

Ila B.

### Landing my Axel

Whenever I stepped on the ice, my mind left the earth and vanished into a far away land filled with dreams. January 21, 2024 was one of the biggest days in my ice skating journey. I was twelve years old and in the 7th grade. Ice skating was one of my biggest priorities.

As I watched my friend exit the ice skating harness, I quickly dashed to be next. The abrupt stopping of my blades at the harness made ice fly left and right, but I didn't care. All I wanted to do was land my axel. Excitement spread across my face as I put the harness on. We went straight to axels on the harness, and I landed them all perfectly. "Great job Ila!" my coach said, "Next!" Filled with the desire to land my axel off the harness, I asked if I could attempt some by myself. My coach hurriedly replied, "Uh, sure just do it quickly." I slightly glided away from the harness so I would have space to try my axel. Remembering what my coach taught me, I took a big deep breath through my nose and out my mouth like smelling flowers and blowing a candle. My skating leg bent lower and lower as I prepared for the jump. My free leg lifted into a high h-position and drove down. I was suddenly in air position. As I prepared to land, my hips stood out behind me as my chest lowered and lowered. I lost my center of balance and fell backwards on my butt. *Ugh I've been falling like this for weeks!* Unexpectedly my coach started jumping up and down shouting, "Ah!! Kick your butt! Kick your butt!" She was eagerly pointing to where I had just tried my jump. Overwhelmed with uncertainty, I stepped up to try again. *Why would I be able to land it now when I have been so close for weeks?* I knew I couldn't back down, so I decided to try anyway.

Thump Thump, Thump! My heart was going at 100 miles per hour. Warm, hot, red fear flushed my face as sweat dripped down from my forehead. My arms were situated in the "v for victory" position, and then my right arm drew back. My right leg followed this action by kicking

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my butt like instructed. Pairs and more pairs of eyes from my peers and coaches laid on me. All those eyes felt like burning lasers on my skin. Anxiously, I put pressure down into the ice and popped up into the air. My right leg squeezed so hard as I drove down, that I thought my quad was about to explode. I imagined jumping onto a fire pole as I crossed my legs into air position just as my arms pulled in and over my right side. I continued to rotate until I had completed the 1.5 rotations. The landing was the last part, and the part I was scared of the most. For weeks and weeks, this landing caused me endless falls along with black and blue bruises. I was squeezing every muscle in my body as I embarked on my landing. First my legs came out of air position, and then my arms. I was careful not to stick my hips out like the last attempt. At last, I looked up and suddenly my arms were checked and my legs were in check out position. I had just landed my axel! Lips turned up in smiles and then smiles turned into shouts. All around me, people were clapping and cheering. My coach hugged me over and over again and was so excited for me. I was smiling so hard that my face started to hurt. After everyone gathered together, we all went off to try some more axels while we rotated going on the harness.

Finally landing my axel felt like conquering a mountain I'd been climbing for weeks. After working so hard week after week, it felt amazing to land it. That day, I walked out of the rink with a smile on my face happy that my hard work paid off.