

Chapter Three

On Thursday night, I showed up early because I love playing football. It's one sport I always look forward to playing. I played in college, but I injured my shoulder, and that was the end of football for me. I guess it wasn't meant to be. What I loved about Lovell Park was that it had a real football field set up. It makes the game feel real when we play. The only thing we were missing was the uniform, but we managed. Everyone was there except for Diego and Ray who were missing. Like I said before, we usually have about fifteen minutes of sharing the word and praying before we would start playing. Ray happened to show up right after Roger ended the prayer, and he said, "Guys, sorry I'm late. I had to pick up my new friend Dion. I was telling him about our group, and he wanted to come."

We all greeted Dion and said, "Welcome!"

"Thanks for having me," he replied. Roger turned his attention to me and asked, "Is Diego coming Mike?"

"He's supposed to be here, let me call him," I replied. The minute I was about to dial Diego's number, he pulled into the parking lot.

"Hey, there he is, he just pulled in," Calvin said pointing in Diego's direction. I hung up the phone as Diego walked toward us. Calvin said, "What's up, man? I thought you bailed out on us."

"Hell, Nah," Diego replied.

"What's up, man?" Roger said as he greeted him with a hug. After Roger released him, he said to the rest of us, "What's up, guys?"

"Hey man, you're late," I said to him.

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"No, I'm not! Y'all weren't even ready to play," he replied before turning his attention to Jeremy and saying, "What's up, Jeremy?"

"What's up," Jeremy replied.

Diego said, "I'm sorry about the other day. No hard feelings."

"No hard feelings," Jeremy replied.

"Good! Just do me one favor, keep your distance," Diego said. When I heard him say that to Jeremy, I just shook my head. I'm glad Jeremy didn't say anything back to him. We started playing, and Diego on the first drive scored a touchdown after I passed the ball to him. Oh, I forgot to mention that I always play quarterback. Diego celebrated after scoring the touchdown, and he ran toward Jeremy shouting, "Who's your daddy, boy?" When I saw him go to Jeremy's face, I was holding my breath hoping he wouldn't start a fight with him. Thankfully, Jeremy walked away from him. Daniel who goes by D was the quarterback for Jeremy's team and had the ball. He passed the ball to Jeremy who seemed to be open at the time, and Diego tackled him causing him to fumble the ball. Instead of Diego picking up the ball, he stood over Jeremy who was on the ground, and shouted, "Get your ass up, pussy!"

Roger hurried and picked up the ball before Ray grabbed hold of it. Diego with his ego, wouldn't back off from Jeremy. I knew soon or later they will start fighting, but there was nothing I could do about it. So, after the ball was snapped, I was looking to pass the ball to one of my guys, but they were all covered. Hence, I ran with the ball and made the first down. After we all got to the huddle, as soon as the ball was snapped, I saw that Diego was open and quickly passed the ball to him. The minute Diego jumped to catch the ball, we saw Jeremy come out of nowhere and tackled Diego while he was in the air. Diego didn't get a chance to touch the ball, and he went down to the ground with Jeremy landed on top of him. I knew this was going to escalate. We all ran towards them in case they decided to fight, and

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by the time we reached them Jeremy was already on his feet standing over Diego who was still lying on the ground looking dazed. Jeremy shouted, "Who's the pussy now, bitch!"

We were shocked after his outburst, and none of us saw that one coming. Ray hurriedly pulled Jeremy away, while we checked on Diego because he was still lying on the ground. He looked a little disoriented.

"Dude, are you all right," Roger asked.

"Yeah, I'm all right," Diego replied groaning. D had a smirk on his face and said, "Are you sure man because you look lost?"

Some of the guys were laughing at Diego, but I didn't find it funny because he looked like he was hurt. Samson turned his attention to Jeremy and said, "Shoot, I'm glad you're on my team, man."

I helped Diego up, and said, "You sure you're all right, man?"

"Yeah, I'm fine," he replied irritably. I walked up to Jeremy who was standing feet away with some of his teammates, and said, "Do me a favor, tune the profanity down, we have children here, all right." I went back to my guys and said, "Let's win this game guys!" We got in the huddle, and as soon as the ball was snapped, I quickly passed the ball to Jay, and he got to the goal line. After the ball was snapped again, I was going to pass the ball to Diego, but changed my mind, and passed it to Roger. He caught the ball and dived for the touchdown.

"Whoo-hoo! Yes! Yes! C'mon!" I exclaimed, and we all ran to Roger to celebrate. Calvin played soccer in the past, we used him as our kicker. He kicked the ball, and Mason caught it. He ran about ten yards before Travon tackled him. So, we got in the huddle again, and I had Tyler cover Jeremy because I didn't want Diego to cover him. As soon as D snapped the ball, it appeared that Diego was eyeing Jeremy like a hawk. Once D passed the ball to Jeremy, Diego came flying out of nowhere tackling him down to the

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ground. You should have seen the look on his face as he stared Jeremy down. If I didn't know Diego, I would say they were sleeping with the same woman. I mean, the game was fun, but the two of them constantly at each other's throats took the joy out of it. Once we got in the huddle again, D did a pump fake to Jeremy but passed it to Samson. Diego again went after Jeremy and purposely elbowed him knocking him to the ground. Jeremy got up, and angrily tackled Diego to the ground. The guys and I ran to pull them apart, and as I was holding Jeremy back, Diego angrily launched at Jeremy pushing both of us to the ground. Jeremy landed on top of me, and I angrily pushed him off me. I don't know what got into me, but the next thing I knew, I got up, and grabbed Diego by his T-shirt collar yelling, "What the hell is wrong with you?"

