

As the scratchy, sparkly fabric of my dress slips over my shoulder, I see Julia walking towards me. She is with her just as snobby group of friends, smiling and giggling as they pass. My mother leans forward and kisses my makeup-covered cheek, "Good luck, Tara, and try your best," she says. Then she turns and enters the crowded, noisy room, in search of my cousins. They have been saving seats for the big event since before I had my wig on straight this morning. I smile to myself remembering the phone call earlier this morning, my cousins almost screaming with excitement to send their best wishes. My father and brother hug me and wish me luck, then they too disappeared into the craziness of the other room, leaving me to practice with my teachers, Lisa and Jill.

As I walk down the long back hallway, I see other girls looking just as strange as me with huge, curly wigs, super tan legs, overpriced, sparkly dresses, and many thick layers of makeup on. Then I see Julia in her neon orange and pink dress with well over 1000 crystals on it. Her dress has a cupcake tin looking skirt with white flowers that seem to grow up the center of her dress. She looks stunning next to me in my plain white and lime green dress. I have a layered cupcake tin skirt, a lime green Celtic knot stitched diagonally down the bodice, and only around 900 crystals. I stare at her, our eyes lock. She gives me a look, as if to say, "Did you come to win second again?" This year would be different; this year I would beat her. I have trained too hard to come in second at the World Irish Dance Championship.

As I begin to walk towards her, a tangle of arms enclose around me. I turn to see my teammates that had made it to Worlds all laughing and wishing me luck. I giggle as I see Jack and Sage holding a sign that says *Go Tara* in big, blue, glittery letters. "Thanks for coming," I say, as I grin from ear to ear.

“Numbers 201 through 203, please come line up,” the man running the stage yells down the hall. I quickly pin my number, 203, in to my cardholder. I give all my friends hugs and turn to walk away. I see Julia standing next to the man in charge of the stage with the number 202 in her flower shaped cardholder. My heart stops. I will be sharing the stage with Julia Watson for my two dance rounds. As I begin to walk away, I feel fingers curl around my arm and pull me back.

“Don’t get nervous,” Jack says as I turn to face him. “You are just as good if not better than her. Tara you can win, just remember to...”

“Turn my feet out, yeah I know,” I reply, cutting him off.

As I take my place in line, Julia turns toward me. “You’re wasting your time,” she says with a sneer on her face. “There is no way you will win, haven’t the past competitions proved that to you?”

I glare at her, clenching my fists, and say, “Good luck.” Then with one quick look at my friends, I enter the competition room.

Once in the room we are led behind a curtain where we wait for the group in front of us to finish. While I wait I listen to the Treble Jig that’s playing and run through it in my head. *Down, treble, treble, stamp, stamp, a stamp, stamp. Out tip one, two click, out tip one, two click.* Finally, it is my turn to dance. I walk to the stairs. I am confident and ready to prove to Julia that I am not just wasting my time.

Stamp up one, two, three. I glide across the black platform. Before I know it I am ending my third step. *Treble and a toe turn, down, treble and a toe, back, back, back, double click up, treble and a diddly dum.* I bow, smile, and walk off stage. I skip down the back hall, very pleased with my performance, and up to where my family, friends, and teachers are

sitting. "You did amazing! That new dress looks great on stage," Jill says, as I sit down in the soft, brown chairs.

"Thanks," I reply, still out of breath, as I put on my soft shoes for the second portion of the competition. Once again I am back stage running over my steps in my head and walking on stage. *Twist, twist, twist, and an up odeshe.* Then I bow and walk off stage to wait for callbacks.

After an hour of waiting in that hot, stuffy room, they are finally ready to announce callbacks. Girls leave the room in tears as the announcer skips their numbers. "Dancers 202, 203, 206..." I breathe a sigh of relief as my number is called and the announcer moves on to the rest.

I change back into my hard shoes and for the last time of the day I enter the stage, this time alone. I stand there, in the middle of the stage, all eyes on me, waiting for the musician to begin to play the music for my selected set piece, "Job of Journey Work." The music begins, *1.... 2.... 3.... 4.... 5.... 6.... 7 up on 8 go!* Before I know it I'm ending my step, I bow and walk off stage for the last time. We switch rooms. This room is filled with hundreds of brown chairs and there is a black stage up front, just like the last one, but this room has TV's hanging from the ceiling. All the TV's showed the same thing, a graph with all the numbers of the competitors that have gotten callbacks.

Suddenly the announcer comes on the PA system. They go down the list telling the scores of each competitor. "Dancer number 202 with the score of 227.6, Dancer number 203 with the score of 301.4." I had beaten competitor 202, Julia, in the first round. I see Julia turn around in her seat and glare at me. Finally, they start the second round and make it to Julia's number. "Competitor number 202 with the score of 273.8, Competitor number

203 with the score of 200.” My stomach drops, Julia and I are tied for first place. My teammates are all looking at me with knowing looks. The callback round is my last chance to beat Julia. By the time the announcer gets to the third round, I am pacing in the aisle. “Dancer number 202 with the score of 398” What, 398, that will be a hard score to beat! My palms begin to sweat, as I cross my fingers, and hold hands with my friends on either side of me. “Dancer number 203 with the score of 398.5” I was in first place, but there are more people to compete against, not just Julia.

My friend Jack taps me on the shoulder and mouths to me, “You are in first.” Then he gives me a thumbs up and a big smile.

“ Now the moment you have all been waiting for, in first place, competitor number 203, Tara McLane from the Roisin Academy of Irish Dance. In second place Julia Watson from the Drumcliff School of Irish Dance.” Everyone around me erupts into screams as tears and mascara run down my face. I begin to jump up and down and scream with the rest of my friends, cousins, and brother.

After I clean my face up, I walk back stage where I see Julia crying. I run right up to her, give her a hug, and say thank you. “For what?” She says between sniffles, “I have been nothing but mean to you?”

“Thank you, for making me the best dancer I can be,” I reply. A smile spreads across her face as she pulls me into another hug.

“You deserve it,” Julia says pulling away from the hug. I take my place first in line.

“ Your under 13 World Champion for 2013 is competitor number 203, Tara McLynne from the Roisin Academy of Irish Dance,” the announcer bellows into the microphone. I walk on stage, and for the first time in my life, I am the first one on stage and the spot light

is on me. I climb to the top of the podium as Jill and Lisa carry my first place trophy on to the stage, and I smile the biggest smile in my entire life.

As they hand me the glimmering, gold trophy Jill says, "Congratulations, World Champion." I smile again, give them both hugs, thank them, take the trophy and turn to smile at the camera.