Name _____ Date _____

Internal and External Conflict: The Captain's Armband

Directions: Read the story carefully, paying attention to what Dani wants, what she owes her friend and the pressure she faces from the people around her. Then answer each question using the words and actions in the story.

The Captain's Armband

After practice on Tuesday, Coach Alvarez held the captain's armband across his desk. "Tessa has missed three practices in a row, and the rule is three and you lose the band," he said, "so it's yours for Friday if you want it."

Dani had wanted that strip of yellow cloth since her first week as a freshman, when she watched a senior jog out for the coin toss as if the field belonged to her. Last summer she had even practiced calling "Heads" into the bathroom mirror, imagining the coin in the air.

She did not reach for the armband, though, because she knew where Tessa had been. Since Tessa's mother had started working evenings, Tessa had been leaving at the last bell to walk her twin brothers home, and practice ran until five. Tessa had begged her not to tell Coach, since she wanted no special deal and nobody's pity, and Dani had promised.

"Maybe she has a good reason," Dani said carefully.

"Then she can come and tell me the reason," he said, "because a rule I bend for one player isn't a rule anymore." He slid the armband an inch closer to her and said, "You have until Thursday."

In the locker room, Kendra slammed her locker door. "Take it," she said, "because Tessa doesn't even show up anymore, and some of us actually care about this team." Dani opened her mouth and closed it again, because the only real defense she could offer was the one thing she had promised not to say.

That night she typed a text to Tessa, *Can I tell Coach why?*, and stared at it until the screen went dark, and then deleted it one letter at a time.

On Wednesday, Tessa's place at the end of the warm-up line stayed empty, and Dani missed two easy passes because she kept glancing at the gate.

On Thursday she went back to the office, where the armband still lay on the desk, and told the coach she did not want it. He leaned back and said, "That's not what your face said on Tuesday."

"It's Tessa's," Dani said, and when he pointed out that Tessa wasn't here, she made herself hold his gaze. "I know, and I can't tell you why, but it's still hers."

He studied her for a long moment before he said, "Then it goes to Kendra." As she reached the door, he added, "You'd make a good captain, you know, and that's the annoying part."

On Friday, Kendra jogged out for the coin toss with the yellow band around her arm. Dani watched from the sideline, and the old wanting rose in her chest, every bit as strong as it had been in front of the bathroom mirror, and she let herself feel it. Then Tessa slid in beside her, breathless, her brothers waving from the bleachers, and asked what had

happened.

"Long story," Dani said, and handed her a water bottle.

1. In "The Captain's Armband," Dani is pulled in two directions from the moment Coach Alvarez holds the armband across his desk. Which pair of motives creates her internal conflict?

A. Her ambition to be captain and her fear that she would be an ineffective leader

B. Her long-held ambition to be captain and her loyalty to Tessa

C. Her respect for Coach Alvarez and her resentment of team rules

D. Her loyalty to Tessa and her desire for Kendra's approval

2. When Dani says carefully, "Maybe she has a good reason," Coach Alvarez answers, "Then she can come and tell me the reason," and adds that a rule he bends for one player "isn't a rule anymore." How does his answer tighten the conflict for Dani?

A. It proves that the coach is indifferent to why players miss practice.

B. It reveals that the coach already knows about Tessa's responsibilities at home.

C. It means that Dani must make her decision before she leaves the office.

D. It means that the one thing that might save Tessa's armband is the reason Dani has promised to keep secret.

3. In the locker room, Kendra tells Dani that "some of us actually care about this team" and urges her to take the armband, while Dani "opened her mouth and closed it again" without saying a word. How does this outside conflict with a teammate press on Dani's internal conflict?

A. Kendra's words persuade Dani to take the armband after all.

B. Dani secretly agrees with Kendra but is too timid to admit it.

C. Kendra's attack makes Dani want to defend Tessa, but the only real defense would break her promise, so she stays silent.

D. Kendra convinces Dani that Tessa has stopped caring about the team.

4. That night, Dani types a text to Tessa that reads *Can I tell Coach why?*, stares at it "until the screen went dark," and then deletes it "one letter at a time." What does this action reveal about her internal conflict?

A. She wants Tessa to know that the coach has offered her the armband.

B. She is tempted to ask Tessa's permission to share the secret, but she lets the idea go slowly and reluctantly.

C. She has decided to reveal the secret to Coach without asking Tessa first.

D. She is angry with Tessa for putting her in such a difficult position.

5. Which two moments in the story show outside pressure on Dani that comes from another character rather than from her own feelings? Select two.

☐ A. Dani misses two easy passes at Wednesday's practice.

☐ B. Coach Alvarez slides the armband closer and gives her a deadline: "You have until Thursday."

☐ C. Kendra urges her to "Take it" in the locker room.

☐ D. Dani deletes her text to Tessa one letter at a time.

☐ E. Dani practices calling "Heads" into the mirror the summer before.

6. On Thursday, when Dani tells Coach Alvarez that she does not want the armband, he leans back and replies, "That's not what your face said on Tuesday." What does his remark add to the scene?

A. It shows that the coach has already chosen Kendra as the new captain.

B. It shows that Dani's wish to be captain was obvious to others, so her refusal goes against something she genuinely wants.

C. It shows that the coach expects an apology for Dani's rudeness.

D. It shows that Dani was angry with the coach on Tuesday.

7. When the coach points out that Tessa is not there, Dani makes herself hold his gaze and says, "I know, and I can't tell you why, but it's still hers." What does this choice reveal about Dani?

A. She is afraid that her teammates would not accept her leadership.

B. She hopes the coach will admire her and offer her the armband next season.

C. She has decided that being captain is not worth the additional responsibility.

D. She puts her loyalty to Tessa and her promise ahead of an honor she has wanted since her first week as a freshman.

8. After Dani refuses, Coach Alvarez decides that the armband "goes to Kendra" and then adds, as she reaches the door, "You'd make a good captain, you know, and that's the annoying part." How do these lines shape the meaning of Dani's choice?

A. They show that Dani was never seriously considered for captain.

B. They show that the coach has decided to change the team rule.

C. They show that the coach intends to punish Dani by benching her on Friday.

D. They show that her refusal has a real cost: the armband goes to the teammate who criticized Tessa, even though the coach believes Dani would have been a good captain.

9. As Kendra jogs out for the coin toss on Friday, "the old wanting rose in her chest, every bit as strong as it had been in front of the bathroom mirror," and Dani lets herself feel it. What does this moment show about how her internal conflict develops by the end?

A. She still feels the pull of what she gave up, because turning the armband down did not erase her ambition.

B. She regrets her choice and plans to ask the coach for the armband back.

C. She has completely stopped caring about being captain.

D. She resents Kendra so much that she cannot bear to watch the coin toss.

10. When Tessa slides in beside her and asks what happened, Dani says only, "Long story," and hands her a water bottle. What does this final exchange suggest about Dani?

A. Dani keeps her sacrifice to herself and simply goes on being Tessa's teammate.

B. Dani is angry with Tessa and does not want to talk to her.

C. Dani is irritated that Tessa brought her brothers to the game.

D. Dani intends to explain everything to the coach after the game.