

A Touchdown For Mama

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In this story, a young man is on his way to football greatness and a one-way ticket out of the inner-city until he receives devastating news about his mother.

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For as long as his family and friends could remember, the game of football has always been, only after God, family, country, and Christmas, all that Derek Carter is most passionate about. Coming from a poor family who lived in the inner-city, Derek dreamed of one day playing in the pros, not for himself, but so he could finally have the finances needed to move his parents and siblings out of the city and to establish a foundation that would assist inner-city children with having the kind of Christmas they could only dream about, including Derek.

Most Christmases at the Carter home consisted of homemade or thrift store-bought gifts and meals that almost always came courtesy of the local church food pantry. Derek is the oldest of three children. His father works, but what he earns is barely enough to rival that of a high school-aged student working at a local fast-food chain.

If there was ever a progeny to the game of football, Derek was it. While he could play most positions, where he excelled most was as a running back. This was an exceptionally stellar year for both Derek and his team, the West Royal Knights. The Knights had just completed an undefeated season -- a first in the history of the school -- and were projected to make it to the state championship. Something the school has never done.

The Knights had just completed knocking off their cross-town rivals when Derek received some bad news from his coach. His mother had taken ill and had to be rushed to the hospital. By the time Derek

arrived at the hospital, his mother had been transferred to ICU. The situation did not look good.

Derek knew in his heart that he needed to keep his composure and to be strong for his father and two younger brothers, especially for young Silas whose mama meant everything to him.

After some time had passed, Derek asked his father if he could be excused so that he could visit the hospital chapel to pray for his mother. His father who had tears running down his face said, **"Yes, of course, son. Please remember to pray for me, too."**

It was a difficult scene to witness; the once happy and proud man who always said with a smile in his voice, **"There has never been a day, not one, that I have not loved your mama!"**, looked so helpless and sad as he gazed down at Derek's mother, tubes and machinery going in every direction.

Derek was amazed at how beautiful the chapel was for being a hospital chapel. It was decorated in the finest that Christmas had to offer that Derek's mother would have been proud of. Like Derek, she too loved Christmas. Not so much because of what the season meant to most people, but because of what it truly is -- the gift of a child who would one day save the world because of love.

Derek approached the altar that had a single candle burning on top of it with several beautifully decorated, lit Christmas trees behind it. He entered into the first pew and knelt down. He bowed his head and began to weep before saying, **"Lord, mama taught me never to question your will. You are the author of life. You have the power to create it and take it away. I am not going to ask you not to take mama if that should be your will. All I ask is that you will allow mama to live long enough to spend one more Christmas, at home, with the family."**

At that moment Derek heard a voice from behind him ask, **"And what would you be willing to give up in exchange for that one last Christmas together?"**

The sound of the voice startled Derek because he thought he was alone in the chapel. He turned around in the direction of the voice to see a man dressed as Santa Claus, of all things, sitting two rows back.

"When did you come in?" Derek Asked. **"I thought I was alone when I came in here."**

"You were, and you weren't," Santa Responded. **"Again, I ask you, what would you be willing to give up in exchange for the opportunity to spend one last Christmas with your mother?"**

"Everything!" Derek said.

"Say again?" Santa shot back.

"I would give up everything ... football, the championship, playing in the pros, my friends ... everything," Derek said again.

"And why would you give up everything including an opportunity to play in the state championship, something your school has never done before, just to spend one last Christmas with your mother," Santa asked.

"Because love and family are a far greater gift and blessing than a state championship," Derek said. **"Mama taught my brothers and me that God created the world and all that is in it because of love. And that it is because of love that Christ freely chose to come into this world on Christmas Day to become like us in all things except sin; the same love that He died for on the cross. I would give up everything because of that love."**

With that, Santa leaned forward and whispered, **"Then consider your prayer answered,"** before suddenly disappearing. Before Derek could react to what just happened, the door to the chapel flew open. It was Derek's father. His face was lit up like the Christmas tree's behind the altar. He had a huge smile plastered across his face with tears of happiness streaming down his face.

"It's a miracle son!", his father said. **"A miracle!"**

"What are you talking about papa?" Derek asked. **"What miracle?"**

"Your prayer son. The Lord heard your prayer. The doctor came in after you left and said that we needed to prepare for the worse because he was certain mama wasn't going to make it through the night. Your brothers and I were devastated. Junior asked if he should come and get you? I said, 'No. He is praying for mama. Let's give his prayer a chance to be heard.' No sooner had I said that your mama opened her eyes, looked at me and smiled."

Derek could hardly believe what he was hearing. Then he asked his father, **"When did this happen, papa? When did mama wake up?"**

"Just a few minutes ago," his father said. **"Why do you ask?"**

"Because a few minutes before you came busting into the chapel, there was a man dressed in a Santa suit who leaned forward and said to me, 'Then consider your prayer answered.'"

Derek's father began to weep. **"What is that matter papa?"** Derek asked. **"Why are you weeping? Mama is going to be okay."**

Then his father said, **"Because the last thing your mama said to me before she asked me to come get you is that a man dressed in a Santa suit said to her that everything was going to be okay. It wasn't her time yet."**

At that moment both father and son fell to their knees and gave glory to God for this very special Christmas blessing. And for the record, Derek, at the behest of his mother did play in the state championship, which his team won. He eventually went to college, earned his degree and was drafted to play in the pros. Derek was able to move his family out of the inner-city and to establish the "Touchdown For Mama" foundation whose mission is to provide as many happy Christmases as possible to poor children who live in the inner-city. We

are happy to report that his mama lived long enough to see this all come to pass.