

Peterson Dance Performance

By Emily Cameron

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My heart thudded in my chest, fast and rhythmic, so hard that I could feel my heartbeat pulsing in my fingertips. Fear and nervousness twisted my stomach into a knot as I stared out across the gym, at the lines marking the boundaries for volleyball and basketball games, at the yellow-and-black picture of a pirate in the center of the gym. It was the day of our dance performances.

As a part of the dance unit in PE class, we were required to create a group of four to eight people and choreograph a dance for any song. We had been given the entire PE period of every day for a week to work with our individual groups to come up with a dance. Now it was Friday, the day when every PE class in the seventh and eighth grade would be performing our dances in front of the entire school.

I had been awake the entire night, too nervous to sleep and too busy worrying about the millions of possible things that could go wrong in our dance performance. What if I messed up and embarrassed myself in front of the entire school? What if I tripped and fell? The possibilities were endless.

I watched several other performances with my group as we crouched along the sidelines, watching the other dances. Some of them were actually pretty good. I didn't know my classmates could dance so well.

When the next performance was over, the PE coach, Mr. Gilmore, grabbed the microphone and tried to speak over the chatter of the crowd. "Alright, next up, we have a group of seventh grade girls who will be performing the song 'Dark Horse' by Katy Perry. Please welcome the *Spectacular Seven!*"

I rose unsteadily to my feet, and my group stood up as well. I looked at their nervous faces and took a deep breath. "We're going to do fine," my friend, Julia, assured us, smoothing back her ponytail. As we walked out to the center of the gym, my eyes searched the crowd. Since the people in our group were all relatively popular, the crowd cheered and screamed our names as we walked to the dance floor. I straightened my shoulders and lifted my chin. Even if I wasn't feeling the slightest bit of confidence, I could at least look like I knew what I was doing.

We took our positions in the center of the gym, right on top of the pirate mascot. Mr. Gilmore gave us a thumbs-up and started the music.

The crowd cheered when they recognized the song and began to sing along with the lyrics. Luckily, no other group had danced to the same song.

The beginning of our dance was a sort of wave, which matched the steady music. After the wave, we shifted to our next positions and the words of the song rang throughout the gym. I mouthed the lyrics as I danced, and we performed some moves from Michael Jackson's thriller. The crowd cheered. I smiled. Maybe this wasn't so bad.

"*Make me your Aphrodite, make me your one and only . . .*" I spun around in unison with my group and held up one finger, like the number one. Then we proceeded with a foot-tapping sort of move and spun around into one line. We made another wave with every other person going in a different direction, and then performed another Thriller move. We shifted into two lines, with three people on each side, and clapped our hands and stomped our feet to the beat while a girl also named Emily, who was a gymnast, did a back handspring between each line. The crowd screamed and whooped. Then, for our final finishing pose, we all huddled together. Alice and I crossed our arms, back to back, while Rachel and Isha stuck out their hands on either side of us. Emily knelt on the ground on her knees in front of Alice and me, while Julia and Maya placed their elbows on Emily's shoulders on each side. The music ended and the crowd went wild, applauding and screaming furiously. I smiled.

As we walked off the dance floor, the crowd cheered. Maybe it was because our song was catchy and well-known, or the girls in our group were popular, but we got a decent amount of applause. Better than decent, in fact. The crowd really seemed to like us.

We sank onto the floor along the sidelines, exhausted but satisfied with our performance. Despite the fact that I had been so reluctant to dance, I actually kind of wished we could perform again. I smiled. Maybe it hadn't been so bad after all.