**Dare Me**

by neverdoubted

**Dare Me - Chapter 16 - Wait, What Happened at Camp? (Part 3)**

Although the morning had barely begun, Coach Easterling was already driven to confront Rooster a second time. Scouring her copy of the contract, she confirmed it said nothing about the proprietor being allowed to bring his grandson onto the armory grounds while guests were present.

Rooster pointed to a clever loophole. He wasn't just the proprietor; he was also the acting facilities supervisor. And as such, he was allowed to bring in additional, minimal resources to maintain the property and facilities. As part of the junior ROTC program at their schools, his grandsons were excused from classes every other Friday and free to volunteer within the community. For them, that meant helping their grand-pops with his various business dealings around town, including maintaining the armory.

He assured her that his grandsons would be perfectly behaved professionals and should be finished with their work around the armory by early afternoon. Coach Easterling reluctantly conceded.

When they heard the verdict, the giggling girls immediately started preening and fixing their hair. It's one thing to practice strutting your stuff and showing off spirited cheers to a blank wall. But knowing there would be boys around to potentially see them elevated everyone's game. Coach Easterling called the end of calisthenics and announced a fifteen-minute rest period. She needed the break to reset everyone's focus and allow things to return to some semblance of normalcy.

Even amid the new challenge of keeping her naked body hidden from an unknown number of boys, something important was about to happen to Lucy: a subtle shift in the social dynamic. It was only a matter of time before someone broke the ice with her. And once they did, not even her lack of clothes could stop Lucy's charismatic personality from shining through the awkward circumstances.

Lucy had a lot on her mind as the other girls broke off into clusters and began to chat. Protecting her modesty had suddenly become a very high priority. It was critical that she not be caught naked by one or more of Rooster's grandsons. Avoiding that would require effort and careful planning. She intended to work through some scenarios in her head and come up with some contingencies in case one of the boys showed up, but she didn't make it very far before her thoughts were interrupted by a couple of the eighth graders approaching her.

"So, are you, like, some kind of nudist?" asked the first girl. She had not introduced herself or shown any courtesy whatsoever. She simply blurted out the question she and her friend had been wondering. Her tone did not make Lucy feel like she was asking out of genuine concern either. Lucy shook her head in response but didn't say anything. Their disapproving, bordering on judgmental, stares made her feel like some sideshow freak rather than a teammate. But at least someone had finally spoken to her.

The girl curled her lip up in disgust. "I don't get it, then. Are you protesting something? Or are you just a pervert?"

Lucy felt her whole body blush. She opened her mouth, but nothing came out. How was she supposed to respond to that rude accusation? She couldn't just admit, "my brother dared me to go naked all weekend, so I just took off all my clothes and left them in my foyer back home and came with nothing. Oh, and also, he somehow tricked our coach into permitting it." Luckily, the other girl said something before she had to come up with a rational excuse for her nudity.

"Cut it out, Cindy. The captains said we aren't allowed to make fun of it because she can't help it." Quickly grabbing the first girl's arm, she dragged her away before anyone nearby got the impression they were befriending one of the sevies.

Lucy was stunned. Nothing the girls had said made any sense to her. Had the captains called some secret team meeting without her and specifically warned the team against making fun of the naked girl? Why would they protect her like that? And what did that girl mean by "she can't help it"? She scanned over the group until she located the head captain, Tiffany, chatting up Rooster, of all people. The unlikely pair had discovered a mutual respect. Tiffany was doing most of the talking, or should I say scheming, but Rooster was nodding right along with her every suggestion.

Apparently, the ice had been broken enough for another brave soul to risk talking to the naked outcast. While my sister was trying to stop her head from spinning, one of the seventh graders approached her. Lucy did her best to pay attention despite her racing thoughts. She knew the importance of making connections and couldn't afford to squander these encounters to be if she wanted to win the spirit award or ever have a chance to make some friends on the team.

