

Curtain Call – Renee Furtado

It was late. Though, not late enough that the city was asleep, but then it never really did rest. The moon was bright enough to cast a low light over the sides of the skyscrapers and the stubbier buildings beneath them. She lay on a windowsill where the glass was almost opaque from decades of dust that no one noticed, let alone could reach.

It was her favourite time of the day. Not because of the view. She didn't have much care for what was going on outside.

She rose up from her crossed leg position to make one quick hop down from where she had been relaxing. Her arms stretched above her head as she let out a yawn.

She figured it must have been around just past midnight as she leisurely crept through the narrow hallways connecting the dressing rooms together. Her muffled footsteps along the half-ripped out carpet was the only sound. She trailed her fingers softly, barely brushing the walls.

She admired the forgotten used lipsticks and torn dresses abandoned in each small room. The mirrors were covered in small scratches and dirt. All the light bulbs surrounding the edges were cracked and broken.

She touched a whiskey glass that had fallen on its side.

The air was heavy and thick with perfume and just a sniff of alcohol. The cigarette smoke added to the haze. All the performers were buzzing, throwing on their costumes and swiftly applying layers of makeup in a rush. A young girl patted on a matte white powder to her face and curled her long lashes. She pulled her bejewelled, sparkling outfit up to her chest, gave a quick twirl and smiled ear to ear with excitement. The harsh lights made it hot, but they were all careful not to sweat. Deep laughs and small talk echoed into the space.

She knew every secret the building held. She knew more about it than the architect who designed it, the builders who crafted it. More than the walls of theatre itself.

The creaking of the supports that guarded against the outside world, groaned into the quietness. She bumped into a tall wooden pillar and turned around to look up at it holding up a series of tangled ropes and wires. Her eyes followed the path of the cables further into the darkness. She stumbled forward through a small side door and tripped into a leather covered seat in front of a large entrance that was unfortunately locked.

The doors were slowly pushed open by two men in matching black formal outfits and the orchestra was already creating an enticing sound for the crowd weaving through the aisles to find each of their seats. Men's eyes widened in awe while the women on their arms pointed at the chandelier casting an amber light over them. She listened to the gasps and chatters as she closed her eyes

and took in these moments slowly. Her fingers fidgeted with each other and her breaths became deep and collected as the speed of the room picked up.

She pushed her way through the curtains draped down, thick and heavy. The more she struggled through them, the more dust gently floated down into the air. She couldn't see anything, she kept shoving her way through until she fell onto a huge wooden floor.

And then the spotlight hit the figure that stood with assuredness on stage as soon as the dark purple fabric vanished upwards. The crowd applauded and cheered. The piano sang from out of the pit filled with musicians. She skipped out onto the stage with several other perky dancers as they sang. Their feet stamped on the hard freshly varnished ground.

There were nails sticking up from the rotting planks. Little splinters pointed out from the boards. Broken glass and sandbags were discarded to the sides. She lifted her head towards the bright caged light standing in the centre and felt her body drift towards it. The rust on the edges of its metal base were illuminated as it perched on the lonely scape of wood. The inky black at the back couldn't be reached, nor even scrape the intricately designed ceiling that was being chipped away. The shadows it cast draped over each of the rows of the rich, red seats that spanned the entire grand room.

The girl span around before swiftly running up into the middle of the audience's view. Her eyes were stuck to the spotlight as it shifted away from her co-star and towards her. She inhaled, ready to perform.

A booming snap sounded.

In a blink, the centre stage light from above plummeted down in a flash.

The ghost light sat quietly on the stage, an electrical cord snaked behind it.

A silence hummed and poured over the dress circle, down into the wings just like the ice-cold air the building was filled with.

Her eyes were empty but she still looked out towards the hundreds of seats. The light shone right through her weightless body. She trembled before taking a short, shaky inhale.