

A Kick In the Heart

A Short Story

By Erin Wade

Chapter 1 – First Kiss

“It’s now or never, babe,” Jason Goodyear declared. “Every college scout in the country is here tonight.”

“You are a great quarterback,” Cam Norse reassured her best friend.

“They are here to see you,” Jason scoffed. “You’re the first woman in high school football history to have a 95% field goal percentage and your average distance of thirty-five yards rivals professional kickers.”

“I guess all those ballerina lessons my parents forced me to take are paying off only not in the way they had hoped.” Cam pulled on her helmet, fastened the chin strap, and sighed. “Let’s go.”

They ran out on the field as the fans began stomping their feet, clapping their hands, and chanting, “Cammie, Cammie, Cammie.”

The announcer thundered through the loudspeakers trying to be heard over the crowd. “This is a lot of pressure to put on one player. With the game tied and thirty seconds left in this state championship playoff, Trenton Huskies kicker Cameron Norse is taking the field. If Cam makes the field goal, the Huskies will win their first state title in ten years. Huskies quarterback Jason Goodyear will hold for the kicker.”

Cam concentrated, blocking out the roar of the crowd and the band playing wildly. “Please let me make this, Lord,” she muttered then nodded for the hike. Jason positioned the ball perfectly as Cam slammed her foot into the pigskin. Silence filled the stadium as the football took an

agonizingly slow flight toward the uprights. “It’s too far to the right,” the announcer reported on the ball’s progress. Cam’s heart stopped beating as the football made the left hook she was famous for and sailed through the goalposts.

The stadium went crazy. Teammates hoisted her onto their shoulders and ran around the field with her. Best of all head cheerleader Kylie Whitaker hugged her so tightly she couldn’t breathe.

“I knew you could do it,” Kylie said into her ear.

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The rest of the night was a blur with everyone hanging out at the local taco joint, drinking cold drinks and dancing on the parking lot.

Kylie’s parents Ed and Missy Whitaker pulled onto the lot around eleven to pick up their daughter. “Great job tonight,” Ed complimented Cam. “We’re proud of you.”

“Thank you, sir,” Cam blushed. “It took the entire team to get us to the tiebreaker.”

“True, but you did it.”

“Kylie is inside getting drinks and eats,” Cam informed them. The line here is impossible.”

“Daddy, Mom,” Kylie joined them leaning down to look into the car. “We just got our food. Can’t I stay out until midnight?”

“I’m tired, honey,” Ed responded. “I have a meeting with the banking board in the morning.”

“I can bring her home,” Cam volunteered. “I’ll make sure she gets home by midnight.”

Ed nodded. “Okay, but not a minute later.”

“Scout’s honor.” Cam saluted, “I promise.”

They watched the Whitakers drive away. “Let’s take our food to Trenton Lake and talk about our future,” Kylie suggested.

##

Cam pulled her car to a stop in their favorite spot overlooking Trenton Lake and Kylie started unwrapping tacos and placing straws into their drinks. “I was so proud of you tonight,” Kylie exclaimed. “You are always cool as a cucumber. I don’t know how you do it with all that racket going on around you.”

“I just block it all out,” Cam replied. *And think of you*, she added in her mind.

“Did you see the scouts there tonight?”

“I did. I heard there were scouts from every major university. We have a lot of great players on our team. It takes good people in every position to win a state championship. I hope they were impressed with Jason.”

“I think they were here to see you,” Kylie said. “I bet offers start rolling in for you. Where do you want to go?”

“UT Austin, Baylor, TCU, Texas A&M. I want to stay in Texas so I can be close to my folks. They love attending my games and have always been so supportive. The truth is I’ll have to go to school on scholarships. My folks can’t afford to pay for my college education. They have my younger brother and sister to think about. So I’ll go to the school that offers me a free ride. What about you? Are you applying for scholarships. With your grades, I’m certain you could get a cheerleading scholarship. You are fantastic. Where do you want to go?”

“My folks are filthy rich. Daddy said we should leave the scholarships for those who need them the most and I want to go wherever you go,” Kylie exclaimed.

“Wouldn’t that be fun. The two of us and Jason in college together. We could share a house close to campus.”

“Are you and Jason joined at the hip?” Kylie pouted.

“No, of course not. We’ve been teammates all my life. You know the three of us have grown up together.”

“I’d rather it be just you and me,” Kylie blurted.

“Okay. We can do that. I was just thinking about the cost of our own place. Splitting it three ways would be cheaper

for Jason and me. I know you don't worry about money because your dad is a wealthy banker."

"I swear, Cammie, sometimes I think you are a dumb jock instead of our valedictorian." Kylie pulled Cam's lips to hers and kissed her soundly.

Cam didn't move a muscle when Kylie stopped kissing her. "Are you okay?" Kylie whispered.

"Yes."

"Say something."

"I don't know what to say," Cam admitted. "I've never been kissed by a girl."

"Did you like it?"

"Oh, yes! Very much!"

The alarm went off on Cam's watch. "Oh, Jesus, your dad is going to kill me. I promised I'd have you home by midnight." She started her car, backed up, and headed for the highway.

They drove to Kylie's home in silence.

