

Seams Like Love

She Can Play
Book 2

Chrissie Harrison



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Ist Over

W elcome to the Garden of Eden.'

She poked his pot belly. 'That joke is so threadbare it's untrue.'

'Indulge the old man, eh, daughter of mine?' Ray cocked a bushy eyebrow, not taking his attention off the road.

Eden eye-rolled. '*I* will. Not sure about anyone else. But *please* tell me you don't call it that in public.'

'Couldn't bear the shame, eh? The whole "doting father" thing?'

'I'm twenty-seven. Yes, in your eyes I'm still eight, and I'll always be your little girl, but just don't become one of those embarrassing dads. Okay?'

'You mean I should stop walking along the boundary rope, declaring to all and sundry that I nurture this pitch, night and day, all for my baby?' Ray glanced across and winked.

'I would disown you faster than—'

'Your mother did?' he suggested.

Eden's stomach always knotted when this topic was mentioned. At least they'd settled into gallows humour about it.

Time will do that.

It's been a long five years.

The car slid through the Aurora Stadium's entrance.

'I could handle the piss-taking,' she said. 'Part of the job,

right? Sharing a pavilion with twenty other girls. But if a visiting team overheard, assumed you curated the pitch for one of the Scorpions' bowlers—'

'Their *best* one,' he interjected.

She glanced at the strapping on her left pinkie finger.
Moot. Especially now.

'—and complained to the stewards that home advantage was way more unfair than necessary—'

'Thanks to nepotism,' he added.

She frowned. 'Is it nepotism? Or merely favouritism?'

'It's definitely an ism, daughter of mine.'

'And you can cut the "daughter of mine" mollycoddling too, *father of mine*. It's bad enough that you're giving me a lift.'

'You could have said no,' Ray pointed out, waving to a fellow staff member as they passed.

'I'm saving the planet,' Eden replied.

'You said you were here for extra practice. Saving the planet probably comes second to that.'

'I'm a cricketer, not fucking Bono.'

'You want to walk the rest of the way?'

'For *swearing*?' she asked in disbelief.

'For exercise.'

She pointed through the windscreen. 'It's a hundred yards. Hardly a chore.'

'Still, want me to drop you here in case you're spotted being given a ride by Daddy?'

She whacked him on the thigh.

He tutted. 'Shame you didn't break a finger on *this* hand.'

'Fuck off.'

They pulled into the parking area. Across the gravel, someone was getting out of their car. Eden turned away, her jaw working.

Ray sighed. 'How long are you going to be like this?'

'As long as I want. That okay with you?'

I don't want. I hate this. But who's going to wave a magic wand and make everything right? Shit happens. This is a cruel game—love, as well as cricket.

'It's bad enough that Matt has been dragging his bottom lip around for weeks.'

'Well, now you have two lip-draggers in your garden. Sorry. We'll try not to drool on the grass.'

'You could always get back together,' Ray suggested.

She shot him a smirk. 'Ah. Relationship advice from you. Perfect.'

'You're not too old for a clip round the ear.'

'And you're not too old to find the second Mrs Palmer.'

'Ah. Relationship advice from you. Perfect.' He pulled on the handbrake.

Much as Eden joked, it was oddly heartwarming getting a lift to work with Dad. Yes, she'd rather be travelling with a housemate—even better, a boyfriend—but that was a knee-jerk thought. When you've lost something precious, the holes in your life seem to be everywhere.

Ray pointed at the passenger door. 'You want footman service, or what?'

She poked her tongue out, then checked the area. Matt was nowhere to be seen.

She tugged the handle. 'What do you want for your birthday?'

'My daughter happy.'

'The impossible I can do today. Miracles take a little longer. A bottle of whisky, okay?'

'Says the girl telling me I drink too much.'

'Okay, a bottle of elderflower cordial.' She leant across and pecked his cheek.

‘And I wonder where your mother got her attitude from...’

‘Not sure it works in reverse, *father of mine*.’

He jabbed a finger. ‘Go on, hop it.’

‘Gladly.’ She jumped out, then pulled her kit bag from the back seat.

‘Go well,’ he called over his shoulder.

‘Not funny.’ She slammed the door and set off towards the stadium entrance.

Dad wasn’t trying to be funny, only to show, as ever, undying love and support. He knew that she couldn’t “go well” for two reasons. Firstly, this was only a training day, and secondly, she wouldn’t be fit enough to play the first match of the season—which wasn’t until next week—anyway.

She sighed heavily, hefting the deadweight bag higher on her shoulders.

