

September

By Lauryn Johnson

Stage in sight.

Eyes widen.

Heart beats faster.

Breathing quickens.

My face is caked in makeup.

My hair is plastered to my head.

My hat is bobby pinned to my hair.

My pants are pinned to my leotard
under my costume.

My shoe laces are double knotted.

Nothing can go wrong.

Neck, arms, legs

My whole body is stretched out
and warmed up.

My 57 teammates

attempt to keep quiet back stage.

Curtains open.

We walk out .

Lights are off.

Take our pose.

The audience shouts out
names, to encourage.

I hear mine.

The blaring bass,

The jabber of rapping voices
fills my ears.

I use every muscle in my body.

Every ounce of strength I've got.

Push my arms and legs out.

Pull them in.

Punch, kick, turn, step.

I think I hyperextended my lungs.

My lungs weren't built
with the large carrying capacity
needed for a little girl
dancing her heart out.

I forget about my troubles.

Give the audience what they want.

I'm here to entertain.

I "ham up" my face,
and give 'em a little attitude.

Every face in the audience is visible.

Their faces look pleased.

My work here is done.

Music stops.
We pose.
Light go out.
Off we run.
Quick! Change
With three minutes to do so.
Tough, in the dark backstage.
Hat ripped off ,
bobby pins fly,
pins undone,
laces untied.
Someone's arms hold out my ballet costume.
I step in.
No time to think about
whose arms those were.
Convertible tights pulled down over my feet.
Ballet slippers slipped on.
Hair pulled in to the bun
(The messiest you can imagine)
My black ribbon-necklace –
Where is it?
No time to search, we're on
The rest of the class
rips off their ribbons
Like magic we match!

Stage is dark
Graceful run.
Pose.
Irish flute notes
fill the auditorium
My mind is occupied with details.
(Ballet is not my strength)
Relaxed hands.
Pointed feet.
Don't sickle.
Tilt my head.
SMILE.
Pose.
Run off.
Quick change.
Another dance.
(Repeat this stanza 3 more times)
Tiring- you might say.
Exhilarating- most definitely!
Finally! – The Finale
Always a bitter-sweet dance
I dance harder than before
I do more than just "ham it up"
For that audience
I give them the whole pig!

My heart aches, this dance
signifies the end of dance class

until September

How will I bear it?

I don't know.

I am overwhelmed with sadness
and depression.

But we put on such a great show!

And I had so much fun.

But without dance,

I've got almost nothing.

My only hope

is to wait

until

September.