

Challenges - Joanna, Year 5, NSW

Lilith stared in awe as she watched her cousin, Reaye, dance across the stage. The blinding lights capturing every move she made. She leaped around the wooden stage as her long silk dress swirled around her. With a graceful leap, the show ended and Reaye disappeared behind the long velvet curtain while the massive crowd clapped and cheered.

“I wanna do ballet,” Lilith repeated in her mind as the crowd roared on. She snapped out of it when her mum tapped her shoulder and whispered, “C'mon let's go meet Reaye.”

Lilith shot up and sprinted toward the exit, her brunette hair twirling around behind her as she ran through the empty halls toward the backstage.

Lilith ran into Reaye's arms and hugged her tightly, whispering in her ear, “I want to do ballet like you.”

Reaye looked at Lilith and simply said, “Follow your dreams,” and disappeared back to the brightly lit stage for another performance.

Lilith looked at her mum, and said. “Mum, I want to do ballet like Reaye.”

Lilith's mum smiled and said, “I'll see what I can do, but why don't you practice with Reaye first!”

Next week, Lilith was in her massive backyard with Reaye learning how to do ballet.

“Put your foot in front of you and spin,” Reaye instructed Lilith. Lilith tried to spin but just toppled over. Reaye let out a small giggle and said, “Don't worry, it take years to learn ballet.”

They spent countless hours practicing ballet every week until Lilith could do enough moves that she could be enrolled in the junior ballet program. She strode into the ballet studio, wearing a leotard and a small white tutu. Lilith had carefully packed her change of clothes, some snacks and a hairbrush. She was early by a few minutes, so she practiced what Reaye had taught her.

“Spin around and stop on your toes,” Lilith said as she toppled over again. She was halfway through a turn, when she heard the chatter of the class. She stared in awe at their bright leotards and professional shoes. She had a lot to learn.

Another student approached Lilith with a warm smile and said in a bright voice, “Oh, you're new here, we haven't had a new student in ages! My name's Keira, by the way. Come on, let's go stretch!”

Lilith followed Kiera over to the other side of the massive gymnasium. The other girls had put their bags away and were stretching in front of the mirror, chatting to each other.

She was halfway through stretching when she heard their teacher, Mrs Sallow, walk in.

“Alright class, line up on the bars and get into point,” she boomed.

Lilith followed the girls over to the bar and went into point. Her feet started aching after only a few minutes. She was relieved to hear Mrs Sallow say, “Alright now, In the middle we're doing the Giselle,” as she started the flowing music.

Lilith tried to follow along but she just simply couldn't. The complicated twists and turns, leaps and stunts, were nothing like the things Reaye had taught her. What was more scary to her was that the final year performance was in 2 weeks. Everyone had to do a solo and the group performance, Giselle.

Lilith's thoughts were interrupted by Mrs Sallow screaming, “Lilith, do it properly! I know you're new but you should at least have learnt some moves!”

Lilith looked down and started dancing the challenging dance again. With every turn and twist her feet and arms ached. How could she ever get up to this level?

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After a few more weeks of ballet practice, it was finally time for the final year performance. She looked at the wooden stage and the blinding spotlights above it shining down on the dancers, as they twisted and turned. Lilith felt sick in her stomach. She would probably be the reason they failed! Kiera put her cold hand on Lilith.

“Don't worry girl, I'm nervous too!” Keira reassured Lilith.

“You've been here for 2 years and I've been here for 3 weeks!” Lilith said, with tears starting to well up in her eyes.

Lilith stared at the bathroom mirror, her mascara and makeup had been ruined because she had spent the last 10 minutes crying. Suddenly, Kiera burst in.

“Lilith, c'mon, we needa go!! Ohhhh yeah you need new makeup...” Keira said.

She pulled out a small makeup kit and sat Lilith down on the toilet cover. Within 5 minutes, Lilith looked like nothing had happened.

“Wow thanks Kiera, but how is this gonna fix how I dance?” Lilith stuttered.

5 minutes later, Lilith was dragged onto the stage by Keira.

“I can’t believe you want our team to fail!” Lilith whispered to Kiera. Kiera stared at Lilith.

“We’re not going to fail!!!!” Kiera shot back. Their discussion was interrupted by an announcement.

“Welcome the Sallow Dance Program!!!” The speakers thundered as the big velvet curtains drew back.

The spotlight shone on Lilith, as she shook with fear. The music started playing and Lilith's brain immediately froze. Only a small tap from Kiera snapped Lilith back out of it. She felt so embarrassed as she stumbled through the difficult moves, trying to keep up with her team. She caught a quick glance at Mrs Sallow and saw her disapproving sigh as she watched Lilith. Lilith turned back and focused on the dancing, her mind racing as she struggled to keep up. The performance felt like forever, and she finally stopped panicking when the velvet curtains closed again.

She caught stares and sighs from the other students. As she walked down the stairs, Mrs Sallow pulled her aside. Lilith shook, thinking it was because of her absolutely terrible dancing.

Instead, she was surprised when Mrs Sallow said, “Hey hun, I’m so sorry but we’ve put you in the wrong class. We put you with the elite dancers, but you belong in the beginners. I misread the message that your mum sent, sorry hun.”

Lilith just looked at Mrs Sallow and said, “So when’s the class?”

“Next Monday,” Mrs Sallow smiled.

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She once again, very eagerly, showed up to class. Dropped her bag, and started stretching. She heard the familiar chattering and Mrs Sallow’s voice, but this time the steps were much simpler and light and Lilith finally felt right.

With the support of Mrs Sallow and her family, she finally accomplished her dreams. Becoming a professional dancer.