

**Title:** Green, Gold and Goals.

### **Chapter 1: When the Dream Began**

“Coming, Mum!” Peyton called out, brushing her hair back into a neat ponytail. Today was her first netball club match of the season. Over the school break, she had practiced every day, shooting hoops in her backyard. She ran downstairs, grabbed her netball bag, and met her mum outside. “I’m about to get in the car—could you check the mailbox and bring in the letters?” her mum asked. Peyton walked over to the mailbox and rummaged through the letters. “Bills... bills... and—what’s this?” she said, pulling out an envelope from Netball Australia. She tore it open and read the first lines. Then she screamed with excitement. “Mum!” she shouted. “I GOT IN! I GOT IN!!” Her mum hurried over, surprised. “Got in? What?” “The U13 Australian Diamonds Squad! I made the team!” Peyton bounced up and down like she was on a trampoline. A few weeks ago, she had tried out for this special team. Now, her dream was real.

### **Chapter 2: Big News, Bigger Dreams**

When they arrived at the netball courts, Peyton’s legs felt wobbly. Her letter peeked out of her bag. She smiled to herself. “Are you going to tell the others?” her mum asked. Peyton nodded nervously. At the court, girls were warming up, tying shoelaces, and chatting. Peyton spotted her best friend Izzy fixing her green hair bow. “Izzy,” Peyton whispered, “guess what?” Izzy turned around, eyes wide. “You look like you just won the lottery!” “Better,” Peyton grinned. “I made the Diamonds! The letter came this morning.” Izzy gasped and hugged Peyton. “No way! The Diamonds? That’s amazing!” Soon, the news spread through the team. The coach smiled warmly. “Peyton, that’s incredible. We’re proud of you.” Peyton tried to stay calm, but inside she was bursting with happiness.

### **Chapter 3: A Suitcase Full of Feelings**

That night, Peyton’s room was a mess—clothes everywhere and an open suitcase on the floor. “This suitcase looks like it might explode,” Izzy laughed, folding clothes. Peyton sighed. “I don’t know what to pack. I’m going to New Zealand in three days. With players I don’t even know. What if I mess up?” Izzy smiled kindly. “You won’t. You were chosen for a reason. You’re one of the best players on our team.” Peyton smiled and hugged Izzy. “Thanks. It feels strange not having you come too. We’ve always been together.” “Yeah,” Izzy said. “But you’re making history. Anyone would want to be in your place.” Peyton felt a little braver as they finished packing.

### **Chapter 4: One Last Hug**

The airport buzzed with noise and excitement. Peyton stood with her family and Izzy near the departure gate, holding her boarding pass tightly. Her mum tucked a strand of hair behind her ear. "Call us when you land, okay?" "I will," Peyton said, trying to sound brave. Her dad patted her shoulder. "We'll be watching your game live. Show them what you've got." Her little brother, Liam, handed her a packet of sour lollies. "For the plane ride. Good luck, I guess." Peyton smiled. She hugged Izzy. "Promise me you'll send updates while I'm gone?" Izzy nodded, already getting a little teary. "Only if you send me all the training stories and photos." After a last wave, Peyton walked toward the gate.

## **Chapter 5: Welcome to New Zealand**

When the plane landed, Peyton felt nervous and excited all at once. At the arrivals hall, she saw a group holding a banner:

"U13 Australian Diamonds – Team Check-In."

She spotted a tall girl with brown hair. "You're here for the squad?" the girl asked. "Yeah. I'm Peyton." "I'm Zara, from Brisbane," the girl said. "You look familiar." "I'm from Sydney. I usually play goal shooter or goal attack." "Oh! I saw you play in the state finals last year!" Before Peyton could answer, a taller girl with a serious face stepped forward. "I'm Blair," she said coldly. "Been on the team for two years. Guess they're letting anyone in this year." Peyton felt her stomach twist but stayed quiet. Zara whispered, "Don't mind her. Blair thinks she owns the place." Tomorrow, training will start. Peyton was ready to show them she belonged.

## **Chapter 6: Game On**

The next morning, Peyton woke early for training. At breakfast, everyone was nervous but excited. Zara smiled at her. "Ready for Day One?" "As ready as I'll ever be," Peyton said. At the courts, the huge stadium and bright lights made it feel real. Each player had a locker with their name and number. Peyton's read: MILLER #23. They warmed up with stretches and drills. Blair acted like the star, but Peyton kept her head high. During passing drills, Blair intercepted Peyton's ball. "Oops, newbie. Gotta stay alert," she said with a fake smile. "It's teamwork, not sabotage," Peyton muttered. Zara whispered, "Don't let her get to you. You've got this." Looking in the mirror later, Peyton saw a determined girl ready to prove herself.

## **Chapter 7: One Night to Game Day**

After a week of tough training, game day was so close to arriving. Peyton zipped up her jacket. The evening air was cool and fresh. Walking with Zara, she felt the excitement and nerves mixing. "You ready?" Zara asked. "Definitely nervous. But I'm excited too." Coach Davis gathered the team. "This game is about teamwork and pride. Wear your green and gold with honour. You're Diamonds now. Go shine." That night, Peyton held her lucky gold necklace. Her mum had given it to her for good luck after her first grand final. She hadn't

taken it off since. Her family and Izzy will be cheering her on tomorrow. She wasn't just playing for herself anymore. She was playing for all of them.

## **Chapter 8: Shining in Green and Gold**

On game day, Peyton woke early and dressed carefully in her green and gold dress. She tied her laces twice and slipped her lucky necklace under her collar. The bus to the stadium was quiet but full of energy. Peyton's thoughts repeated in her head: "*What if I'm not good enough?*" At the stadium, thousands of fans cheered. Peyton spotted her family and Izzy holding high their green and gold pom poms, yelling her name. The game was tough. The New Zealand Silver Ferns played hard, and Blair barely passed to Peyton.

At halftime, the score was tied.

Coach Davis told her, "Ignore the noise. You've got the best shot here. Trust yourself." In the third quarter, Peyton found her rhythm. She scored goal after goal, the crowd cheering loudly. Blair even started passing to her. With thirty seconds left on the clock, Australia was one goal behind. Zara passed perfectly to Peyton in the shooting circle.

Time slowed.

Peyton caught the ball, steadied, and shot.

Swish.

The game was tied.

The Silver Ferns tried one last pass but the Diamonds intercepted it. The whistle blew.

A draw.

Peyton's teammates hugged her. Even Blair gave a quick high five. Outside the changerooms, her mum hugged her tight. "You were incredible." Peyton smiled, her cheeks warm. "Thanks, Mum. I can't believe it's over." Izzy grinned. "You did it. Green, gold and goals." Peyton looked back at the stadium where she had played the match of her life.

It wasn't just about achieving her dream. It was about proving she belonged.

And she had.