

Lily Switka
Mrs. Daly
Religion 11 T/TH A
2 March 2017

Dear Joe,

I couldn't be more glad that we got to go skating together.

On the twenty-eighth of November, I was having a dreadful day. The weather was frigid, and I forgot a jacket. There was an assignment due in my first period class, and I didn't know about it. I was in the midst of an argument with one of my very best friends, and it did not appear as though we were going to have a happy ending. So I volunteered to skate with some kids at the rink.

When I walked in the door, I was greeted by your smiling face. I could feel the happiness radiating from your presence. As I tied hockey skates on your tiny feet, energy pulsed through your limbs. You bounced up and down in your seat.

You were bundled up in an electric blue winter coat and a matching hat. Your mittens were black and fuzzy, and a scarf dangled over your left shoulder. I was adorned with a friend's hockey jersey over my uniform and a pair of gloves I found somewhere in my car. We held hands as I walked you to the threshold of the rink.

Your first steps onto the ice were tentative, so I kept a strong grip on your hand and supported you as you glided across the frozen surface. Despite my efforts, you took a tumble onto the slick icy floor.

There was a moment of silence, and I was worried you might begin to cry. That's when, all of a sudden, everything changed.

Despite being covered in icy remnants and snowflakes, and probably being colder than an ice cream cone, you laughed.

You let out the most infectious giggle I have ever had the pleasure of hearing. Soon, I was laughing. My friends were laughing. The hockey coach was laughing, and so was the ice rink staff. It was that kind of laughter where your head falls backwards and your stomach hurts, in a wonderful way. Your joy had spread to everyone in the room in a matter of milliseconds.

In this moment, it was hard to remember that you have down syndrome. You look different than other kids, but that's okay. Who wants to be the same anyway? You learn in a way that others may find inconvenient, or slow. You are told you are different, and that is viewed as something negative.

But Joe, don't think for a second that being different is a bad thing.

You were a beam of light in a day full of disappointment and anxiety.

You, like any other child with a disability, are closer to God than any of us. You walk with Him every day, and we see it in your eyes. We hear it in your laugh.

You are an adventurous boy with a bright future. You are a beacon of hope and inspiration to people you don't even know yet. You deserve rights and protection, in addition to every opportunity the world could possibly offer. You use your down syndrome as a stepping stone to accomplish greater things. You are Joe.

I couldn't be more glad that we got to go skating together.

All the love,
Lily