

## DELETED SCENE - Soccer Practice

Erin & Rosie

### CHAPTER 8

#### Kick Em When They're Down

When I got to soccer practice, Rosie Velarde was there, warming up with Hannah, a midfielder like me.

“What are you doing here?” I asked her, too surprised to be shy.

“I’m on your team.

“What is she doing here?” I asked Coach Lynn, taking a swig from my water bottle.

“I’ve been trying to get her to come back for years,” Coach Lynn said, smiling. “She finally agreed.” She patted my shoulder. “Get in there and show her your stuff.”

Dropping my water bottle on the sidelines, I tossed my ball ahead of me on the grass.

“Jan!” I shouted, kicking a perfect pass to her. Coach started calling out instructions, including telling me to pass to Rosie. But I pretended I hadn’t heard and kept kicking the ball to Jan.

“Erin, I’m open.” I looked right at Rosie, who was waving her arms at me. Without taking my eyes from her, I side-kicked to Jan, who nearly got it but was beat by two defenders who were closer.

Rosie ran over, her face red. “Why didn’t you pass to me?”

I shrugged. “I just call them like I see them.” Turning, I jogged to get in position. A hand grabbed my shoulder.

“What’s your problem?” Rosie was in my face. I’d never had Rosie in my face before. I’d seen her get in other people’s face and found that really interesting. But I didn’t find this interesting at all. I stepped back.

“Nothing,” I said.

“Then why won’t you pass to me?”

“I think I already answered that question.”

“If you’re calling them like you see them, then you’d better get your eyes checked, chica.”

Rosie jogged back to her position, shaking her head. I could feel the rest of the team’s eyes on me. Deja vu. Well, if she thought she could boss me around, she could just forget it. I got the ball again and again shot it to Jan, even though she had two girls covering her. One of them got it and headed off toward the goal.

“Erin!” Coach motioned me over to the sidelines. “Keep scrimmaging, girls,” she called over her shoulder as I jogged over. “What’s going on?” I stood in front of her, arms crossed over my chest, eyes averted.

“Nothing.”

“We’re a team,” she said. “We can’t win if we don’t help each other.” She stared at me. “Do you have a problem with Rosie?”

“Who?” I said.

Coach Lynn sighed. “Look, whatever’s going on between the two of you, I suggest you leave it on the sidelines. We have games to win.”

“Fine,” I said. “I’ll pass to her.” So I did. Whenever I got the ball. Even if another player was closer.

Coach yanked me for the remainder of practice. “Keep it up, Erin” she said, as I plopped down on the grass. “You’ll be sitting on the sidelines next Saturday.”

I couldn’t believe she’d bench me for our first game. I’m one of our best players. “And Rosie missed three easy goals today. When I pointed this out to Coach, she frowned and said, “Some people are trying to play under extreme pressure, pressure from teammates that shouldn’t be there.” She raised an eyebrow at me.

“What about my mistakes?” I asked her. “Why aren’t those okay?”

“You’re deliberately making errors,” Coach said. “And you’re only making yourself look foolish.”

Coach Lynn used to be my favorite grown-up but not anymore.

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“Taking a break?” I was still on the sidelines, cooling my size 10s when my mom and Chris showed up.

“Yeah,” I said.

“Who’s that new girl on your team?” Chris pointed right at Rosie.

“Put your finger down,” I said. “She’s just a new forward.”

“She’s a hot babe.”

“What?” I couldn’t believe he said “hot babe.” “I told you he’s watching way too much MTV, Mom.”

“Isn’t that Rosie Velarde?” Mom shaded her eyes against the late afternoon sun. “Doesn’t she play for the Eels?”

“Not anymore,” I said. “Now she’s here to wreak havoc on my team.”

Mom chuckled. “Wreak havoc? Oh, honey, don’t be so dramatic.” She looked back at the field. “You used to be friends with her. I remember. Whatever happened?”

“We were practically babies, Mom. You’re not really friends when you’re four and five.” That wasn’t really true. We were still friends when we were older but it seemed like a long time ago.

“Hmmm.” Mom was still watching Rosie. “She’s always been a great player. Still is.” She glanced at me. “I would think you’d be thrilled to have her on your team.”

“Thrilled,” I said.

“I’m going to say hello,” Mom said, ignoring the sarcasm in my voice. “I haven’t seen her folks in ages.”

“Mom,” I groaned. “I have homework.”

“It’ll just take a minute.”

“Let her say hello,” Chris said, his eyes on Rosie.

“Puh-lease,” I said. “Get your tongue up off the field.” I shook my head. I thought boys didn’t notice girls until they were way past puberty. Chris was only ten. I followed his gaze. I’d never really noticed Rosie’s looks. Maybe because I was paying more attention to what she said and did. Whatever it was, it was always interesting. Well, used to be. Miss I-Just-Call-Them-Like-I-See-Them was quickly moving herself into the Snot Zone with Serena Poopendena.

“She’s definitely hot,” Chris said, nodding his head.

“She’s been running around the soccer field for an hour and a half,” I said. “Of course she’s hot.”

“I didn’t mean-”

“I know what you meant,” I said, cutting him off. “But you’re only ten. You should be farting or climbing a tree or something.”

“Shut up. Here she comes.”

I glanced over, watching my mom walk toward Rosie with a big smile on her face. Rosie looked good in an athletic, Mia Hamm sort of way. I dropped to one knee and retied my shoe, even though it didn’t need it. I brushed my fingers over my cleats. I liked them. They were black and made my feet look smaller.

“See you next practice,” Rosie called to me before walking away. I scowled. She was just saying that for my mom’s benefit. Tomorrow she’d be back to acting like I didn’t exist, except to pass her the ball.

“Let’s go,” I said, snatching up my ball and water bottle.

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I couldn’t sleep that night. I kept thinking about what Mom had said about Rosie and I being friends. As I rolled over on my left side for the tenth time, an old memory bounced into my head. We were in second grade. John Martin was teasing me about my feet and Rosie hit him over the head with her lunchbox. It was soft-sided, but she had brought a Thermos of soup so there was a sharp clang when it made contact with his head. He yowled and Rosie and I laughed. I was so grateful to her that day.

Just before I fell asleep, Mom’s question about my friendship with Rosie planted itself in my brain: Whatever happened?