Three different elementary schools fed students into the junior high on our side of town. So, it wasn't a total surprise that Lucy and this girl had never met before. She was comforted to see no ill intent in the girl’s face. Unlike the eighth graders, she didn't appear to have an ulterior motive in talking to Lucy.

"Uh, hi, I'm Alice," she held out her hand nervously.

"Lucy," she answered, shaking the offered hand.

They shared a resemblance in skin tone and hair color. The biggest difference between them being that, unlike Lucy, she was actually wearing clothes, a cute little pleated skirt and a powder-blue tee shirt with very short sleeves.

Alice's gaze drifted down Lucy's bare body, her eyes lingering enviously on her well-proportioned breasts. She matched Lucy in height but not in that developmental area. A simple, camisole style training bra beneath her shirt - something Lucy had outgrown long ago – were plenty sufficient for her own nascent breasts. Her tall, slender body couldn't match Lucy's curves in other areas, either.

"I'm, uh...the captains told us about your..uh," Alice nodded shyly toward Lucy's body, "I'm sorry about your thing."

"Oh, it's fine," Lucy replied, brushing off the girl's concern with a calm facade. But on the inside, she was going crazy. She assumed wild rumors about her must be swirling, but she hadn't the slightest clue what "thing" this girl was referring to! What in the world could the captains possibly be telling people about her?

"I like your...uh," Alice tried to pay Lucy a compliment, but found it very difficult to complement the naked girl without saying something inappropriate. Finally, she managed to say, "I like your socks. They're really pretty."

She sounded genuine, so Lucy genuinely thanked her and complemented her skirt in kind. The third seventh grader, a small girl with short, but striking red hair, had been loitering nearby and eavesdropping on their conversation. When Lucy noticed her inching closer and closer with an apparent desire not to be left out of the newly forming friendship, she invited her to join their group.

The final sevie introduced herself as Hanna. She was fresh-faced with pale, almost porcelain skin, and petite features. The smallest of the group, what she lacked in stature, her bubbly enthusiasm and perky demeanor more than made up for. She seemed perpetually in a good mood with her plump, naturally red lips formed into an easy smile. She was quick to respond to any comment directed her way with a happy giggle.

Hanna gushed enviously over Lucy and Alice's perfect blonde ponytails. She obviously struggled to control her own unruly, red curls. It didn't help that her mom had made her cut her hair short just before camp. She could barely keep it in a ponytail like everyone else without rogue, curly strands constantly springing free to dangle playfully in front of her freckled face.

Most girls on the team were blondes, with brunettes forming the second largest category. Only one other girl was a redhead like Hanna. But unlike Hanna, she had straight, well-behaved hair. Being an exceptionally skilled hairstylist, Lucy generously offered to help Hanna with her ponytail. And just like that, the trio of sevies were officially friends.

Coach Easterling carried her trusty clipboard with her and took notes as she circulated among the group. She had created a custom scorecard or log to keep track of potential candidates for her coach's award. Calling an end to break, she had the team go through the motion of a typical practice session. The returning members knew what to do, but it was a whole new experience for the sevies. While the older girls dusted off the cheers from last year, they gleefully played catch-up. Practicing unfamiliar routines, they made a lot of mistakes. But no one bothered them as long as they stayed out of the way at the back of the room.

As she and her new friends finally got to participate in what they had worked so hard for, Lucy felt a great weight lifting off her shoulders. The stubborn, stressful pit in her stomach remained, as did the dull tingling between her legs. She still had to navigate the rest of camp without any clothes on. But for a little while, she felt like she belonged and was able to just have some fun.

After about an hour of strenuous physical activity, another break was called. The older girls clustered together and sat down to rest, but Lucy was too excited to sit still. Getting to be in a genuine cheer practice session after watching so many of them on video was a dream come true. Too energized, she didn't let her new friends rest, but dragged them to one side of the room and spent the entire break going over the new cheers with them. I wasn’t surprised that her two friends were already following her lead. Lucy was driven, and her enthusiasm was contagious.

