***STIFF NECK***

On a hot summer day, Mira and her brothers, Wayne and Kevin were outside playing in the backyard. While Mira was a few years older than her brothers, and probably should have been with other kids her own age, she enjoyed playing different games with them. Wayne, despite his young age, was a little more mature than he led on. He often came up with different ideas for games for them to play. Of course, there was Kevin, the youngest. He often followed Wayne around due to their closeness in age. When Kevin was a baby, he got sick and it caused partial hearing loss in his right ear so sometime he often turned to his left side for him to hear better and had a bit of a contrary attitude.

It was so cool in the backyard due to the huge pear and pecan tree whose shadows covered the ground and often letting through a cool breeze. Even though the backyard gave off a mellow atmosphere, it was so boring for the siblings. So, they got together to try to think of something to do. Wayne looked around the yard and noticed a deflated basketball sitting by the house. “Why don’t we play volleyball?” suggested Wayne. “How are we going to play? We don’t have a ball and a net,” complained Kevin. “Why do you always got to be that way?” exclaimed Wayne. “You have to stop being so negative all the time, Kevin. It doesn’t suit you at all”, commented Mira as she picked up the basketball. “Besides playing volleyball doesn’t sound like a bad idea?” “Okay, what are going to use for a net,” replied Kevin. Mira began to look around her surroundings and her attention was drawn to the metal clothesline. “Hey, why don’t we use that”, exclaimed Mira. Wayne looked in the direction that Mira was facing. “You mean the clothesline,” said Wayne. “I don’t know, Mira. Isn’t it a little high,” commented Kevin when he turned toward his siblings. “It is a little high. I know, why we don’t pull it down a little,” suggested Mira. “A’ight, let’s try,” agreed Wayne. “Will you help, Kevin?” “Yeah, I’ll help,” replied Kevin.

So, the siblings went toward the back porch and grabbed the wire line. They pulled the wire down until it was chin length to Mira who was the tallest. They began to play volleyball with the deflated basketball. They decided that Mira would play against her brothers being the oldest. It was a back and forth game with each side pushing each other more and more. Each person was so focused on the game that they didn’t notice that their mother had opened the backdoor to let some of the smoke out from the kitchen while she was cooking dinner. As the smells of the kitchen whiffed through the air, the siblings began to realize how hungry they were and also how late it had gotten.

“Time to come inside and get ready for dinner,” called their mother. “Okay”, the children yelled in unison. The siblings stop playing volleyball and put the deflated basketball back by the house where they found out.

Since the backdoor was open, the children went and jumped onto the back porch to go inside the house. “No, don’t come in that way. Go around to the front door,” their mother yelled to them. “Man, Momma”, complained Wayne. “Yeah, can’t we come through the backdoor”, Kevin commiserated. “I said no and because I said so. I don’t want you to track mud in my kitchen,” their mother quipped. “Do what your momma said”, joined by their father. “Come on let’s go. Let’s just go to the front door. I’ll race you,” said Mira. “A’ight, I’m gonna beat you,” Wayne said as he jumped off the porch and ran. “Me too,” agreed Kevin as he did the same as thing as Wayne. “No, you’re not”, Mira said as she jumped, but she didn’t hit the ground immediately. Instead, her neck got caught on something. She hung there struggling to get down. Then, as quickly as it happened, she spun backwards twice and finally hit the ground with a loud thump. Mira was in so much shock that she couldn’t make a sound, but just laid there on her back trying to process what just happened.

As she laid there with her neck throbbing, she remembered that they pulled down the clothesline to play volleyball and forgot to move it back up. Mira’s cousin, Cissy, who lived across the street and was walking by, saw the whole thing. She ran over to Mira to see if she was okay. By this time, Mira’s family had noticed that she had not come in yet and went to the back porch to find her. They say her laying on the ground. “Are you okay, baby?” her mother said. “What happened?” her father followed up. Mira didn’t say anything still in shock. “Mira!!,” her mother called. “Huh,” she replied. “Are you okay?” said Cissy. “My head, neck, and back hurt,” said Mira. “I saw the whole thing. She flipped backwards twice and hit the ground,” said Cissy. “How did you do that?” asked her father. “I forgot to put the line back up and when I jumped off the porch, I got caught on it,” said Mira. “So basically you clotheslined yourself”, her mother said trying to contain her laughter. “Bet you’ll pay closer attention before you jump next time,” her father replied through his laughter. Before she knew it, everyone around her was laughing except her. “It’s not funny”, pouted Mira as she got help from her brothers getting up from the ground. “Yes, it is”, said Wayne laughing along with Kevin.

When Mira got up, she tried to move her neck, but only had limited motion. Her neck movements were so stiff so she looked like a robot when she moved. “Daddy, Mira looks like Robocop when she moves her neck,” said Kevin. “Don’t make fun of your sister,” said their mother. “She do look like Robocop”, said her father who started to make robot noises. Everybody started laughing again including Mira. “I’ll help her inside,” said Cissy through the laughter. “I guess you can go through the backdoor now,” said their mother. Cissy helped Mira up the steps into the house and then went home.

As a result of Mira’s mistake, she had a stiff neck for two weeks. So, the incident served as a lesson to her, as the old saying goes: “Always look before you leap. “Besides, you’ll never know what may happen and end up with a bad headache and a stiff neck, literally.