

WATCH FROM THE SIDELINES...
OR GET BACK IN THE GAME

THE SET

Piece

CATHERINE LANE



* * *

The clash of metal against metal woke her up with a start.

Diego's back? A glance at her clock told her that he would be in pre-game warm-ups right about now on the East Coast. So who was downstairs? She dropped her head back into the pillow only to realize that whoever it was had access to the house.

She flung back the bedclothes, startling Dulce, who was curled around her feet. Pulling her hair hastily into a ponytail and not bothering to change out of her skimpy camisole and silk shorts, she dashed downstairs and peered through the frosted glass door of the gym.

Rob, Diego's trainer, sat at the leg press machine, sliding two huge weights up and down the rack. He let the last one go and the weights crashed to the bottom of the rack. Amy slid back into the hallway so he couldn't see her.

Her mind was spinning. Rob works out here? When Diego is gone? She had seen how he had looked at Diego. Was that motive enough to blackmail the man? He certainly had opportunity, but did he have access to the rest of the house?

The questions crashed around in her mind. The door opened and Rob strode out. She headed toward the stairway to her apartment. If he caught her, she could say she was just going upstairs. The footsteps, however, faded in the opposite direction.

This was her opportunity to play Nancy Drew. She darted inside the gym to see if he had left anything incriminating.

Apart from his gym bag the room was empty, although it held the sour odor of sweat. There was nothing, and then she heard his footsteps coming back. She could stay put, dream up yet another lie and maybe give the game away. Or...she spun on her heel, looking for a way out.

At the far end of the room was another door. She had no idea where it led to, but she raced toward it anyway. She opened it and ducked into a closet just as Rob stepped through the door at the other end. She was in total darkness. Hands grabbed her, pulling her farther back into the tiny room. She stumbled over something that felt like a vacuum cleaner and fell backwards into a warm body. A woman's body. Breasts pushed against her back as she was caught and set upright.

"Shush." A hand clamped over her mouth. "Be quiet," someone whispered in her ear.

Amy nodded, and the hand fell away to rest lightly on her hip. Her eyes adjusted to the dim light that seeped under the door, not that it helped her know who was behind her. She drew on her other senses for that. The height, the lean muscles, even the citrus shampoo smell gave away her captor's identity. Or maybe it was the hand resting on her hip exactly as it had done at Footgolf. This was Casey.

What was she doing here? Hiding? Or something much worse? Amy's stomach knotted. She hated looking at everyone in the household with new

suspicion. But anyone of them could be the culprit. She would have to wait for her answers until Rob cleared out. All they could do now was hold out in this tiny closet, which was not big enough for two.

Despite knowing better, she let her body sink back, just a little. Casey's breasts pressed fully into her back and warm breath danced delicately across the nape of her neck. Casey's shampoo smelled light and fruity with something much more spicy and organic underneath. Amy slowly registered first one place where they touched, and then another. Casey's fingers resting gently on her hip, her thigh braced against Amy's, her cheek against Amy's hair. It was delicious. Amy drank it all in and hoped that Rob's session lasted for another two hours.

Sadly, a bag zippering shut announced Rob's imminent departure. Amy registered the noises as he made his way out of the gym.

"He's gone," Casey whispered, and pushed Amy gently away. "Time to go."

Time for answers. Instead of walking out, Amy spun around in the closet creating a little space between them and bumped the door open with her hip, just enough to see Casey's face clearly. It was tantalizingly close. So close she could feel the warm breath on her cheek. She could see her lips trembling, and then she found Casey's eyes. Amy took a sharp intake of breath. Casey's eyes were dark and smoldering. The chill had completely melted away leaving a heat that could lure a girl into a thousand unthinkable things.

Suddenly, Casey's lips were on hers. Or was it the other way around? She couldn't think. Their lips came together in a hard and passionate kiss. Casey's mouth moved exquisitely over hers, taking full possession. Amy staggered, legs trembling, as the force of the kiss took her by surprise. No fantasy had prepared her for this. She had to take a step away from Casey to steady herself.