"I'm sorry," Kylie said as Cam pulled her car into the driveway.

Cam took her hand. "I'm not. I just need to figure this out. We need to talk tomorrow, in the light of day and when we are thinking clearly. "I'll pick you up for lunch at noon. Okay?"

"I'd like that and Cam, this isn't something that just came over me. I've always loved you." Kylie opened the car door and ran into the house.

Chapter 2 – So Many Offers

Cam drove home slowly reliving Kylie's kiss. *I just sat there like a dumb jock*, she admonished herself. *I've wanted to kiss Kylie Whitaker since the second grade, and I just sat there like I had no idea what lips are for. Seriously Cam, you can be such an idiot.*

The truth is I have no idea what to do. Our future is so bright with so many opportunities. Kylie and I have always been stars in high school, me dating Jason and Kylie dating the preacher's son Larry Cantor. Oh, Jeeze, and Mr. Whitaker is so homophobic he'd skin me alive and feed my bones to his dog. We really need to be sure this isn't some silly phase we're going through. Who am I kidding? I've loved Kylie from the first moment she made me eat a mudpie when we were five.

Cam pulled her car into the driveway two blocks from the Whitakers. *What a difference two blocks makes*, she thought. Was there some magic line that divided the uber wealthy from the blue-collar workers. While the Norse's lived in a comfortable three-bedroom home, it paled in comparison to the Whitaker's two-story mansion only two blocks away.

Cam's dad Dave Norse owned his own electrical contracting company which consisted of Dave and two employees. Cam grew up believing that a workday was from sun up to sun down. She had been surprised to learn that Kylie's dad left for the office around 9:00 a.m. and returned around 5:00 p.m.

Many thoughts whirled through Cam's mind as she unlocked the front door and silently slipped into her home. *Would Kylie be happy in a smaller house? What did she want in her future ten, twenty years down the road? Was love and sweet kisses enough to build a lifetime on?*

“Cammie, I thought you would never come home,” a young voice welcomed her.

“Why aren’t you asleep, sweetie?” Cam sat down on her twelve-year-old sister’s bed and hugged her.

“I wanted to wait for you to tell you how proud everyone is of you and your game-winning kick,” Mercy exclaimed. “It was so exciting, and I am so happy for you. Dad said he was going to sit back and watch the scholarship offers pour in.”

Cam laughed. The game seemed so long ago, so insignificant compared to Kylie’s declaration of love. “Stick with those ballet lessons kiddo, you will be able to kick like that too.”

“I am, but don’t let mom know I want to kick instead of dance.” Mercy giggled.

“It is our secret,” Cam promised. “Now we’d better get some sleep.”

“Yes, dad says you will have a full day tomorrow.”

##

Cam awoke to laughter and men’s voices in their kitchen. She hurriedly dressed, ran a brush through her blonde hair, and pulled it back into a high ponytail. Blowing air through her lips, she sighed and opened the door to a whole new world.

“Here she is now.” Cam’s father stood as she entered the kitchen, “Our star player.”

The two men at the breakfast table stood and extended their hands to her. “Ross Stubblefield, head coach of—”

“Grant Randolph kicking coach—”

“I know who you are,” Cam responded. “I’m flattered that you are in our home.”

“We would like you to play for us next year,” Ross stated flatly. “You can write your own ticket. Tell me what you want.” He clumsily held out a bouquet of roses. “We brought you flowers.”

Cam smiled and took the yellow roses. “Honestly, I haven’t given it much thought. I do know that Jason Goodyear and I are a package deal. I haven’t thought much past that.”

“Sure, we’ll bring your boyfriend along.” Ross replied. “A full scholarship, books, housing, clothing allowance, tutor if you need one.”

“She’s our high school valedictorian,” Pam Norse informed them.

“Brains and a magic foot.” Grant chuckled. “Can’t get any better than that.”

“Jason Goodyear is the quarterback that led our team to the championship.” Cam returned to her request. “I just happened to be the one to score the tie-breaking points.”

The two coaches glanced at one another, and Ross ran his finger down a list of names. “Yes, he is our next stop.” *Now*, he thought. “We’re trying to lock in everyone today, if possible. Do you think Jason will want to play for us?”

“I do,” Cam replied. “We’d like to be a part of winning your fifth national title next year.”

“We welcome Jason,” Ross said. “In fact, we are delighted you are so devoted to him. We were a little concerned that you might be a lesbo, being so active in sports and all.”

“Hold on,” Dave interrupted. “Cam has several other universities to talk with today. Why don’t you talk with Jason then put your offers in writing so we can review them with the others.”

“We will top any offer you receive,” Ross declared. “Talk to everyone than let me send my private plane for you and take you and Jason on a tour of our Austin campus.”

Cam’s wristwatch alarm buzzed. “I really must go,” she said. “I have an appointment I can’t miss. Please, I will consider all proposals and I would love to visit your campus.”

“Fair enough,” Ross stood and extended his hand.
“Thank you for visiting with us.”

Grant stood. “I look forward to collaborating with you.
I’m betting I can help you add five yards to your distance.”

“Now you have my attention.” Cam laughed as she
picked up the roses and sprinted out the door.

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