The Freedom to Move

**AD: The performance shall now begin.**

*The song they see me rollin’ plays. As it does so Katie wheels into the spotlight in a wheelchair.*

**AD: As the music plays a young woman rolls onto the stage in a wheelchair.**

K: Hello fellow humans! I am Katie and this dashing set of wheels is Wallace. Now because I roll rather than walk I get asked some really stupid questions and some of them are just so stupid that I thought it’s be funny to share them with you. Question One please...

**AD: Do you sleep in your wheelchair?**

K: Depends how boring the lecture is to be honest.

**AD: Is she okay?**

K: She’s fine thanks, and she talk for herself

**AD: God will save you...**

K: Will he now? That’s nice of him...what is he saving me from exactly? I was once told this by a slightly crazy lady who also said that if I start praying it’d change my life, and I’d be tap dancing...She told she was gunna me pray for me and sort it all out with the big man upstairs…this was a couple of weeks ago and given that I’m still in a wheelchair I feel like she hasn’t prayed for me yet...

**AD: So, what’s your special ability?**

K: Mind reading. Right now, most of you thinking “she can’t really read minds”. And you’d be right, I can’t…because, funnily enough, you don’t actually get superpowers the moment you become disabled.

**AD: You’re in a wheelchair...but you’re so pretty. You’re too pretty to be disabled**.

K: Admittedly...no one’s every said that to me...

**AD: That’s not surprising.**

K: Rude! Now I don’t get why people assume that you can’t be pretty and disabled? Disabled doesn’t mean ugly. Those words don’t mean the same thing! Go look in a dictionary and you’ll see those words aren’t connected.

**AD: My uncle’s girlfriend’s neighbour’s fourth cousin twice removed is in a wheelchair, do you know him?**

K: Yes, we met at an underground wheelchair meeting, where all wheelchair users meet up to plot to take over the world...No I don’t know him! There’s 1.2 million wheelchair users in the UK, I don’t know all of them!

**AD: “Don’t have a fit!”**

K: You know I was going to but now that you've said that I won't…or will I? I don’t know I have no control over my fits.

**AD: Are you possessed?**

K: Yes…me and the devil bezzie mates…like some people seriously think that people who have fits are possessed…we’re not…our fits are caused by biological conditions not by Satan...

**AD: When you have a fit, do you get spasms in you vagina?**

K: Of course not you twit! Thing is this is not that only inappropriate question I’ve been asked just because I’m disabled. And it’s not just inappropriate questions I also get horrible comments said in my directions. The thing is that these comments aren’t really directed at me, they’re directed at my wheelchair. Because the moment you become disabled or you sit in a wheelchair, you become a ghost. People no longer see you, they just see the wheelchair.

**AD: The lights change so that a hard spotlight focuses the wheelchair. Katie gets out of her wheelchair and crawls out of the spotlight into the darkness.**

Voice: I didn’t know they let spazzes on the course

Voice: 180 disability hate crimes are reported in the UK every day

Voice: Your wheelchair is a problem

Voice: You don’t look right

Female Voice: Are you contagious?

Female Voice: Can you have sex?

Female Voice: [slowly] Where’s your career?

Voice: Nearly 40% of abled-bodied people, in the UK, say that the disabled are a social burden.

Female Voice: If I was disabled I would have just shot myself rather than be a burden to everyone.

Voice: 10% of abled-bodied people in the UK believe that disabled people should be used as medical experiments or undergo euthanasia

K: Now I don’t understand the 40% that believe I’m a social burden…

**AD: The lights raise so that the full stage is lit. Katie is now visible and is holding a sword.**

K: I mean…how can I be a social burden, when I’m not even social.

**AD: Katie slices her sword through the air, and then brings her sword up by her head, and holds this position.**

K: And as for the 10% who think I should be either a lab rat or put in a gas chamber…

**AD: Katie brings her sword to her body and spins on her knees, bringing the sword out as she does so.**

K: You know what when I first read that...I almost cried. Because it horrible, 10% of able-bodied people in this country think I should die...that’s really scary.

**AD: Katie attacks with sword across and then brings it up close to her body, blade upwards.**

K: See last time I checked I’m as human as everyone else in this room is...well...as human as most of you are...a couple of look like you might be aliens...you especially...

**AD: Katie gestures her sword towards a member of the audience.**

K: Now I’m pretty certain that I haven't changed species and that I’m still human and as a human I have rights, and one of those rights is to live, so I don’t get why people are trying to take that away from me just because roll rather than walk…

**AD: Katie picks up a second sword**

K: Now you might be wondering why I have swords. Don’t worry I exactly what I’m doing and that’s kinda the point. Most of those nasty comments claim that disabled people are useless and can’t do anything yet I’m currently doing something that most of you can’t do.

**AD: Katie crosses the swords in front of her body whilst dropping down and then crossing the blades in front of her face.**

K: Also I thought having my swords in the show would be cool and it means when I hear those horrible comments I can pretend I’m stabbing all the people who think that way. Not that I’m a psycho or anything…[awkward laugh] I’ll put these away now…

**AD: Katie puts the swords away and then crawls back to her wheelchair and sits.**

K: Shall we get the last lot of stupid.

