

## Chapter 1

### I Don't Want To Go

"Come on, ump! That's not a **strike**!" Parker sat on the edge of the sofa. All of his focus was on the TV. The Carolina Catfish were his favorite baseball team and they were playing their big rival, the Florida Bullfrogs. Rocky Ramirez was at the plate.

Rocky Ramirez was the best player on the Carolina Catfish. He was Parker's favorite baseball player of all time.

The Catfish were losing by one **run** with two **outs** and a runner on **third base**. Rocky could tie the game with a hit, or win it with a **homerun**. If he got out, the Catfish would lose.

The Bullfrogs' **pitcher** turned to throw the ball.

"Come on, Rocky. We need you!"

**Zip.** The TV went black.

"No, no, no! Why did it turn off?" Parker said.

"I told you it was time to go." Parker's mom had the TV remote.

"Mom! Rocky Ramirez was up!"

"You don't even have your shoes on. We have to get to the store," Parker's mom said.

"Aw, why do I have to go?"

"Shoes on. Now." Parker's mom gave him the look.

"Okay, okay, fine." Parker ran to his room. His bedroom floor was covered with toys, clothes, and baseball cards. He dug into the mess, but could not find his shoes. "Where are they?" He asked himself.

On the wall by the door, Parker had a one-of-a-kind poster of Rocky Ramirez. "Sorry, Rocky." Parker spoke to the poster. "I wanted to see you hit, but my mom just *has* to go to the store. Have you seen my shoes?"

Parker slid under his bed. "Aha! Here they are." Parker pulled out a pair of blue shoes with white laces. They matched the colors of the jersey Rocky was wearing in the poster.

He put on the left shoe, but the right one did not go on as easily. He twisted his foot back and forth. "Come on, shoe! Go on!" He hopped on his left foot and pulled hard at the right shoe.

**Woosh.** Parker's foot finally slid in, but he stumbled. He tried to use the wall to keep from falling, but his hand got stuck on his Rocky Ramirez poster.

**Riiiiip.** The poster ripped right down the middle.

"No!" Parker rushed to put the poster back together. He had no way to fix it. Tears puddled up in his eyes.

"Parker, what's taking so long?" His mom was at the door.

Parker's cheeks were wet from crying. He just looked at the poster and hung his head. It was hard for him to talk.

"Oh, I'm so sorry." Parker's mom put her hand on his back. She tried to fix the poster, but she could not.

Parker wiped his face. "Do you think we could fix it with super glue from the store?"

"Hm," Parker's mom had her thinking face on. "I have a better idea. Come with me." Parker's mom left the room.

Parker looked at the torn poster. "Sorry, Rocky," Parker said. "I wish I could help you."

"Parker!" His mom called to him, "Are you coming?"

"I gotta go," Parker said to the poster.