

5. Shay D.

### **Life, Death, and Football**

My name is Deandre Jackson, I'm 23 years old, and I just pulled up at the hospital. It's 1:28 in the morning and just forty-five minutes ago I was asleep and that's when I got a call from my mother and she told me to come to St. Jordan's hospital in downtown Baltimore where I live. When I asked why she said, "DeAndre, your brother was shot..." her voice broke and she started to cry, "and we are in an ambulance rushing to the hospital. Please meet me there.", and just like that she hung up. My brother was 19, four years younger than me. He used to be a good kid earning good grades and he got into the University of Maryland. Then, he started hanging out with the wrong group of kids, going to parties and doing drugs. Now my little brother an innocent kid had been shot because of his wrong decisions. I burst into the waiting room where my mom was sobbing hysterically. A few moments later, the doctor came out turned to us a grim expression on his face and shook his head. "Why god? Why!?", my mother screamed. I hugged her and we both sat there crying into each other for what felt like a long time and I thought about my life. I had accomplished a lot: good grades, a full ride to the University of Maryland on a football scholarship, and then being drafted into the NFL by the Washington Redskins. I was the starting running back and was good too. Then it hit me: I had a game to go to tonight at 8:30 against the Eagles in Washington. I didn't want to go in play, I was still in shock, my brother had just died. How would I be able to play? My mother seemed to read my mind and she whispered, "Go to your game Deandre, it's what your brother would've wanted you know he always loved watching you play." It was true, my brother and me used to practice all the time when we were young, and we both had dreams of making it to the NFL. My brother was cut from the high school team and he gave up on football. He liked to watch me play every Sunday knowing at least one of us had accomplished our dreams. "Don't you worry about me", my mother continued, "I'll be okay I had a feeling something bad would happen soon to your brother." I gave my mom another hug and then called my coach to tell him what had happened. He said I could take all the time that I needed and that if I was okay to play then he and the team would be glad. Then I went to my house, packed my things, and took the hour-long trip to Washington.

It's now 8:15pm, and my teammates and I are getting ready to take the field. I thought to myself, "I have to win this game for my brother." That thought was still in my head as the game started. The first play was a hand off to me. We had the ball at our 25-yardline 1<sup>st</sup>&10. The QB took the snap and I grabbed the ball from his outstretched arm. Suddenly something overtook me, a sudden rage at everything that had happened, my brother's death. I ran like a man possessed, first a spin move, a juke, then I plowed through anyone in my path. There was nothing, but green grass ahead of me now as I raced toward the endzone. I leaped in for the touchdown! I didn't even celebrate my score my heart wasn't in it for that. The game continued, I kept dominating on the ground, but the eagles were also finding success. My team and I found ourselves down with 1:04 left on the clock. The Eagles had the ball on 3<sup>rd</sup> down at their own 36. Our defense made the stop, but we had no timeouts left and the clock ticked down. We got the ball at our own 20 with just 9 seconds left down 28-24. I had been fantastic up to this point, rushing for 167 yards and 2 touchdowns. Coach new they would be waiting for me to run it, so he decided to switch it up: he called for a pass to me. As I lined up for the snap rage filled inside me. I was mad at everyone, the coaches who cut my brother, my brother's friends, the people who killed my brother, but maybe most of all: my stupid little brother for going and getting himself killed. The snap came, the QB faked a throw down the field, and then threw it short to

me. I caught the ball and immediately dashed into the open field. I evaded two defenders, sidestepped one, and plowed through another. One more spin move and I was diving in the endzone. Touchdown Redskins game over! We won! My teammates carried me on their shoulders as I cried. I did it. I won for my brother.

Coach handed me the game ball and all my teammates wished me good luck. My mother called and said the police found out my brother had been shot during a gang fight and that things with him had been worse than we'd known. Through it all I learned life is bigger than football. I never had a game better than that one the rest of my career. Nothing ever filled me with that same motivation.