

## Behind the Red Curtain

By Chloe Moissis

“Places! Five minutes ‘till we start! Lets go, go, go!”

I heard the voice like a distant echo in my head. Everything was going so fast, surreal, like a movie sped up until all you could see was a blur of moving bodies.

“Hey Chloe, you coming?”

I turned my head towards her. My hair, which had just earlier been curled to perfection and thoroughly hair-sprayed, crinkled behind my neck creating a sound like that of crumpling paper. Her familiar face and bright blue eyes were comforting in the room filled with adults and dancers I’ve never met before. She was a friend from school and dance, one of the only people I really knew at this studio. A piece of her long blond hair was stuck to her ruby lipstick, but quickly was brushed away as she spoke.

“You okay? Come on, we gotta go onstage!”

I smiled to show my excitement and quickly followed her. The smell of hair products and sweat wafted through the hallways, causing my stomach to twist into even more knots. We made our way to the side of the stage, through the old white door, slowly opening it so not to cause any creaking or unnecessary noise. The others were already there, dancing and jumping around the stage, their hoop skirts swirling around them like open umbrellas twirling in a storm. The curtain was down, yet the noise of the thousands of people drifted through the old, majestic fabric. My eyes followed the curtain as it grew and grew, towering above my short nine year old stature. At the bottom of the curtain, through the golden fringe, I caught a glimpse of the crowd. I quickly got on my knees, the cold temperature of the stage penetrating my sheer ballet tights and freezing my hands. My eyes searched the

audience, looking for a familiar face. Before I locate anyone, I was dragged into the hurricane of dancers, and my fears disappeared by this temporary distraction. We jumped and twirled and practiced our movements persistently even though we had been rehearsing the same short dance for almost 4 months. We watched as the main character practiced her dance, her pointe shoes gleaming like diamonds in the minimal light. Quicker than anticipated, the voice came again, repeating the phrase I was expecting:

“Places. We are starting NOW. Get ready Party scene, you’re on first!”

We scurried like mice to our places on the sides of the stage, and waited. The music began, frightening us into jumping up and down and silently screaming with excitement. My makeup felt like another skin on my face, masking my fear with a look of happiness. Through my head, thoughts of doubt circulated, frightening me even more than a horror movie ever could. What if I fall? What if my costume breaks? What if I forget? I sat on the ground and grasped my dress, the silky smooth pink fabric somewhat comforting to my cold and clammy hands. I glanced up, and through the negligible light emitting from the small blue light bulb in the corner, I saw the faces of my friends, all of them anticipating. All the words my director told me began to boost my confidence. No one notices the failures. Smile. Have fun, that’s all that matters. Soon, I rose on shaky legs, and grasped my friend’s hand. She turned to look at me, her luscious blond hair swinging behind her.

“Don’t worry! It’s easier than it looks. I remember my first performance. I was only five!”

The music then started its last phrase. The adults fixed their dresses, the children fixed their hair and the boys tucked in their ties and jackets. The overture came to an end. The lights crept on. The curtain slowly opened. Our music started playing, and I entered,

not only on stage, but also to a new aspect in my life. The endless rehearsals. The anticipation. The butterflies. The makeup. The applause and attention earned by doing my best. The performance.