

**Prompt**

*We all have difficulties in our lives; some are small, and some are life encompassing. In a well-constructed essay, explore this concept, and provide examples that illustrate how these problems are faced.*

**Daniel J Shinnick**

*Student Writer*

Bottom of the ninth, two outs, the Red Sox down by four. We needed a miracle. The stakes were high. I looked to my left and J, my older sister, was watching the game with the same glazed look that was surely on my face. To distract herself, J had decided to go to Fenway Park to watch the game. Suddenly the mental shield had snapped, and reality was beginning to kick in. We were both thinking about tomorrow — brain surgery.

Strike three. Ahhhhh, moaned the crowd. They had been hoping to hear the victorious “Dirty Water” by the Standells tonight, which is played after each Sox win. Instead, as if to taunt us, they blasted “Brain Stew” by Green Day. Maybe it was just my imagination.

At twelve, J was diagnosed with temporal lobe epilepsy. As a fourth grader, I knew very little about epilepsy. As a sophomore in high school, I knew too much. Over six years of frustration and frightening seizures, she had seen multiple doctors and tried what seemed like a thousand different medications; she is undoubtedly the best pill swallower in the world. Tomorrow, J was going to have a surgery that would remove the life-threatening part of her brain—the miracle. No more seizures. It was simple, right? Just a little brain surgery. She had struggled over the decision for months. Some days she was fully determined to leave her epilepsy in the past. Other days she was overwhelmed by the prospect of brain surgery. At times I felt helpless, but eventually I found my role. I prescribed humor, her first medication that did not come in a bottle.

After one particularly stressful day, I remember going up to J’s room. Both of our parents were with her, but she was in tears. “BroBro’s in the house, homies,” I said in an uncharacteristically “gangstah” voice. Everything changed. J perked up her head and soon was lost in a fit of hysterical laughter, a deserved vacation from the decision. My parents and I were just relieved to see her less overwhelmed. As the brother, it was my duty to keep a level head. I had the responsibility to keep an eye on her while keeping up with my own life.

At Fenway, it was time to part ways. My parents would accompany her to the hospital the next morning while I was at school. I knew that the next time I saw J, she would have fifty stitches on the side of her head. I also knew

that she might not remember my name for weeks—or worse. The stakes were high. I hoped and trusted that she and my parents had made the right decision.

The day after the surgery, when I went to that Boston hospital one last time, J was in and out of consciousness. To be honest, she looked terrible. But when she woke up, saw me through her swollen eyes, and murmured, “the BroBro,” I couldn’t help but smile. At long last, the Standells began to play