

Football 258

Chapter 258

"Journalism is dead? WTF does that even mean? Don't just quote a random Twitter hashtag." Liv exclaimed not at all caring for May's off-handed comment. May's eyes flashed with a mix of frustration and hurt as she squared her shoulders.

"You wouldn't understand because you weren't there," May retorted, her voice tinged with bitterness as she shoved her notebook into her backpack. Her movements were sharp, almost angry, as she didn't want to stay in the room for any longer than she had to.

Emma's eyes darted nervously between May and Liv, unsure how to diffuse the rising tension. She opened her mouth to say something, but May was already standing up, her bag slung over her shoulder. "You didn't go through the harassment after the shooting, being blamed for the shooting by reporters looking clickbait after Toby shot up the school. Matter of fact you're never there!"

"Are you really mad at me for not being there when that psycho shot up the school?" Liv questioned directly getting up from her sitting posture and getting in close to May. "And what harassment are you talking about? We all got a little hounded by reporters not just you?" She defensively questioned not at all backing down from the confrontation.

Not taking her question lying down May immediately shot back with a retort. "No, I'm not mad you weren't there but whenever something happens you're nowhere to be seen. Last year when Emma broke her elbow you had a sponsorship meeting, at Rakim's 15th birthday you were at another tennis meet, when my mum was in the hospital you were nowhere to be seen,"

Her voice trembled with emotion, her frustration bubbling to the surface as she continued to speak. "You're always so busy with your tennis, Liv. And I get it, you're talented, you've got a future, but

sometimes it feels like that's all you care about. You say we're best friends, but half the time, you're not even around when we need you."

Liv's face flushed, a mix of anger and guilt battling within her. "That's not fair, May. You know how much I have on my plate! Tennis is my future, my career. It's not like I can just drop everything whenever—"

"That's exactly the problem!" May interrupted, her eyes blazing. "We're supposed to be friends, but whenever your mum calls you're gone and it's always for a good excuse so it's not like we can even be mad at you. You are never there when I need you none of you are and now you're judging me for wanting to do something different with my life."

The room fell into an uneasy silence, the tension thick enough to cut through. Emma, still sitting on the carpet, watched her two best friends with wide eyes, her heart racing. She felt caught in the middle of a storm she didn't know how to calm. Liv glanced her way to see if she thought the same as May but her inability to keep eye contact told her all she needed to know.

"You think so too don't you?" She questioned her wanting to hear a clear answer from her. "We get that you're busy, plus you work really hard so we get it but on half our group trips you have to back out last minute," Emma responded causing another bout of tension to decent between them.

Sensing the tension reaching its peak, Emma finally spoke up again. "Hey, hey, guys, can we please take a step back?" she said, her tone pleading as she stood up between them, trying to create some physical space. "We've been through so much together, and the last thing we need is to tear each other apart now."

Liv crossed her arms, her expression hardening. "I'm so sorry that I don't feel like going to stupid parties with you or getting into a dumb popularity contest when I've got better things to do." She retorted,

"Like last summer you spent it at different parties up and down festivals not bothering to meet us until the start of the school year,"

May's eyes narrowed as Liv's words hit home. "You think I was partying all summer?" She questioned getting right into her face, "That's just what I told you all because I didn't feel like explaining that I spent two months in rehab." she exclaimed with tears in her eyes barely able to maintain eye contact with Liv.

Liv's face dropped as if all the anger drained from her in an instant. "Rehab?" she echoed, her voice barely above a whisper. The room went still as the revelation hung in the air like a heavy fog, suffocating the tension but leaving a thick cloud of disbelief and confusion.

May wiped a tear from the corner of her eye, her earlier bravado crumbling. "What no smart comment now?" She questioned regaining her earlier anger that was fueling this confrontation. "You have your tennis and Emma has her dancing, but what do I have? Sure, I'm popular, but you know what? It gets lonely, always having to be perfect."

"What the heck does that have to do with you being in rehab over the summer," Liv questioned with a much softer tone seeing her friend in a totally different light. To her, May had always been that friend her parents warned her about, don't do drugs, don't drink, stay away from boys. May seemed to always find some way to find herself embroiled in the mix with all 3 of those things.

Despite never having a boyfriend she had fun flirting with a few and teasing the ones who thought themselves to be players. However, as she reflected on her friend's constant cheerfulness and their lack of meaningful conversations, she couldn't ignore the growing concern. "Why didn't you tell us you were struggling, May?" Emma finally asked, unable to stay silent any longer while witnessing the argument between her friends.

Looking at Emma's genuinely worried face, May's frustration began to ebb, and she decided to share her feelings. "You all always had other things going on. It was manageable when Jenna was still around, but after she left, I found myself going out alone more often. I started drinking a bit too much-just trying to feel something because I felt so numb. Things got worse at a party when some guy slipped something into my drink."

"Don't worry he didn't do anything, Rakim and Max showed up at that party and he took me home after I passed out." She quickly explained before Emma and Liv exchanged worried glances, their earlier animosity replaced by genuine concern. The weight of May's confession hung heavily in the room as no one knew what to say for a moment.

Liv took a deep breath, her voice soft but filled with regret. "May, I'm so sorry. I had no idea you were going through all of that." her apology hung in the air for a moment but no one reacted. "I'm sorry too, I didn't know you were struggling so bad, my brother told me you looked sad but I thought it was just him being him, making off-handed comments." Emma chimed indirectly pulling the two into a hug no longer willing to watch the two argue over something so dumb.

May hesitated for a moment, then accepted Emma and Liv's embrace, the warmth of their hug. She didn't quite understand where the anger that caused her to explode came from but right now she felt much lighter. Her shoulders relaxed, and the tears that had been threatening to spill finally came, cascading down her cheeks as she clung to her friends.

"I was tired of pretending everything was okay and everything I was doing to stop feeling numb, and what happened at the party was the wake-up call I needed," she told them before proceeding to explain how she woke up the next morning in Rakim's bed as he had sneaked her back. The boy had spent the night sleeping on the floor before proceeding to scold her the moment he awoke forcing her to face her father.

That's how she ended up spending 2 months of her summer getting clean and working on herself at a rehab retreat. It looked like she spent the summer at a spa getting pampered but it was far from that as she was emotionally challenged every step of the way. By the time she finished her story, she felt as if a

weight had been lifted off her chest. Emma and Liv sat in stunned silence, absorbing everything May had just shared.