

## The Best Day Ever

As I turned into the DMV parking lot, making sure to look right, then left, I cautiously proceeded into a parking spot and placed my mom's car in park. My hands were tightly gripped around the steering wheel and sweat had collected on my palms. My breath quickened into a sort of pant, as I waited for the examiner to say the words that would determine how the rest of my day would go. The road to getting my driver's license was not always easy.

Ever since I had watched my brother get his driver's license as soon as he turned sixteen, I was eager for my turn to arrive. He had passed both the permit test and driving test on the first try, making it look effortless. So I had thought— if he can do it, why can't I? I patiently waited for my fifteenth-and-a-half birthday, when I would be able to take the written test to get my learner's permit.

The day of my permit test came in November. At the DMV, I remember sitting in the stiff black chairs which were arranged in several rows inside the stark building. The chairs were dotted with people waiting for their numbers to be called. I waited in line, got my picture taken, and began to take the permit test. Everyone around me seemed to finish their tests quickly and it felt as if they all knew something that I didn't. As I completed the test, large black letters appeared on the screen that told me I had failed. This news felt like a slap in the face because I had really thought I would be walking out of there that day with my permit. I collected myself and one of the DMV employees offered me advice for my next attempt. He gave me two copies of the driver's handbook that I could study from. I set my mind on taking the test again the next month.

My second attempt at the permit test was in December. At that point I was familiar with the process and the handbook. I felt significantly more confident. I felt much more at ease when I

saw each of the questions followed by four possible answers that had once daunted me. This time, I submitted my responses to the 46 questions feeling much more assured. This was reinforced when I learned that I had passed. I ran to tell my dad, who was waiting in the room adjacent to the testing area. I also immediately texted my mom and brother. I felt a flurry of excitement bubble up within me which mixed with the knot in my stomach from before the test. I walked out of the DMV with a toothy grin stretched across my face and the crisp, white permit paper clutched in my hand.

During the six months that I had to wait to take my driving test after getting my permit, I practiced driving almost every weekend. I mostly drove with my dad to get boba, lunch, or to run errands. We drove on neighborhood streets, PCH, the 10 freeway, and the 405 freeway. I also practiced parking and reversing. With each passing day I thought more and more about what it would be like to have my license.

I got to the DMV slightly early on the day of the test so that I could do a few loops around the block beforehand, like a warm-up. With my mom sitting beside me, I pulled the car into the driving test waiting lane. As I waited, I thought about all the ways I might mess up and fail the test. I was even more intimidated at the sight of a girl about my age who I watched complete the test and emerge from the car with a tear-streaked face. I was even more worried when the same examiner who had been with her knocked on the window to signal for me to open the car so he could get in and start my test. In an effort to ease the tenseness I was feeling, I took a moment to breathe and bring myself back to focus on the present.

At the beginning of the test, I was waiting for the moment when the examiner would declare that I had made a critical error. But that didn't happen. I stopped at all the stop signs. I checked both ways. I checked all intersections. I changed lanes successfully. Once I felt a little

more relaxed, the test seemed to pass quickly. The examiner and I soon returned to the DMV parking lot. I nervously sat in the black leather seat picking at the skin on my thumbs as I waited for the examiner to finish filling out the examination form. I saw him scribble a large number and a circle in blue ink at the top of the page. In my head I decided that I had failed and had already made a plan that I would come back soon and take the test again. But those weren't the words he said. Instead, he told me I had passed.

For a second I thought that the examiner was joking. I couldn't contain my happiness and I told him thank you and quickly got out of the car and gave a thumbs up to my mom. The examiner handed me the exam sheet and I ran to show my mom. When I went back inside the DMV to get my license, the clerk congratulated me and even told me I got a great score. Leaving the DMV feeling proud and relieved with my license in hand, it felt like a full circle moment from when I first took the permit test. My mind was already flooded with thoughts of the new independence and freedom I would have now that I could drive.