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Almost the President

“Struggle of the Titans?” my best friend Tommy Kasten blurted out. “Your dad made up Struggle of the Titans?”

“Yeah yeah yeah,” Alex McLeod said, his legs and head bobbing up and down. “With three other guys in his company.”

“Best game ever!” Tommy started making ray gun noises like he was fighting a space alien.

“I’ve never heard of it,” Ellen Holmes said.

“I can’t wait for your dad to come in, Alex,” Robby Rosen said. “Maybe he’ll bring in free games for each of us.”





“That would be awesome,” said Hector Adélia, another one of my best friends.

“He can’t,” Alex said. “He’s going on a business trip that week.”

A bunch of us were sitting at lunch in the cafeteria talking about Career Week, which my fourth-grade class was having in two weeks. Every afternoon, parents would come in to talk to us about their jobs.

Ellen, Robby, Hector, and Alex were in Mrs. Burke’s class with me. Tommy was in Mrs. Ladislavski’s class (everyone calls her “Mrs. L.”) and so was Tracy Hazlett, who was also sitting at our table.

“I hope Tricia’s dad comes and brings stuff for us,” I said.

“What’s he do?” Alex asked.

“She told me he works for a company that makes all sorts of sports jerseys and hats. Maybe he’ll bring everyone a hat.”

“I wish *we* were having Career Week,” Tommy





groaned. “Mrs. L.’s class always has Rainforest Week. No one gets jerseys or hats on Rainforest Week.”

“Maria’s parents run a bakery,” Alex said. “Maybe they’ll bring in something to eat.”

“Oh, man, I *love* their bakery!” Tommy said. “Sometimes we get their cinnamon rolls on Saturday mornings. Maybe I could transfer to your class for the week.”

“Charlie, what do your parents do?” Robby asked.

I hadn’t asked my parents to come in for Career Week.

Mostly because I forgot.

My parents didn’t design games or bake rolls or make jerseys and hats.

“My mom’s a nurse,” I said. “She visits people in their homes. My dad’s an accountant.”

“What’s that?” Robby asked.

“He mostly works with numbers.”





“He just sits around adding and subtracting numbers all day? That sounds really boring,” Robby said, faking a big yawn.

“My dad’s not boring,” I glared at Robby. “He’s... he’s great at math.”

“A math genius,” Tommy added.

My best friend has a way of exaggerating things.

“Really?” Tracy asked. “A genius?”

She smiled at me, which made my stomach very confused. I don’t know why. I always have a hard time talking to Tracy Hazlett, which I don’t want to talk about.

“Um, yeah,” I said. “He’s really smart. He makes a lot of decisions for his company.”

“Like what?” Robby asked.

Actually, I didn’t know what kind of decisions my dad made. I remembered once my dad told us that Mr. Jameson, the president of the company, had called him in for a private talk. I could tell my dad thought it was important.

“Big business stuff,” I said. “Like when the





president needs to know something, he always asks my dad.”

“Whoop-de-doo,” said Robby. “Numbers are boring. My dad builds houses, and sometimes he lets me come and help him.”

My dad had never asked me to help him at work. Sometimes he brought papers home and worked on his computer, but he’d never really showed me what he did.

“If my dad came in, you’d see how awesome he is,” I said. “He’s got a very important job.”

“Like almost the president?” Tracy Hazlett asked.

“Well, almost,” I said.

“Do you think your dad would really come in, Charlie?” Alex asked.

“I forgot to ask him. If Mrs. Burke still needs another parent, though, I bet he would.”

“If he comes in, I hope he doesn’t give us multiplication problems,” Robby muttered.

“He’d be stupid,” Tommy added. “Stupid” is a





word Tommy and I made up that means stupendous and terrific. “I’ve seen him do cool tricks with calculators.”

“Calculators?” Alex asked. “Could he bring in calculators?”

Just then the buzzer sounded and lunch period was over. Everybody got up from the table, but I just sat there holding my milk carton, thinking about my dad and Career Week.





Tracy Hazlett smiled at me as she left. “I hope your dad gets to come speak to your class.”

I tried to smile back, but my mouth twisted in a weird way.

“Let’s go, Charlie,” Tommy said. “Don’t waste recess!”

I got up to follow the others to recess, but I couldn’t get my mind off my dad’s job. What did he really do? I wondered if his boss Mr. Grimaldi would even give him the afternoon off to come into school. Maybe my dad *could* come in. And maybe he could do something cool. And maybe someday he’d be president of the company.

Or maybe not.

Sometimes I have a big blabby mouth.

