

In High School, I Was a Circus Performer

In high school, I was a circus performer. Every winter, I got to be a part of an enchanting, fantastical production. From juggling to unicycling, even trapezes and kazoos - we had it all. We'd hang like monkeys from the ceiling, laughing while we risked our lives. The Circus was my everything: my physical activity, my support group, my release.

However on March 23, 2014, everything changed.

It was my last show. For some reason, five simple words made no sense to me. *It Was My Last Show*. Which part did I not understand? I stood there, dumbfounded. Luckily, I was not the only one feeling this way. Sissy, bounced beside me, silent. Alison, stretched quickly, silent. Justin, sat down, silent. And then there was me, staring blankly, silent. It was a nervous silence, though, not the good kind. You know, when everyone is thinking the same thing but doesn't want to be the first to say it? Yeah, that kind of silence. I looked around.

I saw the old, stubborn lights that I knew took exactly three minutes to turn on. It always scared me to be the first one in the gym. I don't know why, I spent most of my life there. There's just something about the dark that makes me feel empty, like the comfort of the gym isn't there just because I can't see it. After three long minutes, I would hear that familiar click - and the lights would finally turn on.

I saw the black curtain. We always called it the "black curtain," never just the "curtain." The "black curtain" did not always used to be black, though. It was once bright blue and purple, and would shimmer in the spotlight. The years of the colorful curtain were vibrant. They were the years when I fell in love with the circus.

I also saw the carpet. Either outrageously dirty, or abnormally clean, the carpet had no in between. Today it was spotless. The years of the colorful curtain were also the years of a crappy carpet. It was a harsh blue, an ugly blue to be blunt. Held together with duct tape, the carpet was without-a-doubt crappy. But of course, I had a love for that carpet. Just like I had a love for the tacky curtain and the lights that should have been fixed years ago.

I saw the seats where people watch, silent. We were told silence is a good thing - that the audience is so entranced they dare not speak a word. But at that moment, before my last show, I hated silence. Silence meant thought and all I could think about was the end of my circus career.

"What should we say this time?" I heard behind me.

"Seniors!" someone said.

I gulped. It was the *last* huddle before my *last* show. Waterworks ensued. However, I wasn't the one crying. Tears were streaming down Allie's face. She hugged me and said circus won't be the same without me. *Circus won't be the same without me*. My vision started to blur but I told myself I couldn't cry until after the show.

"3, 2, 1, Seniors!" we all roared.

"Places," shouted Becky, radiating positivity. It provided a flicker of happiness.

Everyone headed back to the dressing room to finish getting ready, except I did not go with them. Instead, I went behind the black curtain and sat. It was dark now. I ran my hands along the curtain, pretending it was still that vibrant blue and purple. Beneath me was the crappy carpet held together with duct tape. I don't know how it happened, but in that instant, the gym was as it was years ago--when I fell in love with the circus.

The clicking of the lights surprised me and as quickly as it had come, the mirage ceased.

I envied the constancy of the lights, unchanged and unaffected by life's uncertainty. They just hung there, observing. They watched me throw a fit because I was not allowed to participate in the donut-eating challenge. They watched me fall countless times, only to get right back up. They watched me perform for the first time. They watched me perform for the last time. They watched me cry. They watched me laugh. And on March 23rd, They watched me break down backstage, not at all ready for life after high school, away from home, separated from friends - without the circus.

Writing this now, I would like to say thank you to the [Actors Gymnasium](#). I was lucky to have a place so difficult to leave and where I will always feel at home.