Free Falling

By Janaya Richardson

The crowd went silent. I can do this. I told myself over and over in my mind. As I looked up at the bright light. I felt a strike of confidence in my body. After this my whole world would be different.

***December 3, 2002***

It was a brittle December morning. There was frost on the window and snow on the ground. I had a feeling- a feeling that something good was going to happen. As the day went by nothing happened, and then that feeling was gone. Just as the hope of anything good happening disappeared, I heard a knock on the door. A tall man stood before me in the entrance of my house. He was tall, and skinny, with lots of thick black hair,a black suit, and sunglasses. He kind of looked like one of the men in black.

“Can I help you?” I asked when I opened the door.

“Is this the home of Amber brown?”the man in the black suit asked.

“Yes. I’m Amber, why?” I asked nervously.

“Let me come in,” the strange man demanded.

“Okay, please come in and sit on the sofa.” I answered kind of scared.

The tall man came into my house and sat on the beige couch that matched the offset white chairs.

“I will go get my mom,” I said as I backed towards the stairs.

The stairs that were in the center of my house led straight up to my bedroom.

“Mom, there is someone down stairs he is tall and he is wearing a black suit and sunglasses. He also has really good hair,” I told her all in one breath.

“Well we will go downstairs and see what is going on,” my mom said before she set the laundry basket down on her bed. As my mom started to go down the stairs she said

“Follow me”.

When we got into the living room, we sat down. I sat in one chair and my mom sat in the other chair. I have never been so nervous in my life my palms were sweating and my teeth were clenching.

“Hello my name is Stacy Brown,” My mom said as she held out her hand to shake.

“ Thank you for letting me in your home, my name is George O’Hara, but you can just call me George” He explained while he was shaking my mom’s hand. We all talked for a while. My mom and George had a cup of coffee, and then he said something, something surprising and then it was dead silent.

“I’m sorry what?” I asked kind of confused.

“Yes, I would like you to be in the Olympics,” he announced

“Umm… can I have some time to process what is going on,” I tried not to smile really big but, I couldn’t. I went up to my room took out my phone and called my best friend Ella

“Hello”

“Hi Ella, I have something to tell you, and I am really excited, but I don’t know what to do.” blurted Amber

“Okay then tell me.” Ella said

“Well earlier today some man came to our house his name is George and he asked me if I would be in the Olympics and I just don’t know what to do.”

“He asked you if you wanted to be in the Olympics and you had to think about it!”

“Yeah.”

“Well the obvious answer is that you need to say yes!”

After I hung up with Ella I sat in my room thinking all of the thoughts that I was going to be great one day rushed through my head. It finally happened I knew what to do. I sat in my room for 10 minutes and then went down stairs. I was nervous and I couldn’t stop wondering what would happen or if I really wanted to or if I let Ella's words into my head. I walked into the living room. Mom was crying and George was sitting looking at me. I could feel his eyes judging me, waiting for me to talk, just waiting.

“I decided that I will compete” I finally answered

“Okay that’s great. It will require a lot of training and time.”

“I know, and I am willing to put the time and effort into it”

“Well I am glad to hear that you want to. I best be going thank you for your time and have a lovely evening.”George said as he was going out the door.

“We will, thank you.”

It was getting late, so I went to bed. I tried to sleep, but I was so excited that I just tossed and turned in my bed I didn’t sleep that night. The next morning I woke up to the smell of bacon cooking. I put my slippers on and went down stairs to see what was cooking.

“Mom what are you doing?”

“Good morning sweetie, i’m just making some pancakes and bacon.”

“But why?”

“I just wanted to congratulate you on your decision.”

I ate my breakfast and went back into my room and called Ella

“Hello”

“Hi, It’s me”

“Did you make a decision?”

“Yeah I’m going to the Olympics!!”

“Oh my god, really? I can’t believe that I know someone that is going to compete in the olympics!”

“I can’t believe that I am going to the Olympics”

“Well I have to go….”

“Okay why do you need to go”

“Ummm… I have to do my homework”

“But we didn’t get home….”

“See you later bye,” and then she hung up.

I didn’t know what was going on with her. Maybe she had a family issue, but I would never know. I went downstairs to watch Dance Moms and eat chips. When the episode ended, I watched Grey’s Anatomy once that was over I went in the kitchen to see what my mom was up to.

“Hey mom what’s up?” I asked.

“Oh just baking some cookies,” she replied.

“Why?” I asked, this time more interested

“ Because I am so proud of you” she replied.

“Well, you know that you don’t have to do this.”

“ I know but I am just so proud of you that I would do anything for you”

“Anything?”

“Yes”

“Can I have 10 bucks?”

“Why sure you can,” she said as she walked over to her wallet.

I got my 10 bucks and went to the mall and bought some hair stuff for my training.

