

Happiest State of Mind

by Juliannah Stephens

At age one, she was the highlight of every family event. Bouncing around to the music and constantly twirling on the tips of her feet kept her occupied. She didn't realize it back then, but jammin' with Nana in the kitchen would be one of her last memories of her. And one of her best memories of all.

At age three, her parents finally took notice of the way the music moved her and decided to sign her up for her very first dance class. They took her to the little studio on the corner, and to say the least, she fit right in during that class. The other girls took a liking to her spunky and upbeat attitude.

At age five, she was convinced that she was born to dance, and there just wasn't anything better for her to do with all of her spare time. She begged to be signed up for more classes, and of course, she got her wish.

At age seven, as children tend to do, she changed her mind and signed up for the soccer team instead of those dance classes that she loved oh so much. She often found herself bundling across the field in a much more graceful manner than her teammates, and soon realized that she wasn't where she was supposed to be. She quit halfway through the season.

At age nine, she reflected on the fact that she was thankful that soccer didn't work out. Dance brought her to some of her best friends, and it brought her to her happiest state of mind.

At age eleven, the anticipation of costume arrival before their end of year performance seemed to last a lifetime. During rehearsal, her teacher told her that the costume she had been most excited for, didn't come in the mail on time. Of course she was upset, but they just used a different set of costumes that were shipped overnight.

At age thirteen, the owner of her studio sat her down, along with all of her classmates, and delivered the heartbreaking news. She explained that money was becoming an issue, and that the studio would be closing within the month. The tears were like a consistent river, just streaming and streaming without an end.

At age fifteen, she was officially used to starting fresh at a brand new studio. It was so foreign to her, considering she had ten years invested in her little studio on the corner. Although this new place was further away, with new teachers and new classmates, this new place was also bigger and brighter and better.

At age seventeen, she worked her way to the top of her classes. She had found that missing puzzle piece within her dancing years. She made the realization that it didn't matter when she danced, where she danced, or who she danced with. That was just where she belonged; on that

stage, with the music touching every inch of her body, and her smile shining almost as bright as the lights beating down on her face. That was just where she belonged.