*Taking the First Step*

996 words

I remember the car hitting the curb, it flipping into the snow, the passenger side crashing into the tree, the screaming, the ambulance, the blood-stained snow. But most of all, I remember the pain. It was unbearable. It felt like someone was trying to pull me apart. Soon after the crash, I blacked out.

When I woke up, I was in the hospital. Nurses and doctors were all around me. Lights flickered in and out of my vision. I felt numb and subdued from heavy medication and couldn’t move. Voices of nurses overwhelmed me, and I heard a doctor speaking urgently to my mom. I remember a nurse noticing that I was awake and ushering my mom over. My mom spoke to me in a soft, sad voice. I felt choked up when I heard the sadness in her voice. I hated to hear her be this emotional. A doctor came over and checked my pulse, he nodded at my steady but fast heartbeat and told the nurse to escort my mom to a waiting room. Not even an hour after I arrived at the hospital, I was taken into surgery.

The nights after the surgery were rough. I couldn’t sleep and when I did my dreams were haunted by nightmares. I was very lonely. About a week after my first surgery my mom was allowed to visit me. She spoke to me and told me it was going to be ok. I didn’t feel like it was though. Every day was like being a hamster in a lab, being poked and prodded by needles and bandaged and unbandaged. A few days after my mom visited me I had two more surgeries and two weeks after that a nurse took me into a waiting room where a doctor came to talk to us. He spoke mostly about the severity of my injuries and how I might have to have a few more surgeries, but then he told me something that tore my world apart. He told me I would never walk again. I remember my mom squeezing my hand after seeing my devastation and whispering to me that I would walk again. This faith in my mother made me want to prove my doctors wrong. Prove to them that I would walk again. And that’s where my story begins.

Two months later

“Are you sure you're ready for this?” Mom asks nervously as we pull up to a Physical Trauma Rehab (PTR) center.

“Yes, I’m sure. I have worked with physical therapists for months.” I say.

“Only two, we just heard about this a week ago,” Mom says, bringing me back to the conversation with one of my physical therapists.

*“Olivia! Good news!” My physical therapist said at therapy.*

*“What? Did you find the center?” I asked nervously.*

*“Yes! They said that they can take you next Wednesday!” She said.*

*“Really? That soon?” I asked incredulously.*

*“Yes! Oh, Olivia! You're going to walk again!”*

“Yes, mom. Only two months ago. But my therapist said I was ready!” I say, reading the worry on her face.

“Yeah, I know.” She says.

We get out of the car and I roll down the ramp. I can’t wait to get out of this wheelchair. I haven’t even been in it for a year and I’m so ready to be out of it. The PT and R center is a place in Colorado Springs. My mom agreed to drive me all the way from our little valley home out here just for this.

I’ve had two surgeries since I was released from the hospital and both of them went well. We quit going to the hospital where I was saved because they wouldn’t stop saying that I was going to fail, that I would never walk again. What they said still angers me.

My mom wheels me into the PTR center and we go over to the front desk. Mom signs us in and the screen says to take a seat in the waiting room until someone comes to bring us into the back. About twenty minutes later, a woman in a white uniform walks in and says, “Olivia Hart?”

I roll over to her and nod at her.   
“Hello, hon. Come with me,” she says in a tone as sweet as sugar.

We walk, or in my case, roll down a hallway and stop before a door labeled, “Workout Room” in large golden letters. She pushes the door open and says, “Well, Olivia? Are you ready?”

*Am I ready?*

One month later

“Ok, let’s try again. Push on my hands with your feet.” Christina, my therapist says.

“Ok, I’ll try.” I say.

I pull my legs up and push against her hands as hard as I can. I grunt with the effort.

“Good, good! You can lower them down now,” Christina says. “You're making great progress!”

“Thanks,”  I pant, exhausted by the effort.

“I think that’ll be all today.” Christina says, looking at her watch.

“Do you think that I’m close to practicing walking?” I ask hopefully.

“Yes, very close. I think next time we will practice walking together.” She responds.

“Oh, cool. Ok, well, I’ll see you on Sunday!” I say rolling out of the door.

My mom sees me rolling down the ramp and opens the van door.

“How’d it go?” She asks.

“Really well! We’re going to practice walking next time!” I say excitedly.

“Really?” She says, closing the door behind me. “I didn’t expect it to be so soon!”

“Yeah, well it is.” I say.

“Hey! No need to have attitude with me. We’re just having a conversation!” She says, pulling out of the parking lot.

I can’t wait for next Sunday.

The following Sunday

“Ok, now. Are you ready to try walking on your own?” Christina asks.

“Yes. I’m ready!” I shout confidently, feeling excited.

I take a deep breath, and push myself up. I put my foot forward and take my first step.