

The Day I Fell in Love

I felt like I was going to throw up. My head was spinning. My skin was hot.

“Again,” she said.

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“You have five minutes to get water,” my teacher decided, before checking the time. “Never mind. Thirty seconds. We don’t have time. Again, all the way through.”

At this point, I was looking at a stranger in the mirror. She was sweaty, breathing heavily, and her face was tomato red.

My face was never tomato red.

I wanted to cry.

My head pounded as I dragged my feet to the side of the humid room. Trying to ignore the smell of pennies, I shuffled out to my mark with the other two dancers, stumbled through the choreography (a quarter count off the shrill music for most of it), and pretended that I could breathe perfectly fine for the camera that was recording my every move.

I was mad. *Why does she think she can push me around like this?*

As soon as we finished and I airdropped the video to my friend’s phone, I ran to the bathroom, where my bag was sitting in its cubby.

This rehearsal was different.

Is this what ballet is actually like?

I’d been doing ballet for eight years and seven days, and it had never been this hard. I hated it. Ripping my pointe shoes off my tortured feet, I turned my water bottle upside down and tried to get the last drops into my mouth. Nothing came out, which was probably good, because I wouldn’t want to hurl all over the floor. I wiped bitter tears from my sticky cheeks before stepping out.

Why is it so hard for me?

I filled my water bottle as fast as I could, before running outside to catch up with my carpool. I was still out of breath and I wanted to go home.

I sat silently in the car on the way home, trying to cool down and wishing that the water had more ice.

When I got home, my dad asked how class had gone.

“Fine,” I lied, still thinking about every bad part of the rehearsal. “I guess it was a little tiring.”

We ended up going to Zupas to meet with my brother and cousin, who had just taken the ACT. I sipped my tomato basil soup quietly, still thinking about rehearsal while everyone else talked about math scores.

It will be this hard forever. It will never be easy again. Ballet is not easy.

And when my aunt asked me how ballet was, I didn't lie this time. If it didn't hurt this much, I wouldn't have cared. I realized I didn't just like ballet anymore, I loved it. I looked up and smiled.

“It was amazing.”