



chapter 7

It was eight o'clock in the morning, and I was standing on the pitcher's mound. Georgie Diaz was up to bat. He wiped his sweaty black hair off his forehead. He spat something gross right next to his shoe. He raised his bat into position. Then he smiled. "Let's see if you can get the ball over the plate, Scruggs."

I stamped my cleat into the pitcher's mound. "Oh yeah," I said. "Well, you'd better start closing your eyes now, the ball's gonna come so fast."

Georgie crouched lower, getting ready to hit. "I'll believe it when I see it."

"Throw the ball, Sylvie," my coach said in her exasperated tone, the one that means she is tired of being seven months pregnant and standing in the

dugout, watching a bunch of nine-year-olds play baseball.

“Okay, Mom,” I said.

“Go, Sylvie!” said my twin brothers, Tate and Cale. “Rip out his heart. Stamp on his gizzards. Eat his brains for lunch!” The twins were five, and they loved smack talk.

I straddled the pitcher’s mound, my long brown hair tucked behind my ears. In one smooth motion, I pulled my legs together, the ball and glove coming up to my chest. There was a runner on first and a runner on third. I gave them both the eye. Then I looked into the stands where I knew my best friend, Miranda, would be watching.

And there she was, behind home plate like always. Her hands were clasped together; her face was tense. Her mouth opened. Her lips began to move. I waited for the thumbs-up and the “Go, Sylvie!” she always gives me when I need it.

“Go, Georgie!” she cried. “You can do it! Whack that ball! Home run! Home run!”



The ball fell from my hand onto the mound. I couldn't believe it.

“Come on, Scruggs,” Georgie called. “Throw the ball already.”

But I was still staring at Miranda, who was looking at me now. She gave me a thumbs-up and a “Go, Sylvie!” but it wasn't the same. What good is a “Go, Sylvie!” when you've just shouted “Go, Georgie!”? You can't cheer for two people at the same time. Not when those two people are enemies.