

# Wise Or Foolish

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“ Come in.”

“ Good morning, Captain.”

I walked into a huge office filled, wall to wall with pennants and medals. What a sight to see.

“ Tell me what happened last night.”

“ Well, captain, it was like this. We finished the training, and were going back to the dormitory....”

I was the first one to tell him the story. Then the monitor Wanchen had given her point of view.

Each story was the same yet a bit different. We all told the truth.

Last night after our training, we were gathered in front of the dormitory. With a stick in his hands, sergeant Liu was walking back and forth severely berating his group of trainees.



“ Listen! I give you 10 minutes. All of you must be in bed and asleep. None of you can brush your teeth. Is that clear? I will come and check!”

Reactions were quickly whispered around. “ Just 10 minutes!” “ How dumb he is.” “ I want to go home , mmpp.” “Damn!”

“ How can he check the girls’ room? We are girls!” Wanchen whispered, with her hands around her mouth and close to my left ear.

“ I don’t get it. Why can’t we brush our teeth?” I whispered back to her.

“ Now... go!” Sergeant cried, and pressed the timer in his hand.

All of a sudden, no one stood still or walked at grandma speed. Everybody ran like an arrow which had just left the bow.



My heart jumped like a deer. I quickly went upstairs, grabbed my toothbrush and toothpaste, rushed to the washroom and brushed my teeth. I knew that he did not allow us to brush our teeth, but I did not think much about it at that time. The sound of a dentist's electric drill was lingering in my ears. After brushing my teeth, just walking out of the washroom on my way to the dormitory, a rasping voice came from behind me.

"Damn!" Cautiously, I bowed my head and glanced at my watch. That was not even 10 minutes yet.

"Don't you know my orders? NO BRUSHING TEETH!" His voice was rough and strict.

Should I respond to this comment? How should I reply? Should I say, "Sir, I am sorry to disobey your orders," or "Sir, I know what your orders are but I will get a decayed tooth if I don't brush my teeth," or, what I really wanted to say was "You stupid idiot, you must have a mouth full of decayed teeth. I don't want to be like you." I hated him, but I knew that I had to be polite.

Regardless, he was older than me.

A strong and very severe looking man was standing in front of me, crossing his arms over his chest. After taking a deep breath, I said "Sir, I am sorry but..."

"Since you knew my order and you still disobey my rules, go downstairs and do one hundred push ups in front of everybody," he interrupted loudly and rudely.

One hundred push ups! I could not even do five completely. I was not going to do that in front of everyone. That was humiliating. And I didn't think I was wrong. His orders were unreasonable.

Why should I listen to him? The reason why I brushed my teeth was because of my health. If I had a bad tooth, my mom was going to have to pay \$100 to fix my teeth. Why would I expect my mom to pay \$100 for me, just because of that absurd order? NO! I did nothing wrong. Well, I had to explain, and we needed to talk about this.

“ Sir, may I explain?... ”

Again, he interrupted me. He was so rude, and I was so angry. Yet, I had to cool down.

“ No explanations!”

His voice was getting louder and louder, but no one dared to be a onlooker. Sergeant Liu ‘s face was contorted with rage. Then, he grabbed my toothpaste and toothbrush and angrily threw them on the floor.

“ If you don’t want to do one hundred push ups, you must stand here for the whole night.”

For 10 hours! I had to choose which option to take or get into trouble again.

“ Yes, sir. I will stand here for the whole night.” I answered.

Perhaps, he did not think that I would choose the second one. To stand for 10 hours was not a problem for me. I would not be hurt anyway. However, this could be a big problem for him. He could be in jail. In China there is a rule which states that it is considered abusive if a teacher uses methods of violence against the student, such as beatings or standing for a long time. This constitutes a crime and the People's Court will hold the teacher criminally responsible. He walked into the girls’ dormitory, with a severe looking face and cried out, “ All of you come out, in 20 seconds.”

Later, my teammates were gathered in front of the dormitory. Lots of eyes were focused on me, for they all knew what happened because the voice of the Sergeant was extremely loud and they were all listening.

“ I said no teeth brushing, but this ignorant girl disobeyed my orders.” He glanced at me, “This is a team and all of you must obey my orders.”

The word “ignorant” infuriated me. I could not bear any more because he insulted my personality.

“ The reason why I...,”

He interrupted me again, but this time I didn’t stop.

“ I will have a decayed tooth if I don’t brush my teeth. This related to my health, so I have to do that.”

“ A decayed tooth? My father had not brush his teeth for 76 years, and he did not have any decayed teeth,” he said confidently. “ You are so misbehaved that I cannot discipline you anymore. You have three choices. The first one is tomorrow morning, you drop out of the team, or you can tell the captain to replace me with a new sergeant, or you can lead your teammates and all of you quit this training. Clear?”

He was pointing at me and said, “ You go back to sleep and give me your answer tomorrow morning. All of you listen. Tomorrow morning, I want you gathered here before you brush your teeth. Clear?”

“ Yes, sir!” All of us answered loudly.

As we were walking upstairs to our rooms, Wanchen said “ Don’t drop out the team. We are a team.” Then she gave me a hug.

The others whispered, “ You are so brave. No one dared to talk to him like that.” “ Please stay. This is not your fault.” ...

I felt so delighted. Now, my teammates were all supporting me. Tomorrow was unpredictable but one thing I was sure of he was playing a power game.



The next day, as he ordered we gathered at 7 in the morning. Everybody was yawning and looked tired.

He was sitting on a stair and shaking his legs. What a naive me! I thought he would forget last night's event. After all, he was older than me. However, he wanted to make a fool of me.

"What is your decision? Are you ready to drop out of the team? Call your mom to pick you up."

A slight smile spread over his face.

"Don't answer him. Stay here," whispered Wanchen.

I thought I should not answer, They say that speech is silver but silence is golden.

"Now, everybody can go to the cafeteria, except you." He was looking at me and the snaky eyes were filled with ridicule.

Yet, no one moved, no one talked. They all bowed their heads, looking at the ground.

He swung his chunky arm and pointed to the direction of the cafeteria, "I say, go to eat your breakfast!" he said impatiently.

Again, no one moved and no one talked. Just then the captain passed by.

"What happened?" the Captain frowned and sounded stern.

The atmosphere was silent and tense. Sergeant Liu was staring at me, irritatingly.

The captain was pointing at me, and said seriously, "You! Come to my office and bring the monitor."

On my way to his office I remembered the saying, "Rules are made for the obedience of fools and the guidance of wise men." I hope the captain was a wise man, not a fool