

Sara

September 3rd

The scent of hot track rubber drifted up my nose as I stood in ready position. Today was September 3rd, the big day I had been waiting for. If I won this race I would be qualified as one of the six runners to start the Bupa Great North Run in England.

I wiped the anxious sweat from my forehead and peered around. People from all over Massachusetts were packed in rows in the stadium. I caught sight of my mom waving hard and my older sister, Savannah texting eagerly on her phone. I rolled my eyes dramatically. *She's probably texting one of her stupid friends.*

My coach walked up to me and told me what he always tells me before any race, "Don't think about the other girls because when you win they won't mean anything anymore." I nodded as he handed me a water bottle.

"You'll need it," he told me. His own stringy brown hair was lined with sweat. *Why's he nervous? I should be the one nervous.*

I drank the water and recycled it as the buzz of excitement roamed around me.

With my heart in my throat, I heard the announcer start to talk, “Racers get ready,” My heart thumped loudly and I felt my legs tremble. “Get set,” My stomach started to cramp and I glanced nervously at my mom. I knew I was fourteen but right now I felt like a little baby waiting for my mother. I swallowed hard and wished myself good luck—I would need it. “Go!” Before the gunshot sounded, I spotted a woman dash after her runaway toddler. The whole audience burst out laughing until the announcer silenced them all. Finally, the gunshot sounded and I was off!

I went slowly, letting the other girls go ahead of me. I knew they would soon be behind me, panting like a pack of dogs.

Pacing myself, I let my body get used to what I was doing and just let it roll. I was in last place but as soon as the girl in front of me slowed down I shot up ahead. *Easy target!* I snickered. I intended the race to be just as easy as this.

I felt the wind brush against my body and I slowed to catch up with it. Using the wind, I sped up to the four girls ahead of me and passed them as they slowed down. Now I only had two more girls to go.

The one ahead of me was Isabelle Strider, the third fastest girl in Massachusetts. I was number one, so I knew I would be able to get past her. But she didn’t slow down like the others. I didn’t let

that bother me and I raced closer to her. When I looked at her I saw that she was breathing heavily and sweat was rolling down her chin. She didn't seem too good. I looked nervously at her and she turned her head to look at me. Letting the worry get past me, I hurried up to her knowing I should pace myself. Isabelle slowed down and I came into second place. We were now on the second lap around the stadium. Jane Casella, the girl now ahead of me, was very impulsive. You never knew what she was going to do.

With the wind behind me, I went freely through the third lap. But after that, I started to feel fatigued. Remembering Isabelle, I thought about how much energy I had lost. I started to doubt that I would win this race. But I still had hope. I couldn't just ignore the fact that I just might win. Glancing quickly behind me I saw Isabelle limping far behind. Grateful for Isabelle, I slowed down a bit to catch my breath. To help my energy, I steadied and evened out my breathing. By the fourth lap, I was breathing heavily. Wishing I had a water bottle with me, I hurried up almost meeting Jane Casella. I had moved up a lot against my will but I just *had* to win. I felt my throat hurt and I gasped for air. I tried some more breathing exercises, determined to help myself. Forcing myself to slow down, I moved behind Isabelle. I stayed behind Isabelle for the fifth lap. This was definitely not my best race. *I can't wait for the meeting with my coach*, I thought sarcastedly. By the middle of

the fifth lap, I felt faint and slowed down more but just not quite enough.

Now my hope of winning was getting lower. I felt as if the Bupa Run was fleeing away from my grasp. Through my effort of running, I heard screaming in the audience and I looked worriedly around. *What's going on?* I saw nothing and with a sickening feeling, I turned around only to see a large green truck racing towards me. *Why is there a truck? What's happening? Where are all the other runners?* My mind felt so blank that I didn't know whether to stop running or keep going. I did what came to mind. I stopped. And before I knew it, I had made the worst decision I could have ever done.

I felt the truck smash hard into my rib cage sending me skidding backwards across the track. I landed hard on my back, my arms placed awkwardly around me. I heard screaming everywhere. The truck passed over my body, crushing my legs. After it left, I could barely feel my legs. I felt as if they had been cut off from my body. With my eyes clouded with pain and tears I cried out, "Mom, mom, mom!"

I don't remember what happened next. I couldn't think straight. Everything was so fast and blurry. I could only remember people crying and ambulances going off. I felt my body being

lifted onto a stretcher as my mother kept screaming my name. My vision turned cloudy; my ears ringing. My mind went blank and the world closed from me.



I remember lying on the soft and cold hospital bed, my body covered in wires and tubes. I opened my eyes a bit and stared painfully at my mother holding a tissue to her face. Before I passed out again, I remember hearing the doctor say something.

“I’m sorry Mrs. Pensile, but when your daughter’s body was hit, it paralyzed her from the waist down. She’s going to have to live the rest of her life in a wheelchair.”

Dylan

What do you do if your best friend gets hit by a truck? I typed the question onto Yahoo Answers and stared at it for a while. It wasn’t a question that a normal fourteen year old would put on the internet but I just had to know. I couldn’t figure it out myself.