Casey looked at her questioningly but didn't say a word, her jaw clenched as if she were holding herself back. And then, losing the battle, her arms reached out for Amy's hips and dragged her back into the embrace. Heat rushed through Amy. Teeth nipped gently at her lips, and Casey's caressing tongue soothed the tingling. Desire exploded in Amy's chest.

And then nothing.

Only overwhelming emptiness as Casey broke away and ran from the storage room.

Amy was stunned. Her lips were bruised, and her whole body still shivered from the embrace. She could feel the pressure of Casey's mouth. The real thing blew her fantasies out of the water.

She knew what she should do. She had to let this moment go. She should chase after Rob and find some way to salvage her mission. She should step back, mentally and physically, from a very awkward situation with Casey. Instead, she rushed to the kitchen.

"Have you see Casey?" she asked Tammy.

"Yes. She just ran out the back. What's going on?"

“Nothing.” Amy quickly slid past Tammy, heading directly for the pool office. One glance at Tammy’s face told her that the woman wasn’t buying “nothing” as an answer. Shit. Amy added Tammy to the list of people and things that she would have to deal with later.

She raced to the office and froze. Casey was simultaneously pulling papers from her desk drawer, grabbing her computer, and shoving everything into a large messenger bag sitting on the chair behind her.

“What are you doing? Leaving?” Amy stepped into the office.

Casey looked up and blushed from the roots of her hair all the way down her throat.

“Yeah. I’ll text Diego and tell him.”

“As in quitting?” Amy couldn’t believe it.

Casey dropped her gaze, and if it were possible turned a deeper shade of red. “I am so sorry.”

“I know. I shouldn’t have—” *Wait. Is she apologizing?* Confusion played over Amy’s face. “Sorry for what?”

A moment of silence hung between them. Something close to annoyance flitted through Casey’s eyes, but was quickly replaced by a look of repentance. “For what happened in the gym. I don’t know what came over me. You were just so close...And I had been...”

Amy said nothing as the shock of what Casey was implying washed over her. *I can’t be this dense, Can I? Did Casey want that as much as I did?*

“Look,” Casey continued, “I know you and Diego are practically married.” She shoved a small purple

notebook into the messenger bag and slid the drawer shut with a decisive click. "For Christ's sake, you told me he was the one the other night." She slung the bag over her shoulder and took two steps into the middle of the room facing Amy. "But back there, in the gym, when I was spying on Rob. You were so close. And, out by the pool the other day, I thought you were sending me signals...or trying to tell me something." Casey noticed the shock on Amy's face and groaned in misery. "Forget it. I don't know what I thought..."

Yes! Casey had been thinking about her too. Amy stared, unable to turn her excitement into coherent words.

"Whatever. It doesn't matter now. I'll text Diego and tell him." Casey hoisted the bag higher up on her shoulder and headed to the door.

"I was." Amy cringed, though not from the words. The first truth she had told in weeks sent her heart soaring. And this particular truth could also bankrupt her or even send her to jail.

Casey froze, her hand about to grab the door handle. "You were what?"

"Trying to tell you something."

Casey slowly turned to face her. She stood with her back against the door and met Amy's gaze head on. "What? What were you trying to tell me?"

The moment of truth. If she opened her mouth and went down this path, there was no going back. The memory of the kiss played against her lips and brought a new kind of freshness to her heart. She would do anything to get back into Casey's arms. The price was high though. The image of Knight

looming over her like an evil troll popped into the head. However, the price of lying to Casey was higher than breaking Horowitz and Kane's non-disclosure contract. She needed to move forward in her life, and playing the big boys' game was not healthy for her. She needed to trade her fake relationship for a real one.

"Well? What were you trying to tell me?" Casey said again. Amy guessed that neither of them wanted to make the first move. Neither of them wanted to be wrong about this.

"That I..." What the hell, just go for it. "That from the moment you crawled out of the pool that first day...I've just wanted to do this." She stepped up and grabbed Casey by the waist pulling her forward. Her mouth was already tipped upward for the kiss. It was softer, more tentative than the one in the gym. As soon as their lips met, Amy felt Casey shiver in her arms, and she went dizzy with the realization she'd been the one to cause it.

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