**August 5th 2003**

Today is the day. Downstairs there's a room where all the female competitors got ready. I was putting my gold and silver Leotard on with the rest of the competitors. We all had our last names on the front of our outfits and our age on the back. Mine said Brown on the front and 15 on the back. There was a knock on the door it opened about 3 inches and a voice saying “5 minutes ladies.” I could hear my heart pounding in my

chest. couldn’t believe that, I was actually in Rio. They called us one by one I was 8th in line. They came to the 7th girl I was next. this was it.

“Amber Brown age 15 please come up” the voice called from behind the raised desk

I walked over to the starting mat and looked at the ground. The crowd went silent. I can do this, I told myself over and over in my mind. As I looked up at the bright light I felt a strike of confidence in my body. After this my whole world would be different. I counted in my head 3 I can do this... 2 it won't be so bad... 1 it's time. I looked up and started to run. I did a perfect roundoff back handspring back tuck and stuck the landing. Then it came to bars. I knew that I wasn’t good at bars, but I couldn’t show that I was nervous. I jumped onto the first bar and did a full turn and into a split jump onto the other bar. (Meanwhile when some of the girls on the other side of the competition were messing around, one of them spilled the chalk and it went right into my eyes.) For a split second I thought that I would be fine until I realized that I was in mid air. THUMP. Every bone in my body hurt. I couldn’t move. I just liyed there until Mr.Marlen came over to help me. He tried to sit me up, but every time he moved my legs there was a pop and a lot of pain.

“Amber, are you ok? can you move you fingers or toes?” Mr.Marlon asked me trying to stay calm.

“I tried to answer him, but when I got the words I don’t know out of my mouth I just passed out and that was it.

I didn’t know what happened until we were at the hospital and my mom was telling me everything. I pulled my covers off and looked at my legs, well more of my hips.

“Mom, why is there white around my legs and hips?”I asked confused.

“Sweetie, when you fell off the bars you broke both of your hips and got a concussion” she said to me with big sad eyes.

“Sow what does that mean?”

“It means that you might not be a good as you used to”

**August 20th 2003**

It had been 15 days since I got admitted into the hospital. The doctor came in and said there was a good chance I would need surgery since I broke both of my hips and I should be able to stand with some help, but I couldn’t and that wasn’t a good sign. My doctor took me to x-ray and when it was done one of the nurses brought me back to my room. The doctor came in he told me that when we tried to stand me up at the competition that it pushed my bone apart, and it wouldn’t heal without surgery. He said that my surgery was scheduled for 3 o’clock.When the time came, my mom tried not to cry but when I looked through the glass doors I could see her makeup running down her face.

After 4 hours the doctors came out to tell my mom that the surgery had gone well and that I would be fine. When I woke up, my mom came in with a flushed face.

“Sweetie, I have to tell you something” she said as she grabbed my hand

“Whats going on?” I asked.

“Sweetie since you were hurt so badly the surgery couldn’t fix your hips all the way.”

“So what are you saying?”

“You can’t do gymnastics anymore.”

I didn’t know what to say. I wanted to scream and I wanted everyone to get away from me. I couldn't do any of that. I was in the hospital for a week after my surgery Sometimes when I stood up it would hurt. The day I got home. I called Ella just so I could talk to someone.

*“Hello” Ella answered*

*“Hi it’s me”I answered back*

*“Oh sorry about your hip”*

*“Yeah it’s a bummer”*

*“So why are you calling?”*

*“”I just wanted to talk to someone”*

*“Well I don’t want to talk to you”*

*“Is this not a good time? Should I call back later?”*

*“No don’t call again”*

*“I don’t understand”*

*“You may be hurt but i’m not, and I don’t want to listen to you complain”*

*“But..”*

*“Look I didn’t sign up for this so i’m done. Goodbye”*

*“Ella wait”*

*“What”*

*“Why are you doing this to me?”*

*“Because I just don’t like you the way I used to”*

*“Why just because I am hurt?”*

*“No, well yeah”*

*“Wow that is just the worst thing anyone has ever done to me”*

*\*BEEP BEEP BEEP\** She hung up on me

A few weeks went by.I was determined to prove my doctor wrong. So I went down to the gym and asked my starter coach if he would help me learn the basics again.

“Are you sure you want to?” he asked.

“I’m sure. I could have been the next big thing.”

“Well, okay I will help retrain you.”

“Great ,so what should we learn first?”

We started with forward and backward roles it hurt at first and after about 4-5 days it was better. Once I had mastered that we went on with cartwheels. Those seemed to come easier than the roles.

**September 17th 2003**

I was still working on training. It was getting easier by the day. I would go to the gym every day for 3 hours, and train. I could see myself getting better and better rom when I started. I thought in the beginning that I would never be the same. I may never be as good as I was before but I have to keep trying. As the year went by I got better and better but I never made it back into the Olympics.

**August 5th 2016**

“Oh I love that story can you tell us again?”

“Yeah tell us again”

Many years later and I had two daughters of my own who have the same dream I had when I was their age.

“Mommy, are you going to tell us the story again?”

“We will save it for another time.”

“Ohh but why?”

“Because it is time for Kelly and Lindsay to go to sleep. Good-night I will see yo in the morning”

**The End**