

CREATIVE NON-FICTION, 3rd Place: Scarlet Jacks

Teacher: Meredith Baine, Jonesboro High School

Action!

INT. CAR – DAY

KID

“Mommy, I’m cold!”

MOTHER

“I know, honey. I think it’s time for a new car.”

MOTHER (CONT.)

“How about CarMax, where they sell the best used cars on the market?”

END SCENE

Being six years old on a commercial set for the first time was not an easy feat, especially without my scheduled afternoon fruit snack and with the cold seeping through every layer I had begrudgingly allowed my mom to put on. But I didn’t have much of a choice. My mom was **MOTHER.**

Still, as a little kid, I understood something important. Creating something even as trivial as a Carmax commercial requires vulnerability and teamwork. The commercial wasn’t just a script, it was someone’s brain laid bare, entrusted to a group of people who helped bring it to life together. There was something so fascinating about the sense of community that they all seemed to share, and I knew from then on that that is who I wanted to be, a villager in a village.

From that day forward, my curiosity grew into an obsession with performance in all its forms: plays, musicals, and improv, especially Saturday Night Live. My first play was Willy Wonka in the first grade, and while I can acknowledge that my standards were low at age six, I had found something I loved. I remember standing on stage during the curtain call, next to all of my friends, in complete awe of the applause directed at the performance we had created together.

CUT TO:

INT. DRAMA ROOM - DAY

11 year old KID auditioning for The Jungle Book walks up to the audition podium viciously shaking in her boots.

DRAMA TEACHER

“Hello, who are we auditioning for today?”

KID

“Hi - uh the wolf in act 1, please”

DRAMA TEACHER

“Sure, whenever you’re ready.”

KID opens her mouth to begin to recite the very well prepared monologue and fails to produce a sound. Her palms are sweaty, the lights are shining too brightly, and she thinks she catches a faint laugh coming from behind her. She scrambles and realizes she left her playbook at home and has decidedly bombed her very LAST audition.

THE END

That moment taught me a lot but the most important thing was that when the goal is experience, failure doesn’t exist. After the audition I was crushed, as any 11 year old would be, but when the cast list came out my name was on the call sheet under “Tree #4”, and no matter how small the role was, I went up on that stage and gave those people the best tree performance of their lives. As I grew older, I became more comfortable with exploring my interests and found that I completely adored being backstage.

I learned to (assistant) direct school plays with an intensity that made me feel, at eleven years old, like I held all the power in the world. I took my role seriously, determined to keep rehearsals fun and focused. What mattered most, though, happened after the curtain closed. The immense joy of having shared an amazing experience with amazing people and the colossal sadness that came with the realization that it was all over. At the cast parties we would reflect back on the time we spent making the production come to life, how much fun we had with each other, and how we hoped we could do it again soon.

At some point, I realized I had found the community that I craved when filming that commercial all those years ago. No matter where I am, what I’m doing, or who I’m surrounded by, creating something always brings community. That is where my passion comes from, the people who help cultivate it.

INT. MOVIE SET - DAY (2032)

SCARLET is sitting in the director’s chair behind the camera, script in hand, the actors are on their marks, and the camera operator yells “rolling.”

SCARLET

“Action!”

THE END