

Honorable Mention, Prose
Grades 7-9

“Okay 11 Birthday,” Dalia Falck

I looked at my clock, it was 6:47 a.m. I looked up at my poster of Steve McCurry, the famous photographer. Today was the day. My hair was messy, but I didn't care! I rolled myself outside on the deck. It was a warm, sunny, Texas day.

I was turning eleven! Eleven was the big year for me, I was becoming so independent. For my birthday my mom promised me an iPhone. Daisy, Addison (my two BFFs) and I could do one of our crazy dangerous acrobatic photoshoots by ourselves. We could also go to Segue (the place that has the best bubble tea and crepes in the whole world) by ourselves! I felt like I was floating.

Daisy and Addison are amazing acrobats. Their moms want to be there with them just in case they fall, even though they never have. They can do crazy tricks on anything, even if it's 10 feet in the air. I unfortunately can't do acrobatics, because I sit in a wheelchair and am partially paralyzed. I have had a lot of time to practice photography in hospitals and I'm not gonna lie, I've gotten pretty good. When I'm not in the hospital, I do lots of photoshoots for fun with Addison and Daisy (me obviously taking the pictures).

It's a crazy coincidence that Daisy, Addison, and I all have the same birthdays. Even better, our birthday was on a Saturday so we didn't have to spend most of our birthday being bored to death at school. Our families have an awesome birthday tradition that whenever it was someone's birthday we would go to Segue and order them a crepe tower. However old the birthday person was turning was how many crepes they received. The crepes are so good that when Daisy's dad turned 53 two months ago, he finished all of his crepes and was in the bathroom for the rest of the day!

Yesterday I came back from a long boring stay at the hospital. I met up with Daisy and Addison's families at Segue for our birthdays. Segue is one of my favorite places on earth. It's quite the opposite of a hospital. For example, Segue smells like vanilla, has the best food ever, and everyone there has a smile on their faces. Only this time the vanilla scent made me feel sick.

I realized something looked different about Addison and Daisy. It was obvious that they met up together without me to change their whole entire look. Daisy was far more out there with trendier shoes and clothes, and she wore *hair extensions*. That was so out of character. I have to admit she looked fantastic. The hair extensions really brought out her dark skin. Addison just got her hair highlighted blonde (which also looked incredible). I didn't know if I was imagining this, but it seemed like their ponytails were way higher than normal. I couldn't believe they didn't tell me.

Once I saw the delicious stack of crepes, the thought disappeared as quickly as I could eat a crepe. After a delicious breakfast, our parents had to leave to go to work. We decided to do a photoshoot since I brought my camera. The location of the photoshoot was right outside of Segue.

After a couple of awesome photos, Daisy said, "There's this new trick that I saw on a Tik Tok that I want to try."

"Okay," I said. "How dangerous is it on a scale of one to ten?"

"Probably...an 8."

"Be careful, I don't want you to end up like me."

"I promise I'll be careful. Addison, can you catch me if I fall?"

"Yeah of course," Addison replied.

I have no idea what Daisy was doing, but she was pushing me towards the stoplight. She and Addison might be doing one of those Tik Tok dances in the middle of the street. Daisy knows that she needs parental supervision to dance in the middle of the street, even in our small town (pop. 2,314).

"Daisy, you know you can't dance in the middle of the street," I said.

"Oh, I'm not going to do that, don't you worry."

Her eyes told me that she was up to something not good at all. My hands started sweating. I bite my lip when I get nervous, and this time I tasted blood. Gross. Before I could say anything she started climbing up the stoplight pole. That was new.

"Addison, do you and Daisy practice things like this in acrobatic class?"

“No, not at all,” she muttered.

I wiped my lips and found a lot of blood on the tissue. When Daisy got to the top, she started bear-crawling to the middle. Her foot slipped. I got a mini heart attack. Luckily she caught herself. Between the stoplights Daisy sat backwards right between the stoplights then she hung upside down monkey bar style. I snapped a couple pictures, petrified.

“That’s not what you are supposed to take a picture of,” Daisy said.

“Oh, so then what is?” I ask.

“Be ready.”

“Okay.”

I had a bad feeling about this. Daisy is still hanging on the pole 25 feet in the air when she back flips off. I was so shaken that I could barely move. I remember the moment 8 years ago when my mom was texting with her friends about their weekly Pilates class while driving. Then unfortunately at the intersection a huge truck came zooming through and BAM that’s how I became partially paralyzed. It’s quite interesting that something so small like a phone can make my legs stop working.

I wake up from my daydream and realize that Daisy got down safely. I think. Her head is bent down, and it kind of looks like she might be crying. I rush myself over there fast as I can and frighteningly ask, “Daisy are you okay?”

“Yeah,” she says, looks up and starts laughing.

Ugh. I honestly don’t mind that Daisy and Addison can do cool tricks and I can’t. What bothers me is that Daisy pretends to be hurt and thinks it’s funny while I would kill to walk again. Daisy isn’t the one who needs help going to the bathroom or has to use ramps and elevators while everyone else rushes up and down the stairs. It’s unfair that they get to go on rollercoasters at amusement parks while I have to sit on the side. I’m the one who’s getting special treatment from teachers, even though I always get better grades than she does.

would love more than anything to walk again and you pretend to get hurt. It feels like you're insulting me."

"It was supposed to be a joke, Skylar. You shouldn't take it so seriously, geez."

"You are being so rude," I tell her, and then she rolls her eyes.

The next day at school was awkward. I had math with Addison and we talked for a couple of minutes. I saw Daisy with the popular girls, and they were all sympathetic towards her and signing her cast. Don't be jealous I told myself. All of those popular folks are fake idiots. Next I realized that Daisy dyed her hair to make it look similar to all the other girls. The jealousy was really kicking in now because Daisy and her new friends looked like they just came out of Teen Vogue. They were gossiping about Ariana Grande's dress at the Met Gala which felt so embarrassing. It seemed as if somehow she moved on already and was glad that she didn't have to hang out with some handicapped girl. Also obsessing over Met Gala outfits was our thing.

Meanwhile I was doing pretty well. I started to become more friendly with this girl named Yael who also sits in a wheelchair. It's nice talking with someone who knows what it's like to have a disability.

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