Athena Malta

Mr. Shin

English 11

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The day I realized

I woke up that Friday morning almost wishing I was about to go to school. I was extremely nervous; I felt the butterflies in my stomach. I felt unprepared, and anxious. I was about to compete my first solo of the year in four short hours. I had practiced, a lot actually, by myself, and with Ms. Nicole. I felt a bit nauseas, so I didn’t eat anything all day. Thinking back that probably wasn’t such a good thing.

I had two numbers before my solo, so I told myself *stop worrying it’s going to be fine. This is stupid.* I made sure I had all of my costumes, makeup and accessories for my dances in my basket. After I double, and then triple checked everything, I put it in the car as my mom was yelling at me to hurry up. On the way there, I didn’t say very much, just looked out the window.

Once I arrived at the theater, I went backstage and was welcomed by all of my friends and teachers, while heading down the echoy, empty hallway towards the dressing room. Dressing rooms are always hot from the bright lights, this one in particular seemed extra bright, and very hot.

“It’s like a sauna in here!” My friend exclaimed while laughing.

“Can you please braid my hair?” Asked one of my other friends.

“Fine.” I sighed.

My hands were still very shaky, so it was quite difficult. Her bleach blonde hair is very soft, and a little slippery.

“You’re going to have to ask one of the mom’s, this is way too difficult for me right now.”

I went up to the practice room to stretch and warm up on my own, because usually that can calm me down. Everything was fine until I felt one tear roll down my cheek, and then two, and another two. *Oh god no, not again. I had an anxiety attack last time too.* I went over to Ms. Nicole.

“I’m nervous, I don’t know if I can do this.”

“Yes, you can. You’re just working yourself up again, you have practiced so much, and it looks very good.” She said as hugging me.

Ms. Nicole talked me down until I stopped crying. Ms. Sarah and two of my other friends came over to reassure me as well. Once I took a few deep breaths, and drank some water I felt a lot better.

My acro group was practicing since it was the first piece I was competing. *I really hate this costume.* I thought to myself walking over to my group. It’s a silver and black one piece, and my neck gets hot because of the stupid silver high neck, and there are shoulder pads, but it really looks like some weird wings since they go off my back and not my shoulders. Once we preformed acro, which was quite messy since I fell out of a lift. *Wow, that was a nice way to start the day!* I thought. I get ready for contemporary and then I have my solo. I try my very best not to think about it but, its hard.

Contemporary goes well, and I head downstairs to put my solo costume on. It’s a navy blue bodysuit with a mesh back, and diamonds all over the front. Its probably my favourite costume; plus its very comfortable, so that’s a bonus, however, I had to glue down the bottom since it rides up all the time. *I hate this body glue, it smells disgusting, and it’s a gross yellow colour, everything just sticks to me now*. Once I’m ready, I go upstairs to find Ms. Nicole, and run my dance with her. I find her, and ask her to play the music. I run it, but I mess up a whole lot, This just results in me becoming more anxious, and more stressed, and even more shaky. I can’t land my jumps, I fell out of my turns, and I lose my balance in all my leg holds.

It was time to go to the stage. Two of my friends were going on before me, so we all went to watch each other. The three of us, and Ms. Nicole huddle together in a group, we say our prayer before we go on. Some of my other friends came to watch and support me: They are waiting and watching in the wings. The announcer calls my first friends name to preform. This is where I started to get very anxious, I could feel my stomach turning. *Oh no its coming, it’s really coming.* I run as fast as I can to garbage can next to the first wing and, I just threw up, it just came out of nowhere. *I haven’t puked in like 4 years. Why now?* I did not feel better afterwards. I sat down on the cold black floor, against the tall velvet wing, drinking water.

“I’M ON IN 1 NUMBER. OH MY GOD!” I yell out to myself, and whoever is around me.

“You’ve got this! Its perfectly fine, do some breathing exercises and try to calm down. I can push you until the end of this category, and then you’ll have three more until you, okay?” Ms. Nicole says extremely calmly, which instantly makes me feel more relaxed. *In, 1...2...3...4, out, 1...2…3…4.* I continue trying to concentrate on my breathing as my friend counts out loud for me.

“Okay you’re next Athena, just do your best, and use your facials!” Ms. Nicole says as she walks over to me

“All right, It’s fine, I can do this.” I say to her, and myself to give me a little confidence.

The announcer calls my name, and I walk on to the brightly lit stage. I look out, and I can barely see anyone in the audience besides all my friends cheering in the front row. I look up and can see the judges. *Well, hopefully their friendly.* My music starts, and I just dance. I can hear my friends cheering from the wings, and the audience as I hit all of my beats. My face lights up, and I know I’m strongly hitting every move as I hoped. I don’t fall out of my turns, and I land all my jumps. It feels great! I hit my end pose as strong as I can, with a huge smile on my face. I bow, and walk off with confidence. I get backstage and Ms. Nicole, Ms. Sarah, my ballet teacher and all of my friends come over to me and give me a huge hug, telling me I was worrying for nothing because it was the best they have ever seen my dance. *If I wasn’t so stressed over nothing I probably could’ve done even better.* I think to myself

“Thanks but someone PLEASE GRAB MY PUFFER!” I try to yell, while barely being able to breathe.

Awards are right after I finish. Everyone who danced in the session goes onto the stage. I find all of my friends, and sit down with them. I’m so out of breath, huffing and puffing. I can taste blood at the back of my throat, that’s not a nice feeling. The announcer comes on stage with the adjudicators. *From what I’ve seen I’m definitely not going to place in this category, some of the girls were incredible!* The adjudicator starts to read out my category.

“Jazz solos 16 years old.” He announces.

He starts reading out the participant awards.

“3rd place to Kasey. 2nd place to Sophie, and 1st Diamond to Athena Malta!” The adjudicator announces enthusiastically.

“No way!” I scream to my friend sitting next to me.

“Go,Go!” She yells back.

I go up to get my award, and look over at Ms. Nicole and Ms. Sarah who are cheering, clapping, and smiling in the wings. *Is this actually real? I threw up two minutes before I went on, and it didn’t even feel like my strongest.*I think to myself, while walking back to my friends. They are all so happy for me because they knew how anxious I was. Next, I wait for the adjudicator to list off the top 10 soloists of all styles in my level from the last few days. He announces places 10th through 2nd, I don’t even think about placing in the top 10. Until he calls my name.

“The overall top soloist of this division goes to… Athena Malta!”

Surprised, I go and get the huge medal, and take a photo with the other top 10’s. I run over to Ms. Nicole and she runs over to me, giving me a huge hug, saying how proud she is and that she knew I could pull it off.

This one day has taught me to try and not get worked up about little things that I have either practiced for months, or things I know I can do. Although, I can not control my anxiety, I can control my nerves, and my confidence. I now know not to worry so much about preforming my routines because I have showed myself that I can do it.