After the break, Coach Easterling announced a teambuilding contest. The girls justifiably groaned when she began passing out notebooks and writing utensils. Only an English teacher would think it a good idea to give a bunch of cheerleaders a writing assignment during camp.

She needed three main topics, common interests they all shared and valued. Eventually, they settled on, "what does cheerleading mean to you?", "describe your ideal boyfriend", and "what little acts of kindness make the world a better place?"

Those are cheesy topics, I know, especially the boyfriend one. But there’s no doubting it was of high interest to them. After seeing Rooster’s grandson mowing outside with his shirt off, the girls probably had cute boys on the brain even more than usual.

With the topics settled, Coach Easterling next made the girls write out examples of each. They would not all be used for the contest, but she needed enough to form draw piles. Collecting the papers, she tore the ideas into individual strips and deposited them into three separate bowls, one for each topic.

Then she instructed the captains to divide everyone into three even teams of eight for a teambuilding contest. The sevies got split up because they weren't picked until the last round. One captain, a stuck-up girl named Crystal, did not hide her disappointment at being forced to take Lucy with the very last pick.

Lucy did not let the disrespect get her down. After getting a taste of what it was like to be an official member of the junior high cheer team, her spirits were soaring. Speaking of spirit. She still had every intention of earning the spirit award by the end of camp. She had already won over her fellow sevies and she saw this challenge as an opportunity to convince more of her team members that she was worthy of consideration, even naked.

She perked up when Coach Easterling brough out three large paper easels and revealed that the contest would have a drawing component. That certainly played to her strengths! However, it was not just a drawing challenge. The teams were expected to produce and present on all three topics, using different forms of creative expression for each. Only one could be expressed through a drawing. The other two had to be the written word (an essay or poem), and an interpretive dance respectively.

The captain of each team would have to allocate her members effectively to win the contest. But the bowls of ideas added a wrinkle to the contest. Each team would draw out five examples from each bowl and had to find a way to incorporate them into their final creations.

Coach Easterling would break any ties, but the girls themselves would judge the presentations to determine which group did the best job.

There was no rule about which topic went with which art medium. It just worked out that the nature of the topics lent themselves to certain forms of expression. For example, it just made sense to perform little acts of kindness using a contemporary dance while it would be much easier to describe the meaningfulness of cheerleading in written form. And that left the ideal boyfriend to be a drawing. Even though it wasn't mandatory, each team ended up using the same art style for the same topics.

With the rules explained, the girls were dismissed to begin working. Crystal gathered her team. She had only been given one hour and had to allocate her resources effectively. Looking over what she had to work with, she immediately counted the naked teammate a total loss. She had no idea the competitive advantage that had just dropped into her lap. Lucy happened to be a very talented artist, award-winning, even! She tried to get her captain to listen to her, but every girl in the group was advocating at the same time to get to work on her preferred assignment.

Cheerleaders are not exactly known for their literary prowess, and nobody wanted to get stuck doing the poem. They all wanted to work on the dance, of course. Absolutely certain where she belonged, Lucy took a deep breath and staked her claim.

"I can do the drawing," she yelled, wincing at how much she'd had to raise her voice to be heard above the din of chattering girls.

The other girls stopped talking and turned as one to sneer at her. "Your job is to stay out of the way, sevie," said Crystal, "and try not to screw anything up."

But Lucy was determined to show her worth. Refusing to back down even under the withering glare of a captain two years her senior, with as much confidence as she could muster, she promised, "I can win this thing, I swear."

She was lucky that no one else really wanted the assignment. With the clock ticking and decisions piling up, Crystal relented, "whatever, but you better not screw me over."

To Crystal, sending the freak to work by herself on the drawing was probably more about cutting her losses than putting any faith in her to deliver. It would keep her out of everyone’s way. Crystal had to be hoping, by putting all her other girls to work on the two remaining presentations, she could polish them enough to overcome whatever inferior stick drawings of an imaginary boyfriend the naked sevie came back with. By the end of the contest, she would have a newfound appreciation of her newest teammate. And it would be the very last time Crystal ever underestimated my sister!