

My Cursed Eyes

I have never been a superstitious person. I hate the occult as much as I hate victim blaming and men objectifying women. It may be related to my religion or, most likely, my sensitive nature. But the curse of Macbeth, as the theatre calls it, seems very silly and irrelevant to me. For those of you who don't know, the curse is something that a lot of theatres take very seriously. It is said that the show itself is accursed, stemming from a string of bad luck since the first showings of the play in the 1800s. Mysterious deaths and accidents every time the show was performed caused people to believe it voodooed, and even saying the name became taboo. The rule is simple: You are not supposed to say the name of the show within the confines of a theatre. If someone does say it, that person is immediately kicked out off the stage, must spin around three times, spit over their shoulder, and say the foulest word they can think of. Then they must wait for permission to reenter the theatre. Macbeth became dubbed as "the dreaded Scottish play" in my high school's troupe by our director. Even though I did not believe in the curse upon entering my freshman year of high school, I was still respectful of others beliefs. I never uttered the name within the confines of the theatre. However, after sophomore year, I wouldn't even utter it....anywhere.

I love theatre and have been doing it for about eleven years now. The stage, specifically Walkersville High School's stage, became one of my few second homes. I had danced, acted, sang, and just had fun on its black enameled boards, wandered through the hidden back hallway that housed the dressing rooms and prop shops, or found unconventional ways to climb up to the costume loft and try on the thousands of costumes up there or just hide and relax. I would run among the seats - red, blue, orange, and yellow in color - all the way up to the tech booth, where my friends and I would "spill the tea," when we had issues or better yet, "drama within the drama." The majority of the friends I made in high school, I made through theatre. They were the ones I danced, acted, sang, and had fun with on that stage. They were the ones I wandered the backstage with and frolicked in the costume loft with. They were the ones to whom I told everything and who were there for me when I was hurting. All the shows we put on during these years have stayed with me in one way or another.

During my high school career, we did four mainstage musicals and one classroom production musical, as well as non-musicals which we typically called straight plays. The musical main stage shows we did were Hairspray, The Little Mermaid, Mary Poppins, and Cinderella, all in that order, from freshman year to senior year. The class production was High School Musical. Now, I always remember some portion of the dances, mainly the main and/or the ending dances of a musical. I recall the dance for "You Can't Stop the Beat" from Hairspray, which we dubbed "You Can't Stop to Breathe." I can give you the majority of "Step in Time" and "Jolly Holiday," as well as the lettering to "Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious" from Mary Poppins. If someone asked about how to do the waltz we learned for the ball scene of Cinderella, I'm your girl. Don't even get me started on High School Musical's "We're All in This Together." My muscle memory is extremely well versed when it comes to these dances. However, there was one show that I cannot remember a single dance to, and that is the Little Mermaid.

I loved the vibe of this show. The Little Mermaid is one of my favorite Disney movies. I will admit, I had a one-sided thought of becoming the first ever black Ariel. I knew it wouldn't happen, but one can only hope! I was extremely proud of my acting and dance audition,

but a bit unsure of my voice audition. The truth is, I get a bit nervous when singing on my own in front of an audience and WHS has open auditions. Everyone could watch the auditions. Also, as I watched others audition, I saw others who would be even better Ariels than I would be. Even so, I was extremely happy to be a part of the ensemble. I was in almost every scene of the show! It was lots of hard work, learning all the songs and dances, but my love for theatre and doing all the hard work with my friends trumped that. The costumes and set were absolutely beautiful and I, as a willing ensemble member, appeared in the many scenes I was in as an oyster, jellyfish, maid, seagull, and....a sous chef. It was in that last character that disaster struck.

Along with being an ensemble member, I was also props master of the show, in charge of making sure all of the little handheld pieces and some set pieces were there. My friend Haleigh was the main chef, Chef Louis, and she supplied the show with the wooden crab mallets that we would use when attempting to capture Sebastian the crab. As props master, I had to make sure the props would not break, especially in ways that could hurt others. The crab mallets could be taken apart: the head of the mallet could detach from the handle. With permission from Haleigh, I superglued the head to the handle and there was absolutely no way they were coming apart, no matter what we did to them. Or so I thought.

The chef scene consisted of Haleigh's solo, then myself and another sous chef entering the stage to assist her in the capturing of Sebastian the crab. We chased him around the table placed in the center of the stage, then chef Louis "planned" with us other chefs to surround Sebastian when he decided to hide behind the table. This part of the scene resembled that of a whack-a-mole for every time the crab would raise his head over the table to see if we were coming for him, Haleigh would pretend to hit him over the head, but Sebastian would duck back under the table just in time. This occurred three times, with a beat from the orchestra for each fake hit, as if there was actually a thud. The first two beats and hits progressed and eventually I had moved to my position directly opposite of the chef, next to Sebastian, preparing to grab the crab as Haleigh lifted the mallet for its final strike.

One moment the mallet was swinging. The next, the head of the mallet was being introduced to my right eye. I immediately dropped, screaming, crying, and crawling in pain. I held my eye, afraid it would fall out if I moved it. I had never felt anything so excruciating in my life. I felt as if I had my own personal nuclear power plant burning through my eye. I remember Ms. Martin, our vocal director shouting instructions and running up to the stage from the audience where she had been listening to our singing. "Someone go get Ms. McFadden! Why are you all standing there staring? Debbie!"

Her words and their responses came to my ears as if they were underwater. By this point, I think I had actually managed to crawl backstage, for it was there that Ms. Martin found me, helped me up and slowly led me out of the theatre and into the drama room. Ms. McFadden was waiting with a chair and immediately sat me down in it. She asked me to move my hand. I didn't. I did not even feel as if my body was my own. Ms. McFadden gently moved my hand away herself, and then asked me to open my eyes. I had calmed down a little, thanks to the soothing voices of both females. But when I opened my eyes, all I heard was the gasps that resounded throughout the room. All I saw was the absolute horror masking Ms. McFadden's face from where she was kneeling in front of me. I started crying again. My brain and my circumstances had finally caught up to each other.

They eventually called my father, and as I was gathering my stuff to leave, I noticed Haleigh sitting in the back of the room with her head on the desk. There was no mistaking the shaking of her shoulders. Although I wouldn't know until later that our fellow castmates were blaming her for the accident, I did know that she felt extremely bad for the entire event. I went over and put my arms around her, saying, "I'll be fine, Haleigh. It's not your fault."

It actually wasn't Haleigh's fault. As it turns out, that day, multiple people had decided to say the name of the dreaded Scottish play backstage, as a joke to McFadden and the rest of our castmates who believed in the curse. Little did they know the damage that they would eventually cause.

When I went home, I fell into a deep, yet uncomfortable sleep. I couldn't lie on my right side for the pain was too strong. When I woke, I decided that I should take a look at the damage. I went into the bathroom and looked into the mirror. My left hand covered my mouth in shock.

My right eye was almost completely bright red. A blood vessel had broken. I had a cut immediately under my eye and that was also bleeding. Well, the blood was dried now. There were dark bags under both my eyes, and a bruise was beginning to form under the right. I looked like a demon. It appeared as though I was cursed, and my eyes were the only telltale sign to that curse. I had my very own cursed eyes.