There was a sudden silence, and I could feel that all eyes were on me because they'd never seen me so angry before. Even Diego looked shocked standing there as if he lost words. After I let go of him, I glanced at Jeremy pointing at him angrily before turning my attention to Diego and saying, "You two are getting on my last nerve! You guys can either straighten out your problems or get off the field because we're not going to have this every freaking game!"

Jay said, "Yeah, you guys acting like you're dating the same girl."

Diego smirked and said, "I doubt that!"

"Shut your mouth, Diego!" I said angrily.

Roger said, "You two need to act like grown men."

Jay asked, "What's it going to be guys?"

Calvin said, "It's either you straighten out your issues now or you're both suspended from playing."

Diego rolled his eyes and said, "I already apologized. I'm not doing it again."

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"You started, you purposely elbowed me," Jeremy said. "You purposely elbowed me," Diego mimicked him rolling his eyes at Jeremy, and he said, "You damn sissy!"

"You weren't complaining last night," Jeremy replied.

"Ooooh snap," D said laughing aloud.

Diego said, "What the hell did you just say?" He was about to walk up to Jeremy, and Roger stopped him and said, "Boy, don't make me beat the crap out the both of you."

"I say we suspend both of them from the game," Calvin exclaimed. After an awkward silence, Jeremy said, "I'm sorry. It will never happen again."

"It better not," I replied still looking angry before turning my attention to Diego and asking, "What about you?"

"Apology accepted," Diego replied.

Jay said, "Aren't you going to apologize to him?"

Diego said under his breath, "I'm sorry."

Jeremy said, "Apology accepted."

I shook my head and said, "Unbelievable."

We finished the game that night and the score was 21-17. Seeing Diego acting like that was very disappointing. I'm mentoring three young men who didn't need to see all this nonsense going on. It frustrated me, but at the end of the day, we are all grown men. He was making my job harder with the young men, but thank goodness they weren't following Diego's cockiness. So, after the game, we all sat on the field as Roger said a few words and prayed before we went home.

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"Great game guys," I said.

Jay said, "Yes, I'll see you suckers next week for some more ass-whooping."

"Hey, Jeremy, if you want, you can join us tomorrow for happy hour," Calvin said. I noticed Jeremy was looking at me as if he was looking for my approval, and I turned my head the other way. I asked Tyler to drop Travon home because I had to meet with my Meghan. I rushed home, took a quick shower, and drove to Meghan's. It is so weird that for the past few days, someone kept calling my phone from a block number. Every time I answered the phone, they hung up. I thought it was some children playing around. I used to do the same thing when I was younger. I didn't take it seriously, but the weirdest thing was, I could hear the person on the other end breathing heavily, and making sounds as if he or she was having an orgasm. On my way to Meghan that night, my phone was ringing. I thought it was Meghan calling me. I picked it up, but I didn't say anything, and the person hung up. My phone rang again, I ignored it. I parked my car and went up to Meghan's door, and knocked. I could hear Meghan shouting from behind the door asking, "Who is it?"

"It's me, babe," I replied. Meghan opened the door with a big smile on her face and said, "Hi, baby."

"Hi, can I come in?"

"I will only let you in if you're going to help me with my work."

I thought, "Work? That's not what I came here for," I faked a smile and curiously asked, "What kind of work?"

"My classwork for tomorrow," she replied giggling.

"What's in it for me?"

"What would you like?"

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“Are you sure you can give me what I want?”

“You want to bet on that?”

“I’m all yours,” I said before she opened the door wider so I could come in as I greeted her with a kiss. I don’t know what I was thinking about agreeing to help her with classwork. I ended up staying up all night helping her with her research paper. My eyes were getting tired from staring at the computer for too long. I leaned back for a minute rubbing my eyes which were burning with sleep. I looked at my phone, and it was past midnight. I looked at Meghan, and she looked like she could barely keep her eyes open. I guess she sensed that I was looking at her, she turned her attention to me and said, “I’m almost done, babe.”

“Yeah, I have to use the restroom,” I said before getting up and walking away. I washed my face while I was in the bathroom so I could stay awake. I went back and sat down next to her, and she closed the laptop, and I asked, “Are you done?”

“No, I’m going to finish it in the morning before class. So, what did you want me to do for you? I’m all yours now.”

I know she was trying to keep her word. She looked beat with exhaustion. I leaned over, kissed her, and said, “Just go to bed babe, you look exhausted.”

“Please, don’t leave. Can you stay with me tonight,” she said with her bottom lip sticking out. She always gets to me when she gives me I need you that look. I thought about it for a few seconds, it was already late to drive back, and I said, “Okay.”

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