

By Darcie Jensen
(Based on a true story)

"Today, today, work while you may; prepare for tomorrow by working today" (Hymns, no. 229).

Band class was ending. Miss Strand, my teacher, said, "Remember that chair tests are tomorrow."

Miss Strand used chair tests to decide which order we sat in. Each band member played for the whole class, and the one who played each instrument the best sat "first chair" for that instrument.

But I wasn't too worried. I had been first chair in the clarinets ever since I started playing last year. I had a perfect record.

"Are you nervous?" my friend Jason asked me. Jason had started learning the clarinet at the same time I had. He had always been second chair.

"Not really," I answered.

"I'm going to go home and practice," he said. "I'm not ready for the test yet."

I don't need to practice, I thought as we packed up our instruments. *I've been first chair all year.*

After school I did my homework and played with my friends. I didn't even think about the test.

Before I knew it, I was in class the next day

and Miss Strand was saying, "Let's start the chair tests with the clarinets."

I was a little nervous as I played—I wasn't as prepared as I thought I was. But when I finished, I was sure that I would be first chair again.

When all of the clarinet players had finished, Miss Strand announced the test results.

"First chair: Jason. Second chair: Darcie . . ." Miss Strand continued, but I had stopped listening. I was *second* chair! I looked up at her in shock, and I

Maybe I wasn't as prepared as I thought I was.

realized she was waiting for me to move.

Slowly I switched chairs with Jason. I felt my face turning red, and I blinked hard to keep my tears back. My perfect record was gone!

"You did a good job," Jason said. I just nodded. If I spoke, I was afraid I would burst into tears.

When I got home from school, I ran straight to my room and cried.

Mom came in and asked, "What's wrong?"

"Jason got first chair today," I sobbed. "How am I supposed to be the best clarinet player now?"

Mom hugged me. "Did you practice last night?" she asked.

"No," I said.

Mom looked at me and asked, "Do you think you would have played better if you had practiced?"

I nodded. Mom was right. I hadn't practiced, but Jason had. He had been more prepared for the test.

Mom continued, "Even if you had practiced hard and still gotten second chair, that would be OK. Being in band is not about being *the* best; it's about doing *your* best. You shouldn't worry if you're doing the best you can do."

The next day Miss Strand started class by saying, "I want you all to know that I'm proud of you. You are all working hard so that our band can play beautiful music. Our band sounds great when everyone works hard together."

Miss Strand's words made me feel a little better about sitting second chair. *I should want all the band members to do their best so the band can keep getting better and better*, I thought.

I smiled at Jason. He looked happy to be first chair. I realized that I really wanted him to play well too.

It was OK if I was a not-so-perfect clarinetist. It didn't matter where I sat as long as I was doing my best. ♦

The author lives in Utah, USA.



"Do your best with the talents your Father in Heaven has given you."³

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

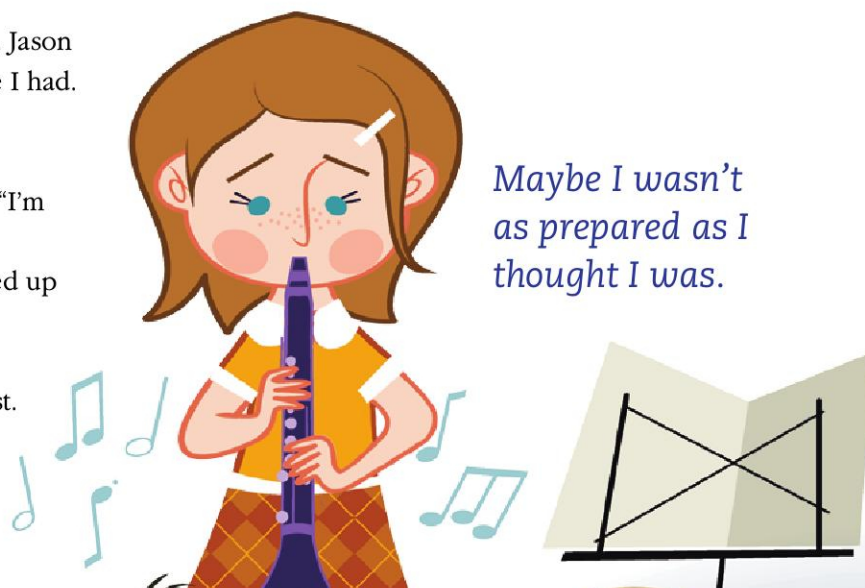


ILLUSTRATION BY BRYAN BEACH

THE NOT-SO-PERFECT CLARINETIST