

## **Addictive**

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I have an addictive personality. I can't temper how much I consume, I have to know everything. I swallow things whole. When there's nothing left I move on to the next thing. I'm a world devourer. I've eaten Middle Earth, Panem, and New Switzerland. I've gobbled up books, instruments, and pastimes. However, there's something that I just can't seem to chew through. My indestructible dog toy. Musical theater.

I love theater. I can't get enough and there's so much of it to get. There's a whole, beautiful world of songs and scripts to encounter. More material than anyone could consume in a lifetime. Cast recordings clogged my playlists and Spotify stream. I'd beg my mother to see shows and dream about Broadway. How the crowd would cheer as you bowed, what it would be like to sing for a packed house. When I was younger, I'd listen to my Mom's Les Miserables CD on my little pink and white disk player every night before bed. Performing was all I wanted to do. But I still left the stage. I was burnt out. Hours of long rehearsals and a slew of smaller roles and a spell in the ensemble discouraged my dreams of being the leading lady. The unstoppable gobstopper of my heart, left to collect dust on my shelf of forgotten forays. I stopped auditioning and tried some other things. I dipped into robotics and rockets. I wrote songs, poems, and plays. I painted until I passed out. However, nothing could cure my smoker's itch like musical theater. The stage makes me feel whole.

Junior year I went back. I broke it into manageable pieces. I did little things that added up. I knew this is where I wanted to be. I knew I had to get better if I wanted to stay. I began voice lessons. I've had more voice cracks than my fourteen year old brother while trying to train my near-tenor contralto voice to sing like a soprano. I'm still working on the high notes, but I've made improvements. I bought a pair of soft ballet shoes and built up the courage to drive on the freeway to attend lessons in the city at the only ballet studio that would teach someone starting so late. Monday nights I'd collapse into bed with sore hip flexors after 8 p.m classes. Saturday mornings, after class, I'd ice my feet and knees after countless tondues and pliés, each a little better than the last.

I auditioned for every play my school produced, every musical it presented. Every time the cast list was announced, my name could be spotted in the ensemble; nevertheless, I auditioned. To learn more about my craft, I joined the International Thespians Society and was elected to be an officer in the same year as my induction. The casting director also

works as the choir teacher, so to show more of my vocal range, I joined choir. In my first semester I was elected to be a choir officer. The peer-elected roles of leadership in this community mean more to me than I can say and solidify my commitment to this part of my life.

Through every sprained ankle, cracked high C, and disappointing cast list, those pale pink shoes remain my promise of patience and commitment. Persistence is a daily struggle, my skills are so far behind that sometimes I think it would be easier to quit. Regardless, I refuse to give up this passion so easily a second time. I refuse to leave due to disappointment again; just being on stage is enough of an accomplishment for me. Even though I am terrified of getting burnt out again, I know that if I do I'll find some kindling and stoke the fire right back up. I couldn't truly leave the theater even if I wanted to. I'm addicted