

Third Place, Prose, Grades 7-9, Shaindy Spiro

Flying free

Shira walked into school, humming a tune with a spring in her step. Today would be play tryouts and not only that, after school she would be taking her license test. She made sure to look her best, with her long blond hair in a light pink scrunchie, her pleated skirt freshly washed, and her white blouse crisp as new. Her blue eyes sparkled. Today would be a good day, she softly sang. She walked into the classroom, her humming turning into full-fledged singing.

“Looks like someone is in a good mood today!” her best friend Tziporah said as Shira sat down in her seat. Shira smiled and with a shrug, she flipped open her notebook.

The day seemed to last forever but finally, the last bell rang. Shira watched as girls streamed down the hallway and out the doors of Bnos Chava.

“Shira, wait up!” Tziporah called out.

Shira spun around and caught a glimpse of Tziporah’s curly orange hair flash by. She waited until Tziporah came to a stop, right beside her, huffing and puffing as if she had just ran a marathon.

“What are you doing after school today?” she asked.

“Something very exciting is happening tonight,” Shira replied with a twinkle in her eye, thinking about the reaction she would get when she told Tziporah she got her

license. With that she ran out the door, not noticing the confused expression on Tziporah's face. Little did she know how true her words were.

Shira approached the sign-in counter by the license office excitedly. The butterflies in her stomach made their graceful entrance now. She watched nervously and eagerly as the lady behind the counter typed in her information, her long, pink nails making a clicking noise that was starting to grate on Shira's nerves. Finally they were all cleared for, and she sat down for the half hour wait. Shortly after, a short lady with a rather round stomach walked in.

"Klien, Shira," she called out.

Shira jumped up and blew her mother a quick kiss before trailing after the lady. The butterflies in her stomach started to grow bigger and bigger. Shira followed her to a black Sienna. They both got into the car and Shira gripped the wheel as tightly as she could. When the lady signaled that Shira could begin, she turned on the engine and pulled out of the parking lot. As Shira continued driving her confidence grew bigger and bigger. I am doing great, she thought to herself and turned to look at the lady for her approval. Out of the corner of her eye, a tree appeared and the next thing she knew, there was a boom, crash, and a bang. The last thing Shira remembered before everything turned black was the flashing lights and blaring sirens.

Shira woke up in a ton of pain, with her head foggy and confused. Everything hurt. Where am I, she wondered. Just then, a nurse walked in and then realization hit.

"I'm in a hospital," she said out loud.

The nurse came close and gently touched Shira's hand. Shira looked up with tears in her eyes.

"Sweetie, I know everything hurts," the nurse said with compassion in her eyes. Those were the last words Shira heard before she once again fell into a deep sleep.

The next thing she knew, she woke up to see her mother enter the room and sit down heavily in the hard plastic chair. Their eyes met and Shira's mother reached out to give her a hug. It was only then that Shira realized that she could not move her feet, they were both in casts. She remained frozen for several long minutes until the doctor walked into the room. He opened the door and strode in, looking very serious. He whipped out a paper and proceeded to explain what happened in the accident. He showed Shira and Mrs Klien what would be happening in the near future.

"Your legs were crushed in the accident," he stated. "There is a 98% chance you will never walk again," he said, dropping the bombshell without batting an eyelash.

Shira wanted to scream "this is my life you're talking about, not a storybook." But she didn't because just then she heard a sob. Turning back from the wall she saw her mother with her head in her hands. Many feelings flooded Shira at once. There was sadness, anger, hopelessness, and misery. Will she ever be able to walk again?!

The next morning, three visitors walk into the room. She already starts to perk up when she sees that Tziporah is among the three friends who came. They come close and there is an awkward silence.

Finally, Tziporah said out loud "Shiiiiira sweetie, I will just poke you 37 times for only 59 seconds each," she said in her best nurse imitation voice.

Everyone started laughing and the ice was broken. Those blissful hours she spent with her friends in the long days to follow were the only bright spot in her long hospital stay.

A few days later, a nurse walked in carrying a big bulky wheelchair. Shira froze and slowly turned to the wall.

The nurse stroked her and said "if you ever want to go places, this contraption is your solution."

Shira didn't want to listen. She tried to shut out what the nurse was saying but wasn't successful. She slowly turned around and looked tentatively at the wheelchair. The nurse smiled approvingly and gently lifted her into the chair. Just then, her parents walked in and stopped in their tracks at the sight of Shira in the wheelchair. Then they ran over and gave her a big hug and pushed her into the lobby.

Mrs. Klein turned to Shira and said "Time to leave! The doctor discharged you this morning!" And with that she swung open the double doors and pushed Shira into the beautiful day outside.

The weeks seemed to drag on as every day Shira was taken to school, being pushed by her friends. It never dawned on Shira that she could walk if she tried too. After all, the doctor gave her a 98% chance of never being able to walk again. And day after day, her friends tried their very best to convince Shira to try to walk again. Yet, each time they tried, Shira would shrug and quickly try to change the topic. One day, as the bell rang, Shira began to pack up her things and wheel to her locker. When she got there, Tziporah was waiting.

“Ready to roll?” she said, and then added with a wink, “no pun intended.” She grabbed the wheelchair handlebars and pushed Shira out the door.

As they strolled down the sidewalk, Tziporah turned to Shira and said, “Can I ask you something?”

“Sure,” Shira replied.

“Why don't you at least just try to walk?! Why are you giving up hope right away? Push yourself!” Tziporah almost shouted out those last words. Shira looked at her for a minute and then shrugged.

As they neared Shira's house, she turned to Tziporah and said, “I will think about what you said. Now would you mind bringing me to my backyard?”

Tziporah nodded and pushed Shira in her backyard right near a bed of colorful flowers. Tziporah smiled at Shira and then left the backyard. Shira turned to the flowers on her right when out of the corner of her eye she noticed a bright yellow butterfly. She watched, mesmerized, as the butterfly tried to fly. It was then that she noticed a small injury on the left wing of the butterfly. She continued to stare as the butterfly tried to flap its wings again, and again, and again. At last, after at least 30 times it finally succeeded. Shira clapped as the butterfly took off into the sky with one final flap.

The next morning, Mrs. Klein entered Shira's room and flicked on the lights.

“Good morning Shira,” she said brightly as she pulled off Shira's covers.

“Good morning mommy,” Shira replied and then added “mommy, could you try to get me therapy to try to relearn how to walk. I know it might be a bumpy road but I won't give up! I will try and try until I succeed!”