



TRUCK STOP

Mr. Frank brought the bus to a complete stop in front of the truck stop, so it was a short walk, especially for Jaylen and his crutches.

“Remember to have your travel suits on and to represent our school and yourselves in a first-class manner when we go into this truck stop,” insisted Coach Dunn.

Mr. Frank added, “We’ll be rolling out in 30 minutes, so please plan accordingly.”

The players headed many different directions as they got off the bus. Some went to use the restrooms. Some went to get food or snacks. But most of them raced to find a good place to plug in their phone chargers and breathe new life into their most prized possessions.

Demetrius and Bobbi found a great outlet right next to some very comfy seats. They were relieved because they wouldn’t have to stand for the entire thirty minutes that they were at the truck stop.

“My mom gave me one of these power banks for Christmas and it has been a lifesaver, at least as far as my phone is concerned. Sure, I’ll be charging up my phone while we wait but I don’t really have to. I’m always prepared if I run out of juice. I have this little portable phone charger with me at all times,” said Bobbi.

“I probably should get one of those, myself,” Demetrius responded back to his roommate.

“It’d be a good idea. Never can be too prepared when it comes to your phone’s battery. If my battery died, I don’t know what I’d do. I imagine if your battery was dead, or almost dead, and we didn’t stop somewhere that had outlets, you’d be hurting.”

“True story,” agreed Demetrius.

“Speaking of being prepared, Coach Dunn might not have realized this, but in the game today, there were a few times where the guy you were guarding did simple things to get around you,” said Bobbi.

“I’m pretty sure Coach noticed that.”

“He probably did notice but he probably didn’t know why it happened,” corrected Bobbi. “What I meant was that each of those times I remember, it was something from our scouting report. You could have probably stopped them if you knew what their tendencies were. I’m guessing Coach just assumed you knew the scouting report. But I know different. I know that you didn’t pay attention to that stuff or go over it at all. It came back to bite us.”

“Well, I didn’t quite expect Jaylen to get hurt. I obviously wasn’t expecting to be called into action,” confessed Demetrius.

“We got manhandled pretty bad tonight against a team that we probably should have beaten. I don’t know if it would have made a difference, but you had a chance to play and you weren’t ready and that showed. At least to me, it showed. Every time you allowed your man to score, it made it that much more difficult for us to generate any momentum or mount a comeback.”

“I didn’t really think about it from a team perspective,” admitted Demetrius. “My bad.”

“That’s why I’m saying something,” said Bobbi. “Look, I certainly don’t always do what I’m supposed to do but I try to be prepared. I don’t have your athleticism but if I can think quicker. If I can be prepared and be a step ahead of our opponents mentally then I might be able to make up for my lack of athletic ability. I want to try and

finish the year strong and there is no way that is going to happen if we're not prepared. It's more important than ever now that Jaylen is hurt."

"I hear you. I just don't believe it's going to be worth it all the time. I'm not sure I want to take the time to prepare and then not play."

"You might not be getting the chances you want from Coach. It also might not be worth it from your perspective. But if you aren't prepared and then fail when given the opportunity, do you think you'll get that chance again?" asked Bobbi.

Demetrius just looked at Bobbi. In some ways, he was hoping that Bobbi was finished but he also knew that Bobbi usually had a good perspective on things.

Bobbi continued, "You'll probably just be proving that coach is right by not playing you. I know that you don't like the fact that you aren't playing and that leads you to not care but it actually becomes a vicious cycle that not only hurts you but the team also. You're mad that you aren't playing so you choose not to prepare. Then, you finally get a chance but aren't prepared, so you do poorly. This causes Coach to not play you anymore and then you have a bad attitude again."

"Thanks, Socrates!" joked Demetrius. I can tell you are paying attention in your Intro to Philosophy course."

"Now that you mention it, I'm reminded of one of my favorite philosophers and literary scholars."

"Oh yeah, who's that?" inquired Demetrius.

"Captain Jack Sparrow from Pirates of the Caribbean, of course," said a smirking Bobbi. "Captain Jack said that the problem is not the problem but that the problem is your attitude toward the problem."

"Deep. Real deep."

"Make jokes all you want but it's true," Bobbi responded. "Not playing stinks, but you still get opportunities once in a while. The real problem is your attitude toward not playing. That leads you to not be prepared. If tonight was a really close game and you got to play, you could have been the X-factor one way or another. You would have

played poorly because of being unprepared, which could have kept us from winning a close game. On the flip side, think if you had been prepared and were called into action in a close game. Combine your preparation with your athletic ability and you could have been the difference maker and helped propel us to victory.”

“But it wasn’t a close game.”

“Absolutely, but you don’t always know what the situation will be. You just have to train and prepare for when your opportunity comes. Don’t worry about the situation. Just be prepared. If you were prepared tonight, we probably wouldn’t have won because it was such a large margin but remember we came back twice last year from bigger margins against better teams, so you never really know.”

“I guess so,” Demetrius said somewhat dismissively.

“You guess so, but I know so! It reminds me of what the Navy SEALs say.”

“I know, I know,” Demetrius interrupted. “The only easy day was yesterday.”

“Well, that is a great quote, but it wasn’t what I was going to say.”

“By all means, continue my young but wise philosopher.”

“I actually thought of another one just now as you were mocking me. The Navy SEALs say ‘The more you sweat in training, the less you’ll bleed in battle’ but that wasn’t the one that I originally thought about. The one I really like is ‘Under pressure you don’t rise to the occasion but instead sink to the level of your training’.”

“I guess those make sense.”

“You bet they make sense,” said Bobbi. “Today you had the opportunity to play. But, no matter how badly you may have wanted to do well, you weren’t going to be your best. More importantly, you weren’t going to be what our team needed. You could have tried to rise to the occasion but it would matter because you weren’t ready. You didn’t have it in you to be at your best. You couldn’t rise to the occasion because you hadn’t prepared.”

Demetrius thought about this for a moment and it was like a lightbulb came on above his head.

“My grandpa used to say something weird that I just thought about as you were talking. He used to use an Abe Lincoln quote. I guess honest Abe would say that if he had six hours to cut down a tree, he’d spend the first four hours sharpening the blade.”

“That’s cool. I hadn’t heard that one before,” said Bobbi. “I wasn’t a Boy Scout and I don’t know how to tie those cool fancy knots, but their motto is ‘Always be Prepared’. I think if we did a little more of that, then we’d be ready for our opportunities when they come our way.”

Just then, Mr. Frank approached the two players as they were talking at the truck stop.