

Season of Revenge

By Ava Westart

I took in everything around me, the squeaking of the shoes, the glare on the court from the lights, the smell of popcorn from the concession stands. It was game time.

Our team had a lot of history together, we played basketball together practically every year then, boom, Coronavirus. Out of nowhere it just appeared and ruins any chances at playing sports. Our basketball team had to be set to rest for almost three years. Three years worth of longing to play, built up. Then once things started to clear up, it was time that we could finally play again. Not in sweaty masks and extra timeouts just to get a mask break, but as if Coronavirus never happened. We had the advantage, we had everything a team needs to be a good team! Sportsmanship, equal goals, and years of experience together.

Once things cleared up, it was our seventh grade year and we had joined our school's basketball team. Seventh grade's third game of the season couldn't have come faster. It was near 7:00 at night at United Jr High, and two teams were fighting for the win in basketball. It was United vs Knoxville. The United girls basketball team hadn't yet won a game, technically. Our first game had to be forfeited by the other team, and we lost by a close score on our second and third game. But forget about that, those games don't matter now.

We were a pretty good team. We were well experienced and knowledgeable when it comes to basketball, although we didn't look like much. We had a very small team as we were simply made up of eight players. We had two main post guards which were Kora and Cameron who were probably around 5'7, 5'6. They were like sisters almost, it was obvious they had a pretty close bond. They were always our main post guards, if not, either Ella or me was playing post.

Apart from that we had a bunch of guards, our team wasn't very popular with people of height. Our guards were Mallory, Jordyn, Reagan, Attie and me. I'm someone who can really play any position, but normally post guard or guard were my main positions. But enough of that, let's get to the point.

Like I mentioned, our team had played for years. Looking back at our team's history together, most of us have played basketball since the 1st grade. You would find the same people on the basketball team every year! That's why Knoxville was a big deal, in our past years of playing, Knoxville destroyed our team. Mostly just one player caught our eye, #40. She was the star of the Knoxville team, she was strong, aggressive and it was obvious she was a good basketball player. We couldn't match up the years before and suffered large defeats against them. But I knew this year was different, Knoxville better watch out because we were a team who was eager for a win!

"Fall back!" our coach yells from the bench.

Before long, it had been 4th quarter and Knoxville had stolen the ball again. I had set up on top of the key getting ready to guard #40. We were winning 18-17, we had this game in the bag. But we had to hold them, a minute and forty-three seconds on the clock. We set up back on Knoxville's side of the court, sweat was trickling down my face. #40 dribbled down the court, she did a few crossovers but we knew her pattern. She dribbled to my left, and I chased after her.

Knoxville set a screen I didn't see coming, **THUMP!** I slammed into another Knoxville player. I felt this sharp pain on top of my head as I lost balance and fell to the ground. Whoever had set the screen on me had slammed the end of their jaw on top of my head!

I was laying on the floor trying to recover, I couldn't see a thing behind me. The next thing I knew I heard massive cheering arrive from the bleachers. But it wasn't our side, Knoxville had gone in for the point, 18-19. *I can't believe it!* I thought as I tried to stand up.

I was taken out of the game, my head was pounding. I was sitting on the bench disappointed, my mind was running in circles. *We are so close, we can't lose this now!*

In the meantime, I sat on the bench with sorrow, my stomach churning. Somebody handed me an ice pack for my head, I looked away to grab it. Out of nowhere, I heard a familiar sound, the audience was crying cheers from the bleachers. My head whipped back over to the court, my heart is beating faster than ever before. Hope filled every part of me, hope that they were cheering for us.

They were! Cameron had made the shot and brought us up two points! 20-19, I smiled brightly, every sick feeling in my stomach, every speck of disappointment flooded away instantly! I screamed out cheers, proud of my team. Slowly, I felt the pain on my head start to fade away. I forgot the ice pack and turned full attention to the court. It was our ball now, our team was running back down the court.

"Ava, are you able to go back out?" the coach asked.

Our post was starting to get tired, they needed a break. I was ready to head back out though, so I subbed in for our post.

I got back out of the court, *53 seconds..* My anxiety was higher than a kite. Knoxville played aggressively and kept getting way too close to the net. Seconds went by as we were running up and down the court fighting violently for who had the ball. I glanced up at the scoreboard, *only 18 seconds left, we got this.* We set up at our side of the court. *No need to do anything, just keep the ball out of their hands...* We were stalling, there was no way we were

going to do something dumb that gave them a chance to take the ball. I took another glance at the scoreboard, *only 8 seconds*.

Our point guard was standing with the ball, rotating herself to keep the ball out of their hands. 5.. 4.. 3.. 2.. 1.. **BZZZZ!** That was the ball game! We won! All the stress and fear was pushed away by the excitement and happiness that filled me.

It was a close game, but we learned that with everyone having an aggressive attitude and everyone using teamwork, we would always win. That was a game I'll remember for the rest of the season.