

Keep Fighting

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A tear slid down Damian's bristly cheek. His wife had gone to rest in her hospital room, so he wasn't worried about letting it escape. Clenching his fists, Damian whispered, "Keep fighting Meg, keep fighting."

His daughter, their first child, was breathing slowly inside her incubator. He felt so vulnerable at being helpless to ease her pain. With each heaving breath Meg took, her Dad urged her on, "Fight, fight! Lord, give her strength."

Wiping his eyes with a flannel sleeve, he closed them and took a deep breath, "Lord, give me strength. You know I would take her place if I could."

With a final fierce whisper he begged, "Lord, please don't take her from us, don't take her from me."

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Zippering down the field, Meg could hear her Dad urging her on from the sidelines, "Keep fighting, just a few more feet and you'll have a perfect shot."

It was all she needed. Another burst of adrenaline and she outstripped the left wing defender and laid all her might into the ball. The ball hurtled through the air, straight for the upper right corner of the goal. With a resounding twang it glanced against the post and was flung out of bounds. The referee's whistle signaled the end of the game. Meg's team lost 7-6 in the final play-off game.

Meg was silent the whole car ride back. Her Dad knew she was taking it hard and needed time to relax.

"That was a phenomenal shot, Megster."

"What!" Meg exclaimed. "It sailed clear over the goal!" She pulled out her ponytail and let it fall into a tangled mess on her shoulders.

"I'm serious, kiddo; just 'cause it didn't make it in doesn't mean it wasn't a good shot. You've gotten so much better since second grade."

Meg was beginning to see her Dad's point.

"Yeah, you're right. I mean, I wouldn't have even made it this far if you'd let me quit when I couldn't manage those long shots." She glanced up at her Dad, a sly smirk was on his face.

"Your first nickname wasn't 'little foot' for nothing you know. In fact when you were first born you had really little feet, about the size of the top of my thumb." His smile deepened as he reached out a hand to grab hers. "I didn't let you give up then and I won't let you give up now, but you have to trust too."

Pulling into their driveway he parked and turned to Meg.

"I won't always be there to push you on, but you have a coach that will never let you down. He certainly didn't fail me when I thought we might lose our first battle."