

# Waiting in the Wings

Inspired by Mark 4:35-41

On that day of the recital, as evening drew on, sweet little Lyla grew more and more nervous. This was her first dance recital. Her mama made sure her costumes were pressed and ready, not a sequin out of place. She dabbed a touch of sparkling pink blush on Lyla's cheeks to catch the spotlights. When Lyla saw her reflection in the mirror she froze. The girl staring back at her was a beautiful princess, just like the ones in her favorite storybooks. She was beyond excited, and had practiced her dance routines with the diligence and dedication of a Broadway star. She imagined the stage at the high school as big as a stadium with bright lights and rows of proud parents cheering on their young stars of stage.

But, as she stood in the wings backstage and showtime grew closer and closer, Lyla's head began to spin like the merry-go-round at the park. She peeked through the crack in the heavy red velvet curtain which smelled like dust and chalk, and felt her stomach set sail on a rocky sea of nerves. Ms. Janice said to her dancers: "Let us cross the stage to the other side and prepare for your first number." Leaving the security of the wings, they took Lyla with them to center stage just as she was. And, the other dance helpers were with them.

Though she had practiced a million times, and had put on at least a dozen flawless private recitals for her mom, dad and baby brother, a violent squall came up from Lyla's throat and waves of nausea were breaking over her tummy so that Lyla's bright green eyes were already filling up with droplets of liquid fear.

Ms. Janice had already taken her position of power in the seat upstage, her beautiful blue chiffon dress flowing over the cushion like a sea of success from her director's perch. She expected the dancers to fall in line like magnets on a metal ballet barre just as they had rehearsed many, many times. The other dancers poked her and said to her, "Teacher, do you not care that Lyla is panicking?" She straightened her spine, tossed her hand in the air pulling back an imaginary curtain of unknowing, and said to the girls, "Quiet! Be still!"

Then, she tiptoed over to Lyla and put one hand on a sparkly pink cheek, and with the other hand made a grand gesture of placing one bouncy blonde ringlet curl back in place. She bent down so she was nose-to-nose with Lyla and locked into her eyes which seemed to be encased in tiny fish bowls ready to overflow. "There!" she pronounced. "Now you are ready my lovely Lyla. Now every single piece of you is ready to dance." Then, with a gentle whisper and a tilt of her head toward the pool of parents, she added, "Not for them. For yourself. This performance is for you. Do what you love and what you are so gifted with. Don't think about it. Your body knows what to do. Just feel it from the inside, and let your body dance with all your joy. I will be right here with you."

The trembling ceased and there was great calm among all the dancers. Lyla and the others simply glowed with confidence. Ms. Janice rose to her full height towering over the sea of shimmer, sparkle, and spunk. Then she asked them, "Why were you terrified? Do you not yet have faith in all I have taught you and all you have learned?" They were filled with great awe and said to one another, "I want to be just like her when I grow up! Even our prickly nerves and swishy stomachs obey!"

It was indeed a spectacular show — where spirit outweighed talent, but no one seemed to notice.

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