

The Spill.

by Shan Shaikh

The amateur audience was filled with wannabe professionals. The cameras were turning on and tripods were being set up. They were all so eagerly awaiting the mess-up of the night, but a laugh would be nice too. My heart was racing behind the door. They must've seen a thousand shows at this crowded, second floor theatre. It was my kind of space, though. I loved the vibe, and although I was feeling like I'd cough out my insides, I was excited. The narrow hallway, which I and the rest of the anxious teen actors were waiting in, was starting to get louder. We could hear our instructor prep the audience for the show. "We've got a great line-up tonight, ladies and gentleman! Our actors have definitely worked really hard for this." He went on about the classes and how our Stanislavski warm-ups helped us delve deeper into our characters. At that moment in my life, I didn't really understand how yelling at the ceiling with my eyes closed helped prep for a scene, but damn did it work. It was pretty neat once you figured it out. It's the kind of thing that clicks after doing it for so long.

"Hey dude, when do we go in again?" asked the only guy in our group with longer hair than most of the girls in our class. His name was Kevin. "Um, I'm guessing once Jeff's done chatting and the music starts." "Where's the scene list? I forgot which scene is before mine." I could barely make out his face in the tiny, narrow hallway lit with this dim blue light Andrew had installed because, the light from the theatre wasn't crawling underneath the black curtain. I would've seen a very desperate face. Kevin was very passionate about his acting. I mean, REALLY passionate. That dude takes method-acting to a whole new level. Ever seen a teenager bust a homeless man's nose to understand a role? Didn't think so.

When I turned around to take a look at the list slapped on the black wall, I knocked over this Starbucks cup. Of course, what kind of performance night would this be if an ice drink didn't spill all over my dress pants? Whoever thought it was a clever idea to place a

half-finished drink from Starbucks right above a set piece before a show belongs with the audience, not backstage. "Ah, shit!" I said to myself, probably loud enough for Jeff to hear. "I'm first aren't I?" Kevin asked, pressing his hands to his face. "What? No, I spilled Starbucks all over myself." All of the nosy teenagers huddled around to see. I wasn't embarrassed. I was flipping out over the fact that Jeff is pretty close to finishing up his incredibly long speech, and I'm actually the first scene. The teenagers slowly dispersed as they saw the damage. I reached for the tissues sitting inside this bar counter set piece we had. I was attempting to be as subtle as possible. Attempting.

I had a handful and started to wipe, up and down, sporadically. That's when she spoke to me for the first time. "No! What are you doing?" she whispered. I looked up and it was a blonde I hardly knew. The only thing I knew about her was that her name was Elena. I had seen her hang with most of the advanced group, but she didn't seem to be the conceited type. She was different from them, and she was beautiful. Her hair was shorter than Kevin's, which was a good thing. Her face was like a smooth, cream ocean in the dim blue moonlight. She had braces, but it didn't matter. She didn't have any makeup like the rest of the other girls that spent most of their time in that 2x2 dressing room. The only things she had on was clothes and a look of sheer confusion. "Um, I'm trying to clean the mess I made." "No, you don't clean it like that." She bent down and reached for a single napkin out of the hundred I had in my hand. "You're supposed to pat the napkin against the fabric. If you wipe, you spread the mess." She began to pat the napkin against my pants. I was in awe. This cute and sweet girl is cleaning my mess. She hardly knows me, but she's kind enough to inform me that there are steps to cleaning a spill. Who knew?

I was standing by this point. I was just watching her pat away. I should've helped somehow, but I was too busy smiling like an idiot. It was actually working too. The spill was just, disappearing. "There, all gone." She said as she rose up from the ground. She was smiling now. "Thanks, man. You saved my life." "No problem. Watch out for

those venti sizes." I nodded, acting like I knew whatever the hell a "venti" was. Then the music began to play. Everybody got in a straight line and Elena turned around and grabbed the door knob. "You ready?" She asked me. I couldn't see her face. I wanted to kiss her. I should've kissed her, but god knows what my breath smelled like and who knows what hers smelled like. "Yeah, ready." She opened the door and I sped through it and onto the dark stage. "Good luck!" She whispered. I didn't respond.

That was the last I remember seeing her. I really hope she hasn't taught anyone else how to clean a spill because it's taken me pretty far.

