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Finalist, Secondary Division

2020 CFUW Writing Contest

### **Ballerina in a Music Box**

“When did it all go wrong?”

“Well the teacher’s question created a big fight in the classroom,” Lia answered with her big toothy grin, “then everyone was yelling why their answer was the best and the teacher, to make us quiet, put the whole class on a time out. It wasn’t fair! I wasn’t even yelling!”

Rosalie looked back from the dishes and gave her a suspicious look. “Well, maybe a little,” Lia looked down sheepishly, “but that’s only because my answer was the best.”

“You never told me the question that caused this huge debate,” Rosalie stated while drying the porcelain carefully in her hand.

“The teacher asked what in-an-imate object we would be,” The seven year old answered stumbling over her words.

“What did you pick?” Rosalie asked curiously.

Instead of answering, Lia held her hand up, signaling Rosa to wait, before rushing up the large marble staircase. Rosa continued drying and putting away the expensive dishes, until she heard soft music being played. She turned around and found Lia standing with a small music box in hand, the ballerina turning with the music.

Before Rosalie could ask her why she picked the box, the sound of the front door opening, followed by the telltale sound of heels on the clean marble floor, signaled the entrance of Mrs. Morgan.

“Mommy!” Lia yelled, as she put the music box down on the table hurriedly, before rushing to the arms of the tall blonde woman, only to be stopped by the large amount of shopping bags.

“Rosa, put these away in the closet for me. You know where everything goes.”

“Of course Mrs. Morgan,” Rosa answered quickly, gathering the large bags in her arms before going up into the master bedroom.

She unpacked the bags swiftly, knowing the huge walk-in closet like the back of her hand. As Rosa picked up the last item, she let herself daydream while she admired the lace details of the beautiful red piece, feeling the amazing silk dance between her fingers. She shakes her head to remove the ridiculous thoughts plaguing her head and puts the dress next to the collection of other dresses that had never been worn.

As Rosa walked out she noticed a similar gold box on the dresser. It was Mrs. Morgan’s music box also with a ballerina inside. Differently from Lia’s, hers had a few small diamond and gold earrings inside. Rosa admired the jewelry, letting her thoughts run wild again as she picked up the shiny accessory.

Later that night when Rosa tucked in Lia for bed, she asked why the little girl had picked the ballerina.

“Because it's easy.” Lia answered enthusiastically, “The ballerina makes me happy and all she does is dance in a circle,” Lia yawned, “while still looking pretty!”

Rosalie smiled at the child's innocence with love and care before pecking her on the forehead, accompanied with a whispered goodnight. She descended the staircase still smiling, until an object on the kitchen table caught her attention. Rosa brought the forgotten music box to her small room on the main floor and let the music fill the space.

Staring at the turning ballerina for a while she thought she understood why Lia chose it. To Lia the ballerina represented the perfect, easy life, filled with glamour, a perk of being born into a wealthy family. To Rosalie the ballerina seemed trapped in a life she didn't choose, damned to always spin and work for others while smiling. The turning ballerina reminded herself of her, more specifically the cycle she wanted to break. Rosa's family had worked for the Morgans for generations. The only one who had attempted to leave had been Rosa's mother, who had been accepted to college, the joy of the family until she broke it all by stupidly getting pregnant. As fast as the dream came, it left, when she died giving birth.

Rosa was going to break the cycle and make her family proud. She would go to college and get a better job. She would become successful and one day go to a company party with one of the hundreds of beautiful red dresses she had in her closet. All she had to do was finish the application and submit it. Tomorrow. Today she was too tired. She fell asleep while the ballerina kept spinning. As the next night came, she collapsed in bed promising to finish her application the next day. *She didn't.*

*The ballerina kept spinning.*