

"Losers"

Written by

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FADE IN

INT: LOS ALTOS HIGH SCHOOL TEAM ROOM - NIGHT

The VARSITY BASKETBALL TEAM of 12 girls, some standing, some on the floor, a few lucky ones sitting on the one available bench, all cramped inside the uncomfortably quiet team room for halftime. No one makes eye contact. No one makes a sound.

They are donning their white home jerseys. Half of them with theirs drenched in sweat. The other half still has theirs unsoiled and neatly tucked in.

MAURICE "COACH MOE" SIBOLBORO (39), holding a dry erase clipboard, storms into the room and slams the metal door shut. The team remains silent, unfazed.

COACH MOE

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU ALL DOING OUT
THERE?!

No one answers or looks up. Coach Moe puts his hands to his face and then suddenly kicks the door. The team flinches and looks at him.

COACH MOE

What? You girls complain I'm too
mean, too dramatic, too crazy. But if
I'm nice, you don't pay attention!

Coach Moe throw his clipboard on the floor. After a brief moment, he lets out a laugh.

COACH MOE

"Come to Los Altos," they said. "You
can be head varsity coach." (beat) I
shouldn't have left Sierra Vista.
Those girls had a chip on their
shoulders. Those are the girls I
want. I come here and what do I get?
You girls don't care!

Coach Moe grabs the clipboard from the floor and looks through the scorekeeping book clamped onto it.

COACH MOE

You girls are going to love this. I had our stats girl keep track of all the shit you guys did. 6 missed free throws. 13 missed layups. Oh and, are you ready for this? (beat) 22 turnovers.

He tosses the clipboard onto the floor, smiling smugly and looking around the room. His smile disappears suddenly.

COACH MOE

6 MISSED FREE THROWS. HOW DO YOU MISS FREE THROWS. THEY'RE. FREE. AND 13 MISSED LAYUPS? THAT'S--

Coach Moe takes a moment to do the math, drawing imaginary numbers in the air with his finger.

COACH MOE

THAT'S 28 POINTS YOU THREW AWAY.

GRACE RICAFRANCA (17) and JUNE WU (17) look at each other, but decide against correcting him.

COACH MOE

AND 22 GODDAMN TURNOVERS. IN ONE HALF. HOW?! (beat) WHEN ARE YOU GIRLS GOING TO GET YOUR HEADS OUT OF YOUR ASSES AND START PLAYING SOME FUCKING BASKETBALL?

Coach Moe looks around the room at the still silent girls and lets out another laugh.

COACH MOE

Since being nice clearly doesn't work, I guess I'm just going to have to be the bad guy again. (beat) Every turnover is a set of lines in practice. For anyone who needs a reminder, you're at 22 right now.

Looks of worry and anxiety spread across the girls, but two short blasts of the buzzer from outside the room interrupt their distress.

COACH MOE

So I suggest you all pick it up right now.

Coach Moe leaves the room first. Then the girls file out after him.

INT: LOS ALTOS HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL GYM - NIGHT

The scoreboard reads: "Home - 18" and "Away - 31".

The Los Altos team and ROWLAND HIGH SCHOOL TEAM are at their respective benches, preparing for the second half. Some of the parents occupy seats of the mostly empty wooden bleachers.

One long buzzer sounds. The two referees blow their whistles. The two teams have their 5 starting players run onto the court. Then, one of the referees blows into their whistle one last time and hands ERIKA BESERRA (16) the ball to inbound.

Erika makes eye contact with VERONICA AREYZAGA (17) and lobs the ball to her. ROWLAND GIRL #1 sprints in and intercepts the pass. She takes three dribbles and several long strides, then gently lays the ball off the backboard for an easy two points.

COACH MOE

(to the bench)

That's 23.

INT: LOS ALTOS HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL GYM - MIDDLE OF 4TH QUARTER

The scoreboard reads: "Home - 27" and "Away - 46".

