

All Day and all Night

7:00am

My alarm just went off.

It was a Monday and god I really hate Mondays.

I had just woken up to get ready for school like any other morning. But little did I know everything was going to change that day.

I got up and got ready.

As I left my house I saw Aaliyah already waiting for me outside.

"Hey J" she said.

"Hey Aaliyah" I answered.

Aaliyah really is the only person that I trust, she's been my friend since we were little.

Aaliyah is also the smartest person I know, I think she is going to be the first person to make it out of West-Point.

West-Point is the place where we live.

To give you a brief summary, it's probably the worst place to live on the entire planet. The city is full of violence, drugs and other dangerous things. NO ONE makes it out of West-Point.

Aaliyah and I were walking to school together.

"So how'd your test go yesterday?" Liyah asked me.

"Another F" I answered like it was nothing.

I really didn't like school at the time. I didn't do my homework, I never listened in class and I really couldn't care less about my grades.

"Damn, you really need to focus more on school. Otherwise you'll end up like any other person from West-Point" she told me.

Aaliyah obviously got another **A**

She has the best grades in the whole class and is soon to be our valedictorian.

She always tried to help me with my school work, but I really never paid that much attention to anything that had to do with school.

Once we had made it to school, I went to class and as soon as I got to class, I threw my hood on and put on my headphones like I always do. I never listened to anything that happened in class.

That day went by slowly like any other school day.

I was about to leave, when I remembered that Aaliyah had told me to meet up with her in the library after school, because she had something important to tell me.

Once I made it to the library, I noticed Aaliyah studying by the window, so I went over to her and took the seat next to her.

"What's up Aaliyah? You had something to tell me?" I asked her.

She didn't say anything, she just pulled out a letter out of her backpack and handed it to me.

"Look inside" she told me happily.

I opened the letter and saw what it said.

"You have been accepted to Yale University"

"Oh my god, you made it?" I asked her excitedly.

"Yep, full scholarship, too" she explained.

"That's crazy. You better leave this dump as soon as you can" I told her.

"You should really take school more seriously and start thinking about colleges ,too, you know?" she told me.

"I don't know, it seems like too much work for me" I explained.

"You know, it would be my dream to see you make it into a good college too, you have so much more inside of you than you know" Aaliyah told me.

"Yeah, okay" was all I said to her.

Aaliyah and I left the library after that and started walking home from school.

We were talking and joking around like we always do, when I suddenly saw a black car pull up slowly. Out of the window of the car came a gun that fired 3 shots, one of them hitting Aaliyah.

I threw my bags on the floor and rushed over to Aaliyah. I called for help, but nobody came.

"It's going to be okay" I kept telling her, while calling an ambulance.

But it was too late.

Aaliyah died right in front of my eyes.

She was the only person I had ever trusted, she was my best friend and she meant so much to me.

I couldn't imagine a life without her.

I couldn't sleep that night, to be honest I couldn't sleep or eat for the next set of days.

We had so many memories with each other and she had such a big impact on me, she was all I could think about after she got shot.

I didn't want to talk to anyone about it, all I did was lie in bed in my cold, dark room by myself.

I was thinking back to all the memories we had, when I suddenly remembered what she had told me the night she died.

She would've wanted me to make it out of West-Point and to focus on my schoolwork.

I knew I couldn't let Aaliyah down and I wanted to fulfill the last wish she had had.

And so I got on to work.

I didn't know where to start but I knew I had to change my actions.

I started little by little, changing little things everyday.

I started to wake up earlier, I started to do my homework, I started to study for tests and really pay attention in class and most importantly I stayed out of trouble.

I really started to work **all day and all night**.

The first test was coming up.

It was a biology test and to be honest I think biology was the class I was actually worst in at the time.

I started to study for the test and I actually started to understand the things that came up in class.

I was studying all the time, wanting to make Aaliyah proud.

The day the test came up I was ready, I had prepared for everything that would come up.

It seemed quite easy to me and I didn't understand why I hadn't studied for tests before.

As I went to school the next day, I saw Mr. Fisk handing out our Biology tests.

Everyone got their tests, looking disappointed.

All the tests were handed out, except for one last one, which was mine.

Mr. Fisk came up to me and handed me my test.

"Good Work" he told me with a surprised look on his face.

I turned the test over and saw the one and only **A+**. I felt so proud of myself, it was the best I've ever felt in a while.

The next couple of tests came up. It was the same thing. I was studying and studying and studying. Working my hardest to get good grades.

The tests came back.

A+, A, A and A+

It was like magic to me. I had never known I was capable of doing such things. I had never known I had this in me.

Most importantly, I knew, that step by step and brick by brick, I was getting closer and closer towards my goal, towards Aaliyah's wish.

I continued to push myself to failure, I continued to study and focus on my schoolwork and the results started to show. I kept getting more and more **A's**

I kept doing this and kept getting the same results and as the year came to an end, I had already applied for a number of colleges. I was very nervous and anxious about getting in.

The first college application letter came in.

It was from Georgetown.

I was incredibly nervous opening the letter.

When I opened it, I saw

“At this time we cannot be accepting you into Georgetown University”

I was devastated, but I didn't lose hope yet because there were still other colleges I applied to.

I knew I had to work harder and that there was more room for improvement.

I signed up for extra work, community services and other things that would help me get accepted into a college.

As the other application letters came in, it was more of the same.

UCLA, USC, UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA and a couple others. All of them had the same thing written in them.

“At this time we cannot be accepting you into our University”

I started to lose hope because I had only one more application letter left. My last hope of fulfilling Aaliyah's wish.

I was so nervous that I couldn't even sleep for some nights.

As the last and final application letter came in, I was so nervous, I couldn't even open the letter properly. It was from the University of Minnesota.

As I opened the letter slowly, I started to think back on what my life had looked like before I had started to study. I started to think of how much my life had changed and how I had gotten into such a position as I was in today.

I opened the letter and took a deep breath.

“We are happy to announce that you have been accepted into the University of Minnesota”

It was as if my whole body exploded out of joy, all my hard work had paid off. I couldn't believe it. I got accepted. I was going to make it out of West-Point.

I knew how proud Aaliyah would've been of me and I knew she would've been even more excited than I was.

It was crazy to compare my life after Aaliyah's death with my life before. It was like looking at two completely different people.

I couldn't believe it.

As I look back at this story now, I am 27 years old and I successfully graduated from the University of Minnesota.

I am married and I have my own little daughter.

I named her after the person that changed my life and helped me get to the position I am in today.

Her name is **Aaliyah**.