

*Evaluate a significant experience, achievement, risk you have taken, or ethical dilemma you have faced and its impact on you.*

### On Stage

A three hour interview? Two minute speech? Well, only one chance. The stage is a void, the maw of my audience. Long black curtains weigh over me like the veil of death overshadowing my self confidence. The blinding spotlight is disquieting. It drowns me in brilliant rays; my shadow grows.

“What is your name?”

The light deafens noise coming from the blurry theater, and for a minute the rounded chair backs sound like rows of weathered gravestones. I lean forward and squint in an attempt to hear better. “Julie Fleming,” I reply smiling, hoping some of that ridiculously intense light will reflect back onto the three person panel seated before me.

“Haven’t we seen you before? A few years back I recall. Such a shy, sad, little lass you were then.” A satirically amused, yet simultaneously dismissive, sigh comes from the center of the faceless auditors.

“Yes, but that was two years ago.”

“So,” the monotone voice drawls in flat question, “Why have you returned?”

“I’ve grown since then. I want to give it one more shot.”

The uninterested -and unbeknownst to its author, misleading- scratch of *average* reaches me from the paper suffering beneath a fountain pen, coffee mug, and white cuffed, golden buttoned coat arm. “I see. Have you performed in any significant pieces since then?”

A memory flashes through my mind as quickly as the dreamscape of color projected onto the lids of our closed eyes, changes with the light. I stand before the room, trapped in the vise of fear and my suddenly unbearably hot sweatshirt. Assignment in hand, I begin to perform, cautiously gaining momentum, hesitantly courting courage.

Then, that heart stopping moment. Watching as pages of script float through the air and crash to the ground with the same effortless grace and awesome violence of autumn leaves swept off their feet and spun around by a winter zephyr. A deathless moment as all the pages seem to settle, then a bus rattles by, jerking them up into the air as if pulled by marionette strings.

They are kicked, thrown, and shuffled through as if this, not the fate inked onto their faces, had been their original purpose.

Finally, despite the nervous tension over timing, the charged atmosphere of anticipation, and intervention of the incidental, the breeze twirls into a curtsey, the foliage drops into a bow, and the storm roars its approval, unleashing thunderous applause.

“Just an English project in front of the class,” I shrug, beaming.

A pause comes from the perplexed panel, “No formal training, no lead role in a show, nothing of that caliber?”

My eyes adjust, my shadow provides solid ground beneath my feet, and my voice ricochets off the cone of light surrounding me, projecting out into the auditorium as if strengthened by a megaphone: “It was a small, but impacting performance.”

They are dubious, but I am ready to impress. “Very well,” one says, stacking notes together, “Blow us away. You have five hundred words. You may begin.”