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# The Road Less Traveled

Kamber LeForce

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# THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED

BY Kamber LeForce

“Be a leader. Be a leader. Do not be a follower. Life is a big journey. Make your presence known in this world by your actions and not your word.” These are words that my parents instilled in me as a child. Little did I know how these words would make a difference in my life years later.

It was just like any other football Friday night for me, or I thought it was. I was on a bus full of loud, rambunctious cheerleaders on the way to a football game. I was the lone freshman on the cheerleading squad, which made it very difficult for me to fit in with the group. I wanted to be with the popular crowd, but I was very shy and did not like to talk much. Instead, I would just stay out of everyone’s way and mind my own business.

Under the bright lights, I cheered on our boys to a victory. I tried my best to be involved in every part of the game. Listening to the crowd’s laughter, fans yelling at the referees, fist bumping the football players, sweaty children screaming from behind the bleachers, and the clapping of the fans made my Friday nights. I can still smell the salty, buttered popcorn and the taste of creamy hot chocolate on my lips from those chilly, bitter Friday nights.

That Friday night, at halftime, I was asked a question by the head cheerleader who just happened to be, in my opinion, the most popular girl in school. What a shock! She asked me if I would like to stay at her house after the game with some other girls. I wanted to say “Yes” immediately, but I knew I would have to ask my parents first, and that is just what I did. I probably hurdled everything in my way as I ran towards them to get permission.

“Yes, as long as you go straight to her house after the game.” I was ecstatic to go tell her I could stay with her. I could hardly wait for the game to finally end. We finished cheering for our team and went home with a big win that night.

As happy as I was, it did not take long before my happiness waned because the head cheerleader failed to give me all the information about what we were doing after the game.

“I can go as long as we are going straight to your house,” I told her.

“Kamber, do you think I would ask you to come along if we were just going to my house?”

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“I thought that is why you asked me,” I paused. “What other reason would you have invited me to go home with you?”

“I want you to go to a party with us and all the other cheerleaders.”

As we carried on our conversation, she told me I needed to make up my mind because we needed to leave. I did not know what to do in this situation. It was the first time I was ever invited to hang out with the cool, popular kids. I knew if I went along with her, I would be lying to my parents. I did not want to say no and be rejected by the kids I wanted to be with, but I knew it was decision time.

At that very moment the words I was taught as a child came back to me, and I knew which path I had to choose. I was embarrassed to have to tell the head cheerleader that I did not want to go to the party. She joked with me about it, while the rest of the cheerleaders laughed at me. I could feel a river rushing towards my eyes, but the tears did not dance down my face until I got to my parents’ car.

The next Monday, many of the students, including the cheerleaders, did not show up at school. I was told that the party the cheerleaders went to was busted because of a noise complaint. The cops stopped the party, and many high school kids got in trouble for doing illegal things. Even the ones that did not do anything illegal at the party got in trouble. These kids, who were only in high school, got in trouble with the law.

Whenever I hear younger students or my peers talk about who they would like to hang out with or what party they want to attend, I just smile and continue to do what I like to do. I do not need to follow in other’s footsteps; instead I need to be opening the doors for others who really want to make better decisions. I have realized that saying “no” that one time has made me into the person I am today. I am now strong enough to not care what people think about me and my decisions. The road I chose was the best for me – the road less traveled.

