

Foiled Plans

Flash Fiction

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Glad Tidings Church

1,197

I tried to calm my nerves as I wiped my sweaty palms on my pants. I slipped my thick fencing jacket on. Silently, I prayed, *God; help me be at the top of my game today.*

As I glanced at the clock, the teenager sitting next to me brought up the subject of my nervousness. “So, who do you think will win these final bouts?” Cameron asked, shaking his brown hair from his face. “It comes down to today. That scholarship’s to the #1 college to fence at: Penn State!”

“Well,” Kyle answered, “look at the odds. We’ve all gotten to the final level, but there can only be one winner: the best fencer here.” As he pushed his blonde hair back with his hand, I could guess easily to whom Kyle was referring.

I could feel my face twist, disgusted. Kyle was an exceptional fencer, but not enough to be bragging like *that*. His parents had wealth, and he showed it off daily. I’d made a goal to invite Kyle to church, but hadn’t had the opportunity yet. *I’m sorry, Lord; I prayed silently, clear my thoughts. Help me to... to be gracious to Kyle.* Everything inside me wanted to tell him what a horrible person he was, but I knew Jesus was forgiving. I decided that following his example would be the best thing to do.

Cameron sighed.

At that moment, Coach Dennis stepped into the room. After giving us his short you-will-all-do-great speech, he declared, “Now get to the main room for the announcements.”

We filed out of the locker room and onto the main floor that held both fencing strips.

I'd trained here every day after school. Every spare minute I had, I put into fencing. My dream was to go to Penn State, and maybe get skilled enough to compete in the Olympics. My parents said that I had to get a scholarship to fence at a college at all. Unlike Kyle, my parents were in a difficult financial situation, and they couldn't pay without bankrupting themselves. I was on my own. I'd prayed that I could win this scholarship, because it's my last hope and best bet of being able to attend my dream college.

"Here are the semi-final bout pairs; Max and Josh, Kyle and Cameron." Coach Dennis announced. As the boys scurried to their assigned strips, Coach Dennis stopped me. "I've seen you fence before, you can be unstoppable. Don't be nervous."

"Thanks, Coach." I said. Coach Dennis's words of encouragement echoed through my head as I walked to strip 1. Max was recorded as a challenging opponent, and I hoped that Coach Dennis was right about me being unstoppable. *God, help me glorify you, and give me the strength for what comes next.*

After I attached to the signaling-equipment, I saluted Max, the director, and the audience. I walked up to Max and gently tested my foil against the boy's chest, and Max did the same to me. Red and green lights came on. We were ready. My heart was beating faster than before.

"En Garde!" The director called. "Ready, fencers?"

"Ready!" We both called.

"Fence!" The director exclaimed.

We were off. Both of us jumped into action. Max attacked suddenly, his entire form roaring with aggression. Instinctively, I responded by parrying his attack and 'riposting', making

a counter-attack. I scored a point. The director called halt and restarted the match. My heart was still beating wildly and I prayed, *Thank you Jesus. I can do all things through you, who strengthens me.*

Max growled like a wild dog and attacked, flying. I parried and riposted, scoring once more. Then, I went on the offensive, only to be caught off guard by Max binding my foil and scoring a point. Sweating, we continued dancing back and forth across the strip, but the torture finally ended in an insanely intense but close game, 5-4, and I was the victor.

Once we had shaken hands, Max walked up to me and said, “Good game.”

“Good game,” I answered, unable to hold back a small smile.

I went to the locker room and prayed, *God, thank You for allowing me to win this bout. Give me strength for one more.*

Just as I had feared, Kyle had won his match also, and we would face each other. The winner would get the scholarship. We walked onto the strip, tested our weapons, and I saluted him. I bowed my head for a second, *I know it comes down to this, God. Strengthen me; let Your will be done.*

“Ready, fencers?” The director asked.

“Ready,” Kyle and I confirmed.

Kyle launched at me, arm extended. I parried and riposted, scoring the first point of the bout. Kyle yelled with rage. Attacking again, Kyle half-ran to me and scored a point that hit me so hard, the sword bent in half.

The fight seemed to drag on forever, every once in a while one of us would score a point. Then the score was 4-4.

The next point wins the match.

Hands shaking, I bit my lip. My heart seemed ready to burst out of my chest.

I advanced on Kyle and lunged. Kyle parried, lunged, and scored.

I stood still, paralyzed. I had lost. The thought echoed in my mind. Nightmares had become reality. What have I done wrong? Why did this door close? I saluted Kyle and shook his hand. I walked off of the strip, hoping I would wake up and find myself only in a dream. A sense of dread filled me.

I..... had..... lost.

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Sunday – Church 11:00

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I hadn't been able to shake the feeling of disappointment from losing that shot at my dream college. I was about to walk away from my friends and find my family when Jackson, a friend of my father's, walked up to me, smiling. "I'm glad to have found you, Josh! I have to ask you a question."

I turned my attention to him.

“I heard about the scholarship yesterday, and I wouldn’t ask you if you’d won. But, I’m going on a missions trip to France this summer, and I need someone who knows how to fence. We’re going to do a fencing camp for kids, which makes you perfect for the job.” Seeing my surprised look, he continued, “You don’t have to make the decision now. I just wanted to let you know. And, I’ll pay your way. Money’s not a problem.”

“Thanks,” I said. He nodded and left me with my thoughts. Slowly, I made my way to the nearest bench. Sliding myself down, I thought about Jackson’s proposal. Had God closed the door to the scholarship for this? What if I wasn’t cut out to go to college for fencing? Was I meant to wield God’s double-edged sword, along with my foil?

I knew what my answer was. I was going to France. Immediately, I knew why I had been in such a daze since the competition. It was as if I felt like God let me down, but I knew that was impossible. I understood why a moment after.

I hadn’t lost anything.

I... had... won.