

## THIRD PLACE

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### **Courage**

Courage is a word associated with heroic actions and things that do not happen in everyday life. But the truth of the matter is that courage is not just about those heroic actions. Courage is the ability of individuals to face the things that frighten them. It is about overcoming fears and obstacles that prohibit people from living their lives to the fullest.

My sister Jess is the most amazing example of courage. Jess was abandoned at an orphanage in Korea only days after she was born. While she was still a baby, she was diagnosed with cancer that started in her right leg. The doctors determined that without an amputation, the cancer would be terminal. At the age of one, Jessica had her leg amputated at the waist. From that moment on, her life would prove to be different than the lives of everyone around her. Not long after her amputation, my parents adopted Jess. From the moment she came to live with them, she was treated just like everyone else in the family. My parents believed that the fact that she only had one leg did not make her incapable of doing the same things as everyone else.

By the time she was five, she was a part of Wheelchair Sports Camp, which is an organization that allows people with physical disabilities to play sports and do other activities. Jess learned to play basketball and tennis, as well as how to rock climb and snow ski. But just learning how to do things was not enough for Jess. She had to be better and faster than anyone else. She pushed herself harder than any of the others.

When she was about twenty, Jessica had to have surgery on her left hip. This surgery left her unable to walk for a long time, and afterwards there were months of physical therapy to endure. But even the hip surgery did not stop my sister. She now lives in Colorado where she spent the last year training to compete in the Paralympics. She was one of the best snow skiers. But just as she was seeing the end of the long road of training, her doctor told her that if she continued, she would need another hip surgery. The recovery for this surgery would take twice as long. Jess was left with a choice to make. She could either continue chasing her dream and ignore the consequences or find something new to do with her life. Now Jess competes in tennis tournaments all around the US. Nothing has ever stopped her from living her life to the fullest not even the fact that she only has one leg.

I believe that my sister is an example of the courage that people often forget about. It would have been so easy for her to just say that she could not do it. But instead, she faced the challenge and has proved to herself and to everyone who know her that she has the courage to do things that some people would not have imagined.