

Juggernauts

by Timothy Merath

They are always there. Stoic and steady.

I'm sitting on my bedroom floor, legs off to one side, eyes darting back and forth, searching for a new card to analyze. After a few seconds, I find one and hold it a few feet from my face, then slowly move it closer. The player grows as he walks towards me, greeting me. He's as familiar as ever in his trademark pose. The details of the card become clearer as it approaches my nose. His strong hands gripping the bat. The calm but loaded gaze. His cap tipped just slightly downward.

He is heroic. He is here.

I flip the card over and begin testing myself, trying to recall all the vital information. Born 1969, correct. Height 6' 1", yes. Hometown... I should know this... Mount... Saint... Saint Paul, yes. I almost let him down there. He may be my friend, but forgetting something as important as where he came from might be unforgivable. I should know where my friends are from. Disaster averted, I finish up analyzing and remembering all the stats and place the card on top of its proper pile.

Still friends.

My mother is yelling loudly now. My step-father is yelling back, even louder. A door slams, then another. I think I hear crying.

I focus more intently. I reach for another friend. Stoic and steady. If anyone can make the fear go away, he can...

