

A Voice of Encouragement

I'm never bored when I'm on my skateboard. The dirty white wheels tell a story-- practicing a single trick dozens of times until I get it right. I was told I couldn't do it, that I should try something more for a girl like me. "What about gymnastics or ballet?" my teacher asked me. But I ignored her. I ignored the people and the voices in my head that were telling me to stop. To "be realistic." "It's a phase," my friend said when I started. A five-year phase? I don't think so. The voices in my head got louder, and I felt hopeless. But I stuffed those feelings down and acted strong. At least I tried to. And I kept going. My knee pads became a part of me. The skate park became my second home. I practiced everyday, deep in the zone. Nothing could stop me. Or so I thought. And then I fell.

Boom.

There I was. Laying on the ground, stars spinning above me in the summer afternoon. I saw someone pointing at me and laughing, sticking out his finger. I could hear his muffled voice: "I knew she couldn't do it." I felt my cheeks go hot and red.

Once my dizziness lifted away, I could see that he was actually reaching out his hand to help me. "Are you okay?" asked a boy.

“Yeah, I’m okay,” I said as he pulled me up from the ground. “I’m Caleb,” he said. “I’ve seen you skating here. You’re pretty good.” I knew he didn’t mean it. No one thinks I’m good. But I reluctantly pushed out a “thank you” and walked away. However, his compliment lingered in my head. I was not used to those words. Was he being genuine? Usually, fellow skaters only talk to me when they’re asking who I’m borrowing my board from. They can’t imagine a girl skating herself.

The next day, I went back to the skate park, bruises still on my knees. The first person I saw was Caleb. He seemed as if he was waiting for someone. Strange. And then a funny thing happened on the way toward him. We locked eyes and he nodded with a smile. I stepped onto my board with a boost of confidence. His words, “you’re pretty good,” still lingered in my head. And I started to skate. When I’m on my board, I feel like I’m flying. This time, I was soaring.

“That was incredible!” Caleb shouted as I slowed to a stop. And I smiled because this time I knew he meant it. “You know, Caleb added, “you were really born to be a skater.” And that was all it took. One person said I’m good enough. One person made me feel like I could achieve my dream. One person made me believe in myself. And that one person overpowered all the people who told me I could never be a skater. A funny thing happens when someone believes in you.