

Lucas Green

Dr. Lowe

EH101 - Paper 1

9-14-18

Holding Yourself Up

The smell of cleaning solution, plastic beds, and sweat filled my nostrils as I wiped my brow. I'd been in and out of this damn clinic three times a week for five months, and I still sweat like a pig during every workout. I had hoped I'd be used to it by now, but somehow I knew that I never would be. I was tired of seeing the same eggshell walls and multicolored exercise equipment but most of all the workout; this injury didn't just take my body away from me but also my sanity. If I had to spend much more time surrounded by these elderly people, who were all dealing with their own problems but never did anything to get better, I was going to be joining them in a mental institution soon.

"C'mon, Lucas, you've still got to do your squats, good-mornings, bird dogs, bosu balance, and lunges," Chelsea, my therapist, said while she scanned over the clipboard holding my report and my routine for the day.

"Yeah, just give me a second," I huffed, wrapping my hands around the horizontal metal beams supporting me. I bent my knees slowly and lowered my body towards the ground, my injured leg shaking like a toothpick under stress. I pressed off the floor and upwards.

"*One*," I grunted, my leg muscles quickly burning out.

"Another," she urged me on. I tried to wipe the sweat off my forehead again, but the perspiration that had formed on my hands prevented this and just made my forehead even more

disgusting. I began my second squat but a spasm shot through my quad as I went downward, and I fell to the ground in a yelp of pain.

“Lucas!” Chelsea dropped to a knee to help me up, but I threw her off and pulled myself up.

“Are you okay?”

“Damn it—I’m fine! I’m just tired, I can’t feel my legs, I’m sore, and I don’t wanna be in this clinic anymore. I don’t care that the doctor says I need another two months of therapy—my knee works fine when I’m not constantly doing these *ridiculous* workouts that never seem to work! I’ve been running on my own for two weeks now! Shouldn’t I be fine to go back to working out on my own?”

“You need to listen to your doctor, Lucas, he’s the professional.”

“Well, it’s *my* knee, not his. I would think that I understand how it feels more than he does!”

“I know you’re tired, and you think you’re ready, but you’re not. You’ve got to push through this.” Chelsea handed me an old white towel, and as she spoke, I thought back to the words of my coach from my first ever wrestling practice in seventh grade.

“Everyone get back in here *now!*” Coach Christopher barked at us from inside the matroom as I leaned down, desperate for a sip of water. My thirst wasn’t quenched, however; a senior wrestler yanked me by the collar of my shirt away from the fountain. We all stumbled into the matroom, and I chose a spot in the back, apart from the seniors and the coaches.

“We’re going to start my favorite end-of-practice drill!” Coach continued. “It’s called the twenty-one drill, for you newcomers—allow me to shed some light on what this new hell is

called. Twenty-one push ups then twenty-one crunches for the first set. The next set we will do eighteen of each, every set will count down by three until we reach zero—got it?”

It didn't sound fun, but it certainly didn't seem like hell.

“The most important detail about this drill, however,” he continued, dropping the final blow, “is that I can restart the drill *whenever* I feel like!” He laughed with sadistic joy.

That sounded like hell.

He dropped us to the mat, and we began the drill, all in sync—not just with our repetitions, but also with our suffering. After restarting the torture four times and doing roughly 300 reps of each exercise, each more painful than the last, Coach Christopher made his way to the back of the matroom and stood over my quivering body as he scolded me in an attempt to break my spirit.

“You look like shit, Green!” he spat while we held a push-up position. He was right; I did, in fact, look like shit. At some point during the drill, it seemed a demon had come along and replaced my arms and shoulders with columns of jello.

“Down!”

We all responded in unison. “Twenty-one!”

“What are you even doing here, Green?” He scolded me again. “You can go home whenever you want!” He pointed at the door that led out of the matroom, to the locker room, and to the parking lot. He knelt down and whispered in my ear. “You don't have to go through this you know. It's only the first practice; there's no shame in quitting. This sport isn't for everyone.”

“Well, that just made me wanna stay *longer*, Coach,” I responded with a smirk.

“Alright then, Green! We'll see how bad you really wanna be here! Rapid fire!”

I had pissed him off now, and I could feel the eyes of the rest of the team on me. We began an onslaught of unrelenting push-ups. None of the reps counted for our running drill set, and once it finally ended, my arms were running on empty.

“What’s the matter, Green? I thought you *wanted* to be here!”

I gritted my teeth. “I do, Coach!”

“Then get back into push-up position!”

“I can’t, coach!” I struggled, straining to hold myself up.

“You *can’t*?” Coach yanked me off the ground by my collar. “You will *never* say those words in my matroom ever again—if you even come back. *Can’t* isn’t a word that we use as wrestlers.” He turned and raised his voice so that the whole team could hear him. “From now on, anyone that uses the word *can’t* will be subject to my preferred version of the twenty-one drill: the *fifty* drill. Understood?”

Our collective response of compliance of, “Yes Coach!” thundered through the matroom.

Coach Christopher returned his attention to me once again. “You’ve gotta learn to push through adversity, Green, or else you’ll always be the kid in the back of the room barely holding yourself up.” He dropped me, and I thudded onto the wrestling mat. “Now *finish the damn drill.*”

“Lucas?” Chelsea’s voice brought me back to reality.

“Huh?” I blinked and shook my head as the words of my old wrestling coach still echoed in my head.

“You still here?” She asked me.

“Yeah, my bad.” I started doing my squats again, but as I did them, I paused and looked at Chelsea. “Sorry for yelling at you.”

“It’s fine.” She laughed, “I was expecting it to happen at some point during our time together. It won’t bother me, as long as you don’t still plan on quitting. Do you?”

“I’m still holding myself up here aren’t I?” I smirked.