

CHAPTER 4

ONE DAY BEFORE THE KIDNAPPING

I wake with a start to the sound of my phone ringing. “Hello?” I push myself against the headboard, noticing that the sky remains dark outside my window.

“Kate,” the voice of my boss, Charlie, from TRP Sports cuts through the haze. “Are you awake,” he says, not asks. Knowing perfectly well that I’m not.

“Does it matter?” I snap, not responsible for pre-coffee behavior.

“I waited until six to call. There’s been some unexpected changes with your show,” Charlie starts as I slide out of bed and shuffle downstairs.

“I’m listening—”

“We need to move your tennis story up to this Sunday.”

“This Sunday?” I say, adrenaline ramping up. “That’s a whole week earlier. Jeez, Charlie. Why? That’s going to be a tough turnaround. I’ll barely be done with the interviews.”

“A combination of things—one concerning your cohost,” he says, letting that sit in the air. My cohost, also known as my ex-boyfriend David Lopez, has been growing more and more hostile. Not just to me but to Charlie and the TRP staff in general. “He’s not going to be ready with his story.”

A spite delay, I can't help thinking. "You said a combination of reasons," I say, turning the coffee maker on.

"The new bean counters. They're micromanaging the hell out of me and think it would be better to have the tennis piece during the first week of the US Open."

The bean counters descended on TRP Sports and the rest of NetWorld Media last year, right after the chair of the corporation and his son landed in federal prison. Largely a result of my investigation. The unintended consequence of the arrests is that our station is up for sale, and the new board of directors wants to cut budgets to make TRP Sports more appealing to buyers.

"If I try to argue with them?" I ask, watching the coffee drip into the carafe.

"Wouldn't matter," Charlie replies. "See how much you get done, and we'll circle back in a few days. Okay?" he asks but hangs up before I can even respond.

That's an empty offer. I down my coffee and get dressed. No choice but to power through with some long days and, hopefully, productive interviews.

CHAPTER 5

Glenport is technically part of Long Island's Gold Coast, but the glaring exception. The idle rich settled to the east and west of this town, leaving Glenport's rocky beaches and swampy wetlands to the working class.

I drive past abandoned storefronts and modest homes, slowing down to turn into an industrial park with a stone and granite yard to the right and a storage facility to the left. The tennis center sits straight ahead, a bare-bones concrete building, with a giant domed roof.

An arch of blue and green balloons swings softly in the breeze over a platform facing fifty folding chairs. I get out of my car, then walk the parking lot in search of Bill and his van. I don't spot him but see Lucy sitting in the driver's seat of a black SUV idling in the front row.

I knock on the passenger window and hop out of the way as the door opens and Nico steps out. His hair wet and pulled back in a ponytail. "Good morning, Kate Green," he says with a little bow. "How exciting for Lucy that she gets to return home for this reunion. What a lovely little facility."

I glance at Lucy to see if she notices Nico's tone, but she either doesn't or doesn't care. He excuses himself and heads toward the activity, saying he wants to make sure everything is in place for his wife.

"I thought most players don't like driving during tournaments," I say, making myself at home in her passenger seat, the smell of leather and lemon strong inside the car.

“I’m not like most,” she snaps, then straightens her back and sighs. “Driving helps me clear my mind.”

“I get that,” I say, also a fan of driving my little BMW convertible around. I take out my phone and text Bill to see how far away he is. Even though the ceremony will only be a small part of our story, I’d still like to get the video. Bill responds he’s almost here. “**Traffic!**”

“How does it feel returning home?” I ask Lucy, noting her hands clenched around the steering wheel, knuckles white.

“My brother would be mad if he knew you were talking to me without him.” She turns to me, eyebrow raised.

“But the whole point of this story is to give you the chance to open up. Something Conrad said you wanted to do,” I reply, knowing I won’t have an extra week to *charm* her into sharing.

Outside, a group of people unravel a vinyl sign welcoming Lucy home. She presses her lips together but doesn’t explain why she’s agitated. Something I will push her about later when the camera is rolling. What about home makes her uncomfortable? And it’s not like I’m trying to be salacious. Conrad came to me saying Lucy wanted to do this no-holds-barred interview to, in his words, *bare her soul*.

In the meantime, there’s no reason to delve without the camera going, so I sit in silence as more cars pull into the lot, including a bus with children dressed in bright-yellow **Lucy Bosco Tennis Academy** T-shirts, some down to their knees.

“Cute kids,” I remark.

She turns to me, voice low, “Do you know why Conrad thought you’d be trustworthy over other reporters?”

“You didn’t help him decide?” I ask.

“I was busy,” she says in her matter-of-fact *bordering on insulting* tone.

“Maybe because I’m a fellow athlete,” I suggest. “Or because I know how harmful inaccurate coverage can be. You probably are aware of the fact that I’ve had my own run-ins with the press.”

“You have?” She releases the steering wheel, turning to me.

Close Call

I don't know whether to feel offended by Lucy's ignorance or envious of her blinders. I tell her about the gotcha video from two years ago that showed me cursing out an NBA player. "He deserved it," I explain. "But only part of the video got caught on tape."

"How did you redeem yourself?" she asks with genuine interest.

"I nearly died trying to catch a killer. In the end, that became the bigger story." In front of us, the children pour into the seats in front of the stage, their giggles reaching the car. "I didn't force you into this story. You came to me," I remind her.

"Technically my brother did," Lucy says, more to herself than me.

"I promise to be fair. I'm just here to tell your story."

"Mine and Brynn Cole's." She looks at me with a smirk.

I want to ask Lucy about Brynn, specifically Brynn's comment last night where Brynn compared herself to a *young* Lucy. But I want that on camera and on the record.

Lucy returns to surveying the area as a limo pulls up and a woman emerges from the back seat. Lucy's body stiffens as she watches the thin, small woman, who looks like she's playing dress-up in a baggy suit jacket and pointed heels.

"Is there a problem?" I ask Lucy.

"Would you excuse me for a second," she says. I can take a hint and step outside into the hot, humid air. As soon as my door shuts, Lucy picks up her phone and turns her back to me. A phone rings about ten feet in front, and I see Conrad answer. He's too far away for me to hear what he's saying, but his brows are knit in frustration.