It was pointless to keep scanning the way ahead, hoping not to bump into Matt, yet it was instinctive. Things had been the same for weeks and would continue to be. What was the alternative? She couldn’t leave the club—she’d moved here specifically to be near Dad. It was cruel to expect, even suggest, that Matt get a job elsewhere. They’d have to coexist, be civil.

I can do that. He can too—he’s a nice guy.

She entered the stadium building. Debs, the club secretary, raised a hand in greeting.

‘Morning,’ Eden called.

‘New kit’s here.’

‘Great, thanks. I’ll collect after training. How’s Griff?’

‘Don’t ask.’

Eden sauntered over, letting the bag slide from her back. ‘What’s he chewed now? Table leg? Family heirloom?’

Something in your *special bedside drawer*?' She grinned mischievously.

'Remind me why we pay you, Eden Palmer?'

'Because I'm a very sought-after pace bowler.' She looked away. 'Or was,' she mumbled.

'Still are,' Debs replied. 'But fewer insinuations would be appreciated.'

'Done. So, house training's not going well?'

Debs grimaced. 'I'm too impatient for this. Should have bought an older dog.' She leant in. 'Don't want him, do you?'

'Is it me, or was there a slogan like, "A dog is for life, not just for Christmas"?'

'Can't it be for a different person's life?' Debs asked hopefully.

'Well, not mine. I'd have a pup, definitely a cat, but not with this schedule. Or someone else to pick up the slack.'

Debs nodded knowingly. 'Ah. "Someone else".'

Eden didn't rise to that. Her breakup with Matt was common knowledge. Hard to keep it secret when they both worked at the ground and had gone from loved up to barely speaking. It had been a wet winter in the South East, but frost had broken out in this corner of Maidstone.

The door clanged.

'Ede!'

She'd recognise that voice anywhere—Phoebe, her team bestie.

'Later,' she said to Debs, hoisting up the bag.

Phoebe hustled over and the duo walked to the changing rooms.

With every step, Eden's pulse quickened. This felt bigger than any game day. There were always nerves, but with 122 career matches under her belt, playing was natural. Having to

make nice with her longtime best friend was discombobulating and hateful. Having to be welcoming, chummy and collaborative with someone who'd ruined her winter was a huge ask. And this was only Day 1.

It's going to be a long season.

She painted on a smile and entered the changing room.

Brooke was in the far corner, pulling on her training kit. Even this unremarkable act wrenched at Eden's soul. It had been ten years since they'd worn the same strip, been on the same side of the scoresheet. Now, it was heartwarming to be reunited again. Awkward as hell to be forced into close proximity after everything that had happened. Disheartening that they'd be competing for places in the match day squads.

Whoever said cricket is a cruel game was the wisest person on Earth.

Eden moved through the hugs, high-fives and laughter, crossing the room to her nemesis. Brooke's body language wasn't downbeat. Wise—it would be unseemly, unprofessional, for them to live under a thundercloud for the next six months.

You can do it. Be the bigger person. Or at least not a grouchy cow.

She pulled Brooke into an embrace that was like hugging a beautiful thistle.

'Welcome to the Scorpions, Tweedie.'

'Thanks, Ede. It's good to be here. Odd, but good.'

Winter had been kind to her new teammate. Lots of Australian sun. Lots of cricket. Much as Eden had avoided the stats pages, she knew Brooke had performed brilliantly, underscoring why the Scorpions had given her a contract. Eden had barely been able to train.

Brooke probably knew that too. Yet had she been in

touch, offered support? No. She hadn't even pinged an excited message to say she'd signed with the team weeks ago.

In truth, things had been cool between them for over a year. For two seasons in a row, their friendship had taken a back seat to their rivalry.

Would Brooke's presence on the squad make things worse or better?

About the Author

Writing romcoms is my happy place. After working in other genres for many years, I couldn't resist the pull towards comedy and romance. I have a soft spot for stories with strong women, nice guys, and a touch of the bittersweet. I like the connection between my protagonists to be more than physical – a bond that helps solve their problems. Often I shine a light on mental health issues, especially neurodiversity, which is close to my heart. Fundamentally, I try to write the books I like to read – those with wit, heart and intelligence.

Away from the writing desk, I enjoy great scenery, a relaxing train ride, delicious coffee and cake, and catching up with friends and fellow authors.

Chrissie Harrison is a pen name.

Find me on Instagram or Threads @AuthorChrissieHarrison or in other places via Linktree

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