

Excerpt from Chapter 3: Making the Team (God's requirements)

It really stinks that only one of you will start the new life that you both have always dreamed of, the life of an NFL athlete. The other will have to go join the masses of "regular" people and get a job. The only football one of you will get to watch will be on Sunday or Monday nights on television, like everyone else. The two of you ride back to the hotel and agree that you will always remain friends, no matter who gets released tomorrow. The night seems to pass by in slow motion as you try not to compare how different the two lifestyles will be. You wonder which one you will have to live out, the superstar or the "guy who couldn't make it."

The next morning, you both get up early and go through the motions of getting ready as usual. You decide to skip breakfast and get on the road to the training facility for an early start. You suit up in your equipment and fight off a tear, because for a moment, you just can't help but think to yourself, *this could be my last time to ever put on a football uniform*. You both join the rest of the players who are going through the same situation, and you begin the final day's practice.

Everything seems to be moving very quickly, and you are almost in a trance as you keep making play after play. You are in a rhythm and you seem to be in the right place at the right time throughout the day. Your friend is not as fortunate today. He seems to be in his own world as he keeps screwing up. He doesn't even look like himself today. Every time you make eye contact with him, you want to help him out but you cannot do it. The last drill of the day has the two of you in a physical battle, lined up across from one another, and everyone is watching to see who will get to stay and who will have to go. The whistle blows, and you fire off as hard and low as you possibly can. He loses his footing and tumbles backward as you tower over him in victory. He looks up at you, and you reach down to help him up as the rest of the players and coaches are cheering you on for your domination. It seems like everyone is rallying around you as the victor in the battle for the last open position. You feel bad for your teammate, but you have to do your best. Even though you wish he had done better, you have had a great last day of training camp.

The coaches call all the players and prospects in and tell everyone the generic "Thank you for working so hard" speech. The head coach tells all his veterans to go on to get changed and leave, but he notifies a few of his players who have been there for a year or two that they are no longer needed on the team. There is a little bit of commotion as they walk off. He then directs his attention to you and your fellow new team prospects. He says that he and the other coaches will be working for the next few hours reviewing your performances throughout the camp. He tells you all to go back to your hotels and get cleaned up and eat something. After dinner, all of you are instructed to meet in a reserved conference room at the hotel. You are told to have your cell phones on in case you receive a call of dismissal. The coach releases everyone, and you go take care of all that he directed you to do.

Later that evening, you all show up in the hotel conference room around the same time. Everyone in the room is in a serious mood, but occasionally someone will crack a joke or something to lighten things up a little. The laughter stops as you hear the first phone ring, and one of the smaller guys who had been working at receiver gets the bad news first. He just shrugs his shoulders and gets up. He tells everyone goodbye and that at least he can go home knowing

that he tried. After he is gone, another phone goes off. This time, it is a potential linebacker who was really fast and strong. He plays with great intensity, but the coaches may have held it against him the way he ran his mouth all the time. He slams his phone shut and begins to curse the stupid coaching staff. He kicks the wall as he storms out into the hotel lobby, telling everyone how sorry the team is and how he hopes they don't ever win another game. The next phone call is taken by a young man who was trying out for a field goal kicker position. He gets the call and just hangs his head down and cries. He is silent for a few minutes and finally gets up and wishes the rest of you guys the best of luck in life. He says that he is through with football and that he is going to work for his dad's marketing company back home. The evening seems to drag by as you watch player after player getting cut and reacting in a similar fashion to the first three players who got dismissed.

You realize that almost every position has been narrowed down except yours. You and your friend look around and notice that the guys who are left are all looking at the two of you. You start to say something to break the silence when you hear your phone ring. Your heart drops down into your stomach and your throat feels like it is about to swell shut. You open your phone up and...