The same starting 5 Los Altos players are on the court. Coach Moe is pacing up and down along the bench. The girls on the bench are following the action on the court, occasionally shouting out encouragements to their teammates.

Coach Moe abruptly stops and turns to face Grace.

COACH MOE

Can you get past that girl?

GRACE

(beat) Yeah, I think so.

COACH MOE

You don't sound very confident. I'll
come back to you when you're ready.

Grace's shoulders drop and she lets out a sigh. Her teammates on the bench fidget and look away, staring intently at the game.

The ball exchanges possessions a few times. Coach Moe walks to Grace again.

COACH MOE

I'm going to ask you again. Can you
get past that girl?

GRACE

Yes.

COACH MOE

Okay. Go get Erika (beat) and don't
fuck it up.

Grace gets up from the bench and kneels next to the stats table at half court. The ball is knocked out of bounds and the referee blows their whistle and waves her in. Grace gets up and runs into the court towards Erika.

GRACE

Erika!

Grace extends her hand for a high five, but Erika ignores her and jogs off the court to the end of the bench. The game resumes.

Erika is visibly angry. She kicks the chair at the end of the bench and starts throwing her towel, water bottle, and mouthguard. Her teammates on the bench look at her, then at Coach Moe. He walks over to Erika, and, with their faces inches apart, mutters a few words. Erika slumps down in the chair furthest away from the team.

Los Altos has possession again. Grace dribbles the ball down the court, where the rest of her teammates and the defenders are. She

makes it over the half court line and ROWLAND GIRL #2 steps up to defend her more closely.

Grace fakes to the right and crosses the ball over between her legs, driving to the basket as ROWLAND GIRL #2 loses balance and trips.

ROWLAND GIRL #3 runs up towards Grace's left side to help. Grace, now dribbling with her left hand, bounces the ball once behind her back to switch back to her dominant hand, takes two steps, and completes her move with a layup.

Cheers sound from the bleachers and bench. Grace's teammates on the court give her quick high fives as they turn to get back on defense.

One of the referees blows their whistle. Erika is running back on the court. Grace looks at her teammates, all of whom give her shrugs.

ERIKA

Grace!

The two run past each other without exchanging high fives or any words. Grace looks at Coach Moe, who doesn't acknowledge her, and reclaims her seat on the bench from before next to June.

JUNE

Dude, shake it off. You did good. You totally broke that girl's ankles!

Grace half-heartedly smiles, slightly out of breath.

GRACE

Thanks. I saw you sink that three earlier! Don't think I missed it.

INT: LOS ALTOS HIGH SCHOOL TEAM ROOM - AFTER GAME ENDS

The girls are settled in the room, similar to when they were there during halftime. Coach Moe walks in holding onto his clipboard, looking at the scorekeeping book with a slight smile.

COACH MOE

Well, would you look at that. You girls only had 5 turnovers in the

second half. I knew threatening you guys would work.

He puts the clipboard behind his back. His tone changes almost immediately, his smile morphing into a hard frown.

COACH MOE

But 31 to 50? That's 20 points. And those girls aren't even good.

Coach Moe looks down and shakes his head.

COACH MOE

You know what your problem is? You girls are too soft. You guys don't care. At the end of the day, no one cares if you went from 22 turnovers in the first half to 6 in the second. They wouldn't even care if you made a 50 point comeback only to lose by 1 point. You know why? (beat) Because that would still make you a loser.

He lets last word linger.

COACH MOE

If you're not playing to win, then why are you even playing? None of you care enough to win. (beat) Except Erika.

The entire team looks up with a mixture of confusion and shock.

COACH MOE

Yeah I said it. I know all of you think she's an asshole and don't like her, but you know what? She's got more heart than anyone out there. No one plays harder than her. Maybe if you girls started getting a chip on your shoulders and playing like her, then we can actually do something great this season.

Coach Moe walks out of the room, followed by Erika. Laughter and exchange of playful remarks are heard, muffled through the door.

FADE OUT