

The Stage

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I love being on stage with the spotlight shining down on me. I feel the light blinding my eyes and the bulb spreading warmth on my skin. The empty stage, wide and spacious, is like a blank sheet of drawing paper, waiting for me to fill it up with whatever performance I want to present. The freedom is sweet, and I feel like a horse running across a plateau. It feels amazing ... but only when there is no audience.

However, in the presence of an audience, anxiety weighs me down. My hyper self-consciousness starts creeping under my skin and into my veins once I step on the stage. It seems as if their beady eyes are silently judging me, and the deafening silence dampens my longing to fill up the emptiness of the stage. With the emptiness comes the feeling of growing insecurity, and my limbs start to tremble. The platform seems to move and my palms turn sweaty, making the microphone I am holding cold and slippery. I can hear my heart beating a little too fast, thumping hard against my ribcage. My head starts to spin.

I start my performance, be it speaking or singing, and I find myself shaking even more. Darkness begins seeping into my

mind, anxiety hastening its penetration. My legs want to give out, but the conscious part of me tells them not to. Then I realize I have made a mistake in my performance. I try to ignore it, but the whispers from the crowd will not allow me to. When my performance comes to an end, the entire crowd erupts in cheers. I am startled, thinking I have done a bad job, but, almost immediately, I decide otherwise. With this newfound confidence, I get off the stage.

My experiences on stage seem to repeat themselves. I get nervous, and start to panic, but it usually ends up the same. Anxiety and fear of messing up keep taunting me, triggering the visions I had witnessed of people messing up, and eating away at me. Even so, I will never stop performing. To overcome this anxiety, I must face it. No matter how self-conscious I am on stage, I will not let my anxiety get the better of me. I will not let the microphone disclose my fear. Even with the floor giving out underneath me, I will fill up the emptiness of the stage with my amazing performance. The stage will no longer symbolize fear and anxiety. Instead, it will be a showcase for freedom of creativity.

