

Lucy and the Carrot

By: Adrienne LaValley

Lucy smushed her face into the dance store window just as she'd done nearly every day before. She loved watching the store clerk stack boxes of pointe shoes with the tenderness of a mother folding her infant's clothes. She admired the same pair of black tap shoes she'd already named The Elena's, and tried one more time to will them into her life. "Please God. Please let me have them. I have to have them." she said to herself.

She'd go in every now and then, just to pretend she actually needed them. She was a dancer if only in her heart, after all. But it only took one visit for the store clerk to realize she couldn't need them. In his opinion. How in the world could a girl who couldn't hear anything ever learn to dance? The music fell silent on her ears. And it broke his heart.

He saw her peering into that window nearly every day after school. Her rosy cheeks and nose pressed into the glass, as if there were something she needed for survival in there. Like a little girl who'd lost her dog. He shoed her away only once, before he knew of course. And now he'd quietly shake his head and giggle to himself every evening as he wiped the glass clean of her smudges.

But today was Tuesday. Tuesdays were his favorite day and today something dawned on him he'd not thought of before. "Of course", he said to himself. He picked up the The Elena's and held them up like a carrot on a string, beckoning Lucy to come in. He raised his eyebrows and invited her with a wave, smirking like a tiger stalking its prey. "Is this a trick?", she thought. Her mind swirled with memories of ballerinas giggling behind her back, while she desperately tried to find the beat alone in the back line. Stuck in her own quiet cage.

The Elena's kept calling though and she just couldn't resist. Their shiny black patent leather a beacon on a dark rainy day. So she carefully tiptoed in with her hands behind her back, and her head hung low. The store clerk placed the shoes on the ground, helping her step into them one foot at a time. He stood her up, pointed to his ear and signaled for her to close her eyes.

Suddenly, Lucy felt something explode in her chest. She felt the ground move beneath her feet. Stunned, she opened her eyes to see the store clerk tapping on the floor. She

could feel it! Through her feet, up into her legs, through her heart and out the top of her head. She didn't need to hear it. She could feel the beat.

The store clerk smiled and said: "They're yours now. Come back tomorrow for a proper lesson".

She looked down at her feet and felt her eyes well up with tears. She wore the display pair, filthy from being tried on by other dancers. But she didn't care. They were The Elena's, and now they were hers. Silence be damned... Lucy found her beat.