**The Night of My Awakening**

The noise of basses, tenors, altos, and sopranos weaves a basket of sound filling the ears which flood the room. The light glides around my body leaving no surface unlit; heat radiating like a tanning bed left turned on. All the commotion. The voices. The movement. Everything has stopped: leaving nothing left but the energy that flows on the stage like a million tiny snakes on the prowl. Then, the tension that knotted every muscle releases like the pop of a balloon and in that very moment I feel utterly, completely, truly alive.

“This is the moment we’ve been waiting for. All the work we’ve done in the last six months has lead to this,” my teacher begins with her first of many pep-talks of the night. The stage is brimming with bodies whose pores bleed with angst and eyes which crave the light. Threaded between bodies stand transformed pieces of plywood which create a new scenery. Here, we’ve created new time, with new people, in a new world. A world which we would soon bring to life.

I stand studying the reflection which appears before me. Reality begins to sink like the space around my eyes. In a few short hours a room full of faces would be watching my every move, and I must give them a show.

Like a Renaissance artist, I paint my face with a spectrum of colours bringing a persona once drawn with words to a persona printed to life. My costume glides over my skin, perspiration clinging to each layer.

*These aren’t my shoes! Whose shoes are these? What am I going to do with no shoes? I can’t go on without shoes! That’s it I’m not going…oh wait, they’re right here.*

I stand with my final product in front of me; you can clearly see my identifying features that poke through the makeup and clothes, but you can also see features that seem foreign. I look at myself as I recite my lines in my head. Next, I take an elongated breathe, releasing the thin top layer of anxiety that clings to my skin. I pick up my cumbersome body and carry it backstage.

The dancers practice their choreography with a turbulence of agitation that gushes through their flailing limbs. Meanwhile, actors maneuver around these limbs causing the curtain to waver from left to right; bringing life to the once still object.

Jenna, who was draped with a ripped shirt and skinny jeans, grabs my arm, turning my body to face her, “Do we turn to the right or left during the finale?”

“Umm, right, I believe,” I say faintly, trying not to be heard by the community that fills the space behind me.

Ten minutes till curtain- my lungs heave as my legs propel around the space, placing and plotting my props into place. A face appears in front of me to which its features are hidden by the somber lighting, “ Do you know where the plunger is? I can’t find it anywhere,” the voice croaks with the impeding fear that has settled among everyone. “Yes I put it into place,” I whisper absentmindedly, as all I can focus on is the cacophony that I hear around me.

Five minutes till curtain- my mouth stretches into some shape similar to a smile, yet, what lies behind my lips is gritted teeth and tension that wraps around my every muscle like a rubber band. My nails sink into the palms of my hand; a pain that is overshadowed by the knotting that arises in my stomach. Voices fill every inch of the room. Silence has become a forgotten buzz. As conversations blend, impossible to differ, I feel a warmth enclosing my hand. My fingers intertwine with someone else’s. I turn my head to see my friends eyes glazed over with excitement. Her emotions of dismay were hidden behind a fence of smiles, regardless, they were still apparent by the texture of her palms.

“We got this. I know we do,” Eaemya encouraged with hope in her voice.

“Of course we do,” I respond with hope emerging past my doubt.

One minute till curtain- my teacher projects to the many eyes which sit before her. I watch from the sidelines behind the many heads that poke and prod their way for a view. She takes a step back with arms out wide, “Without further ado…,” her voice begins to trail from my head and the world around me becomes slow. My breath deepens with struggled inhales; air enters through my nose but leaves in on big heap through my mouth. Heat rises from my toes to my forehead like a fire consuming a forest. Trembles begin in my fingertips, dread produces and reproduces like the cells in my body.

An alarming stillness falls upon the crowd as the anticipation for the blackout creeps closer. All of a sudden, the margins of the theatre that once burned bright dissolved into the extinguished night of the room. A railing of my fellow actors is created around me, ready to follow me onwards. My body moves forward but my mind stays in the jumble of worries I leave behind. My body is planted tight with anticipation; my heart pounds drowning out reality. As soon as illumination grabs the empty space around me it’s as if a referee blows his whistle to start the game. My body gets tossed into actions; the once struggle-some moves become muscle memory. My body sweats every drop of anxiety to the floor and I become invincible.

Time becomes agile; with every breath the end approaches hastily. The threat of fear has become a foreign at this moment. I take a moment and gaze upon the audience before us. I take in the sounds of the music and commotion, coupled with the irritation of my costume embracing my skin. Most importantly, I take in the smiles that surf across everyone faces, equally, as content as my own.

A momentum of clamour builds as the final song of the night begins to play. The audience leans as if a mysterious force blows them forth; their eyes fill with awe, and their mouths open eagerly. We stand before them; a few hours earlier we stood connected by the terror that burned our insides. However, our connection at the end of this night is held strong by our passion. Once separate seeds, together, we’ve grown into an indestructible flower- known as a family.

Ryan delivers the last line spoken on this stage tonight with power and sentiment, “…because we rock!”

The music booms in my ear drums and my vocal cords pull with the tension I impede on them. I grab my family’s hands as we stand centre stage; soaring on top of the world. The lights burn my skin as do the eyes that watch me. Our hands project upwards, our heads greet the light; we swing our torsos down exploding the energy we wrapped and packed all night. This moment we share, hand in hand, awakens my body from a slumber I did not know I slept. Every ounce of vitality that I have built up for the past six months has oozed on this stage, covered like a slimy slug. With a hollowed out body and awaken eyes, I face the audience utterly, completely, and truly alive.