pointed at the man I saw earlier,	
	295 C
Austin's finger swiveled to the courts but I didn't need him to point Christopher out. Christopher Hayes was the tallest guy on the	
opposing team and, when he moved, he dominated. He was going head to head with Luke the most.	41
"They're both shooting guards and they f*cking hate each other. Chris	a 5
goes to Alpine High. Their coaches both think it's a good idea for them to face each other o more regularly than high school games."	6 ²
"So that's why we're here?" I asked, yawning from the early wake up	a
call.	ď
"Yeah, for some streetball. Gets rough between the two of them sometimes, but good practice. Helps them showcase their individual	
	a
"Speaking of individuals, do you know why I'mhere?"	æ
Austin shook his head, "You're going to have to ask the man himself. He's taking a break soon."	đ
Even if he knew, Austin would never say it. Luke and Austin's	a
friendship was so tight; Austin was practically a vault.	264 C
I didn't have to wait long before the guys came to the sideline for a water break. Luke's blue eyes scanned the small crowd and landed	
on me. He waved me over.	đ
"You like my style?"	200 C
Skipping down the bleacher steps, I replied, "Wake me up any earlier and I'm throwing co ee in your face."	188 0
	ď
"First o , you've got icing on your lip."	157 C
	a
	,835 C
My face dropped. "Millie," he raised his hands, recognizing my expression, "Don't freak	đ
	å
Freak out? Freak OUT? Oh, he was about to get it.	đ
"You BETTER NOT have forced me out of bed and drive forty-five minutes to help you hook up with a girl!"	242
	a a
"You are infuriating, LUKE! I'm such a zen person without you. I'm so	
	302 268
Actually, you came along, with your car. Over my laptop."	268

	a a²
"I have a game to get back to, so we're going to have to cut your little	a 48
I breathed in. I breathed out. Zen Channel the inner zen lemur	a
(image above) . The game was starting to pick up again. They called Luke back in.	270
	303 C
"I'm always on my game," he winked, "On and o court."	aº 491
** I tried to find a store, any store, near the courts. There were a lot of	a⁴
apartment blocks and very little else. A couple convenience stores	a ²
	aı
He's really going all out for this girl. Dragging me out of bed at 5.30AM	55
to I came across a water fountain by a worn-down playground. An	a
empty swing creaked in the wind. I had an idea - and it did not involve a horror movie.	273 a
I returned to the courts with the drink in hand. The sound of sneakers skidding on tarmac and occasional cheers from the tired crowd brought me back to reality. I felt like I'd just walked through a ghost town - but, then again, I'm not used to being an early riser.	a ⁵
The girl Luke talked about was sitting right by the court. I walked	a
towards her. It was hot outside and all this exercise had made me sweat. I'm glad I couldn't smell my armpits.	
	a đ
Luke was holding the ball, about to shoot when he looked over at	.11
me. I explained to the confused girl, "I think he thinks you're thirsty. I mean, dehydrated. Not thirsty. Well, thirsty in like a liquid way but not	a
in the looking for guys-"	225 C
"Did you bring me water from the Co ee Bean?" she asked, staring at the cup.	165 d
I'll admit it's a far place to go for water. In reality, I had just rinsed my co ee cup and filled it with water from the water fountain at the playground.	a72
"Uhh, yes. It may have traces of co ee as a result but I think that's intentional. Co ee infused water."	184 d
Thwack. The basketball bounced across the court and hit the metal fence with a resounding sound. We all looked over. Christopher Hayes was glaring at Luke.	ح
	a 540
Luke calmly looked up, "Is that your excuse for how badly you're playing today?"	ď
OohkayJ slowly took my drink back. Maybe he wasn't trying to hit	886 C C C C C
The pretty girl looked scared. The coaches ran up to intervene the	a
boys before the argument turned into a fight. It didn't look like the first time this had happened. The boys were going at it and their teammates had joined in. Austin	a
was the first to jump over the crowd and throw himself into the mix. I went in too, not caring that the average height of this crew was 6'4'', and grabbed Luke by the strap of his shirt.	402
He was alarmed to see me, but before he could say anything, I dragged him out of there.	a ²
	a1
"You had me sabotage your opponent?!" I yelled. He shrugged me o him. "I was taking care of his sister."	ය් ක්
"Don't talk about my sister!" Christopher yelled, overhearing us. He was being restrained by his teammates.	ď
	a å
"Luke, I thought we were done with your basketball tricks," I reminded him of our last catastrophe at the Surfside Shack when	
he'd gotten into a fight for betting on his own games. "It's a friendly match. You should've seen what he did to me last	đ
week." "I know I don't have many friends but if you call this situation	a
friendly, then I think I'm good." "Look, Millie," he sighed, "This is the way Chris and I are. Our futures	a
	a²
"It's not what I do and I won't do this for you. I'm serious, Luke. I don't care about the deal we have if it means messing with other people. I'm done. I'll pay you back in actual money, even if it means taking double shi s at the store and being indebted to you until I'm	
	347 a
Luke's coach interrupted us, having disentangled himself from the	
	274 a
"Gladly," I snapped, "And as a coach, you should start teaching him about the ethics of sportsmanship." Luke and the Coach stared at me. Yes, I just went there.	883 0 0 0 0
"You are not impressive, Luke," I told him, "But you are right about your future. It's not only what you create now. The future you is also	a
whoyou are now."	14K 238
A/N: I legit can't get over the photo on this chapter. It's my	a
favorite thing. I feel like the meditating lemur should become a main character.	a75
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