

The Way It Started

By Shiloh Speciner

We all have that one thing that gets you through anything. Your life could be going completely haywire, but you will still show up, you will still put in the work, and you will persevere because it is your outlet. If you are happy, it's your outlet. If you are angry it's your safety valve. It's your channel for anything.

For me, the one thing I love more than anything in the universe is dance. What people don't understand is that I don't dance for the money. I don't make anything at all. And, I most definitely don't dance to show off my flexibility. I dance because it means something to me. I love it.

A few months back...

The sun shined powerfully through my wide blinds and then spread dramatically onto my face. All I could think was, *What did anybody ever do to you sun!?* I blink my eyes open carefully and anxiously. I slowly climbed down my ladder to my bunk bed so that I wouldn't slip and fall while I was barely awake.

I first checked my kitchen to see if my mom was there, and it was a lucky guess because she was. She was there waiting for me, watching me but not always guiding me down the steps just like in dance.

I finally woke up all the way. It was like a calm clearing, I could finally see again. "Good morning Pancake!" She said excitedly. Pancake is my nickname. It always has been.

"Hi, mom!" I said directly back to her. 'Big day today huh?' She questioned me like she didn't already know.

"Yeah," I said "big day..." It had only been 3 seconds after I was done talking before she decided to say something.

"Ok let me make you a special breakfast for your special day." She said standing up and clasping her hands together.

That day I just had toast with peanut butter and a banana sliced on top. It wasn't very special but my mom said it was so I believed her.

The second I had taken my last bite my mom said "Ok why don't you go get dressed,

P" (P is also my nickname short for Pancake)

It was like she had been watching me, waiting for me to finish my food and shove that last bite in my mouth. I know she has been. "Okay, Mom," I said as I got up and placed my plate in the dishwasher.

I ran up the stairs, my feet thumping against the soft carpet with wood under it. Thump, Thump, Thump. It sounded like a stampede was happening, only a quiet, one-person stampede.

I got to my room and slowly shut my door so that I wouldn't wake up my sister and dad praying that I didn't already wake them up by running up the stairs. I pried my drawer open, tugging harder and harder until it opened.

"Come on already, please open! It must be caught on something..." I muttered to myself.

Finally, I tugged open my drawer and started looking through. I pulled out shorts and a shirt and put them on ready to go, ready to make the long one-hour drive.

As soon as I got there I was amazed by how many people were there. Everywhere you look, boys, and girls, with numbers pinned to their shirts. I was ready, ready to start dancing, I knew I was.

I was auditioning for a dance company, my future. If I didn't make it would I go to college, would I still dance? At that point, I did not know, all I knew was that I needed to dance. It was my outlet.

I stepped up to the front desk to get myself checked in and grabbed my number so that I could pin it on my shirt.

"Hello," the front desk check-in lady said to me.

"Hi," I said timidly. "First and last name please," she responded. "Shiloh Speciner," I said warming up to her. "Okay..." she said while clicking on her keyboard.

"Age?" she still clacked on her keyboard. "Oh uh, 11," I said even more nervously because I didn't look 11, I looked 14. "Okay, wow you do look mature for your age." the lady in her 60s said while pulling down her glasses and looking at me.

Once I got my number and was called in to audition my anxiety level was through the roof. I was standing in a room full of people I didn't know, plus there were judges in the room too. I learned a hard and complex combination en pointe (a hard boxe shoe where you stand on your toes). The ballet music starts and I rise onto my box (the hard part of your pointe) and... it really, really, hurt. I come down off of my box and to the combination on flat (not standing on your toes).

I auditioned and everything went okay. I just didn't know if I would make it or not. I spent weeks and weeks just waiting for the email to come, the one email.

Two weeks later I was lying in my bed thinking about the email when my mom called me down. "Look at your results," she said as I entered the kitchen. As I opened up my computer and logged in all I could think about was how hard this company was to get into and that I would probably not make it. I clicked on the most recent email and... "Congratulations! Welcome to DanceSpace Performing Arts Academy!" popped up. "I made it... I made it!" I shouted

To this day I am still making that one-hour drive and dancing at DanceSpace Performing Arts Academy, and I love it, it was worth it.