At the race, I had watched Sara, my best friend, get put onto a stretcher and sent to the hospital. I didn’t even know what was going on. All I knew was that I had to help and if I didn’t I would

regret it for the rest of my life. I then rushed over to Sara's mother, Ms. Pensile and put my arm around her. All I could see in her face was anger and despair.

“My baby,” she wept, “she'll never be the same again.”

Even though I didn't feel the same as her, I felt so overwhelmed that I started to cry. She looked at me and smiled weakly. “Sara is lucky to have a friend like you.”

The tears didn't stop but I felt a little better. One of the paramedics came over to us and offered to drive us to the hospital.

When we reached the hospital, Ms. Pensile was quickly taken to Sara and I was left alone in the hospital waiting room. I sat on the hard metal bench and stared at the floor. The tiles seemed to be moving in various directions. I felt so confused and angry.

Will she ever be the same again? Will we still be friends?

Sara

September 17th

“Sara sweetie, can you open your pretty blue eyes for me?”

I blinked the blurriness out of my eyes and stared hard at the nurse. She wore baby blue scrubs and had thin red glasses. The

nurse repeated what she had said. I turned away from her and mumbled. She smoothed out my blond hair and used comforting words on me.

“Do you want some water?” she asked.

Mumbling, I shook my head. I tried to remember what had happened and why I was here but I couldn't quite remember.

I felt the nurse lift her weight off the bed and go out the door. Once I heard the door close behind her, I sat up and pulled the blanket off my legs. Gasping, I stared at my legs covered with scars. *What happened to me?*

Someone opened the door and I looked up. It was hard to recognize them at first but then I realized who they were. “Mom, Savannah!” I felt a tear trickle down my face. My heart was pumping as I stuffed my wet face inside my mom's shirt and sobbed.

“I missed you so much,” I heard her say.

She let go of me and took hold of my hands. Savannah stepped forward and put a basket filled with presents from my classmates on the bedside table. They stared at me for a long time as if examining me for any faults.

Finally, I could keep it in. “Mom, what happened? I feel different now. I feel as if I can’t do anything. I only remember running and...and...”

“Sara,” she let go of my hands and sat next to me on the bed. She sighed before continuing. “You were hit by a truck that accidently ran onto the track as you were running. The doctor said that because of the impact from the truck,” she grabbed hold of my hands and squeezed them. “You became paralyzed from the waist down.”

I couldn’t talk. I felt my world whirl around me. Ripping apart and smashing together.

“What happened to the other runners?” I asked.

“Some of them got hurt but not as bad as you,” she looked down at her hands.

“Why?” I was not hoping for an answer.

Savannah sat on the other side of the bed and held onto me. “I know it must be sad Sara, but we can still live through it. Trust me; good things will come out of this.”

I squeezed my hands together forcing the tears to go away. The doctor came in and injected some things into my legs and

arms. It felt painful but I ignored it. I knew Savannah was right about what she had said. I needed to think positively.

“What’s going to happen now, mom?” I asked as soon as the doctor was gone.

She rubbed my back as she spoke. “Well, all I know is that you’re going to get a wheelchair and after that,” she sighed. “I just don’t know. The future seems kind of hazy.”

I put my head on the pillow and let the tears fall. How could I ever run again? I could never do that in a wheelchair. “It’s not fair mom! It’s just not fair! All I ever dreamed of was becoming a famous runner...and now...”

“It’s okay Sara. Don’t be mad about what happened—”

“How can I?” I cut in. “My life is totally ruined!” the tears rolled down but I never wiped them away.

“It’s okay Sara. I know how you feel,” my mom was trying to comfort me but it clearly wasn’t working.

“You know how I feel? I’m the one paralyzed, not you! You’ve always had your legs but now *I* don’t. You don’t know how I feel.”

It was hard not to think that this accident had changed my life forever. I didn't know whether I would ever run again. I pictured myself in a wheelchair just sitting there waiting for something. It didn't seem right. That wasn't me. Was this really how God had planned my life to be? Was there a meaning for this?

Dylan

I got a call at 5:00 in the morning. At first I let the phone ring a while and then I picked it up. I didn't know what to expect.

“Hello?” there was a silent echo before the other person spoke.

“Hi, is this Dylan?”

“Yes, who is this?”

“This is Ms. Pensile. I have some great news for you,” she had a happy edge in her voice.

“Is it about Sara?”

“Yes, I just wanted to tell you she woke up from here coma!”

My heart stopped for a second. This had been my wish for a while. And finally it came true. I couldn't talk. I choked back a cry and just let the news sink into me.

“Dylan, are you still there?” Ms. Pensile asked.

I smiled so wide I could have won the Guinness World Record for the biggest smile in the world. “Yeah, I’m here.”

Sara

September 19th

After I woke up from my coma, everyone seemed to be acting extra nice to me. It made me feel weird—like a kid. I wasn’t allowed to roam the hospital hallways without an adult by my side. Those were my mom’s strict words. Suddenly, she’s started to get extra protective of me.

Not all the nurses knew that which allowed me *some* freedom but not much. Once, a nurse left a wheelchair hanging around in my room