**AD: Your legs move so you’re obviously faking it!**

K: Yeah, I totally am...this is just benefit fraud...Shhh... Don’t tell anyone. That was joke! I was joking! Just because I’m not paralysed doesn’t mean I’m faking it. A lot of wheelchair users can move their legs, some can even walk...I can’t though...

**AD: Wow, you’re so brave.**

K: I really can’t deal with phrase because it’s just not necessary. Like one time I was in a shop and this old lady, who I don’t know, patted on the should and went “you’re so brave”, and I was just there like...I’m not brave, I’m buying Pringles.

**AD: Don’t you wish you could walk?**

K: No I don’t. I don’t really think about it. I don’t believe that being disabled is a negative thing. I don’t see my disability as something I need to get rid of. I know that to a lot of people the idea of becoming disabled, terrifies them. In fact it was found that one of the main reasons why abled-bodied people ignore and abuse disabled people, is because they do not want to be confronted with the idea that at any moment their lives could change and they could become disabled. Change scares people. Becoming disabled means you do have to completely change your life and this is scary concept. And becoming disabled is not easy. Discrimination, lack of access, actually being ill...sucks! It really does but it doesn’t mean that your life is worthless just because you’ve got a disability. Now I became disabled when I was 17 and back then I didn’t think like this. I was desperate to regain my ability to walk. I was depressed and I just hated being disabled. I used to hate my wheelchair. Absolutely hate it. But then I realised that my wheelchair wasn’t something awful that was restricting me but rather something beautiful. I mean wheelchairs are, if you think about it, one of the most beautiful inventions ever created. Wheelchairs allow people who can’t move or walk the ability to get around. To see the world. Wheelchairs have such negative connotations when actually there beautiful. Once I realised this, I realised that I had been looking at disability the wrong way. Being disabled wasn’t something to be ashamed of, rather something to be proud of. My wheelchair wasn’t something that was restricting me, rather it was giving me the freedom to move.

**AD:** **Katie pushes down on the wheelchair breaks, locking the wheels in place. She lifts her body up, suspending her legs above the seat. She turns placing her legs on one of the arm rest and drops. Placing her arms on the other arm rest, she once again lifts her body up and holds. She then brings one of her legs round to the other arm rest, so that she is in a sitting position although still suspended above the chair seat. She flicks up the footpads. Katie tucks her legs under, placing them on the wheelchair seat in a kneeling position. She leans forward placing her hands on the floor, she walks her hands forward pulling the wheelchair along with her. Katie walks forward then stops and sit back up, kneeling in the wheelchair. Katie’s hands go to the wheels and she rolls the wheelchair to the side of the stage. Katie crawls out of her wheelchair. She then lays down and stretching her arms out so that she can reach the footpads of her wheelchair. She pulls the wheelchair forward and rolls it over her body. The wheelchair rolls freely over Katie’s legs, and continues to roll by itself until Katie sits up, crawls forwards and grabs hold of the chair’s push handles. Katie crawls backwards pulling the wheelchair with her. She tips the wheelchair backward so that the wheelchairs backrest is now on the floor. Katie rolls onto her back tipping the wheelchair over so that it is on top of her. She then spins the wheels so that the turn. Pushing up with her hands on the arm rests and her feet on the seat of the wheelchair, Katie raises the wheelchair above her body. Once in position, Katie removes her hands so the wheelchair is being balanced on top of her feet. Katie’s hands come up to the armrest and her legs move from the wheelchair. Although her legs still remain raised from the floor, the wheelchair is now being lifted up by Katie’s arms. Katie turns slightly and brings the wheelchair to the ground, the wheelchair collapses and folds down as it hits the floor. The only wheel visible spins. Katie watches it spin, then rolls, crawls forward and the locks the unseen wheel. She then watches the visible wheel spin. Katie reaches forward and stops the wheel from spinning. She then pulls her body on top of the wheelchair and sit on the wheel. Katie then spins around on her wheelchair’s wheel. Katie gets off the wheel and sits on the floor. She lifts her wheelchair up and crawls behind it. The wheelchair still remains folded. She runs her hands over the wheelchair, caressing it’s unique shape. After unlocking one of the wheels, Katie pushes the wheelchair round so that she is knelt behind the folded backrest. She tips the wheelchair backwards, unfolding it. Katie then pushes the wheelchair seat into place. Katie tips the wheelchair back up so that it’s wheels are on the ground and pushes it forward. She then pulls it back, embracing it. She places her hands flat cross over on the left side of the backrest...which is the symbol for love in British Sign Language. Katie then folds down the backrest. Katie places her hands across the folded backrest and slowly moves them apart. A move that as well as makes sure the backrest has completely folded down, mean equality in BSL. Katie then pulls her body over the back rest so that her hands are by the wheelchair footpads and her legs raise over the backrest. The wheelchair rolls backward as Katie’s hands walk in that direction. Once the wheelchair rolls to near centre stage, Katie stops. Her hands go up to the breaks, which she pulls down locking the wheels in place. She slides forward. She then places the footpads down. She pulls herself up into a kneeling position and clicks the backrest back into place. She then brings her legs down so that she is sat in the wheelchair and smiles.**

K: The performance ends.