

The Shadow's Halo

Ellia locks the door to the coffee shop while pulling her jacket tightly around her. She can see her breath fogging up her glasses, and the kaleidoscope of colored leaves starting to pile up along the sidewalk. Turning, she sluggishly wanders back to her apartment, the familiar sight appearing in view. Her eyes droop, and her uptied brown hair is falling out and tumbling down her back. It is late, but the city is still wide awake bustling with energy. The sound of coins sliding into parking meters and the honking of horns. About to walk into her apartment, something stops her. In her peripheral vision, she sees a flash of movement. Holding onto a bulletin board by one lone pushpin is a flier. Ellia grabs it before it flies away.

"Playwright Contest." The bold words stand out to her and an old spark of excitement dances across her face. She looks around quickly and stuffs the flier in her coat pocket. She sprints five flights up rickety stairs, and unlocks her apartment door. She steps inside the eight hundred square foot space. She frantically looks around through her cabinets and unorganized drawers stuffed with old mail. Unsuccessful, she rummages through the storage under her bed. Climbing on top of her nightstand, she reaches inside her closet. Sifting through clothes and old objects she sees what she is looking for. On the top shelf, in the far back corner is a small box. She climbs down, opening up the box revealing the neat stack of papers.

She holds in her hands her play. She swipes off some collected dust and sees the title looking back at her. *The Shadow's Halo*. She sighs remembering the rejection letters she received in the past. Ellia pulls the paper from her pocket and reads the rest of the flier:

Playwright Contest

An Open Invitation

Submissions welcome until November 30th

Conflicted, she sits in front of her closet on the floor. Her phone buzzes with an incoming call. She sees it is from her mom. Immediately declining, she contemplates reaching for another box among the growing pile laying in her closet. She continues rummaging through boxes and shifting objects around. She opens one box, and sees some old blankets and other loose nicknacks. Looking on the other side of the box she sees an old snowglobe. She grins, and picks it up, and turns the winding key. Shaking the globe and watching the powdered snow fall, she

reminisces about how her and her mom would dance together like the dancer in the snowglobe. She remembers back to feeling like she could do anything.

A fragment of determination starts to form in her mind. She grabs her play, and a pen from her nightstand. She begins scribbling on her play, adding and deleting unnecessary scenes. The paper is soon marked up with ink and borderline illegible handwriting throughout the margins. She writes until her hands grow tired, only to then start typing her revisions onto her computer. Grinning wide, she prints the story out while her eyes scan the pages. She reads as she envisions her story coming to life on the stage. She runs out of her apartment clutching her story tight, and heads to the post office across the street. Stepping inside, she buys an envelope and places her play inside. She seals the envelope shut.

Ellia turns and leaves the post office feeling accomplished for the first time in years. She heads to work at the coffee shop as usual, but now with a new sense of purpose. During her shift, she immerses her thoughts in her play and is invigorated by the notion she could have the career she has always dreamed of. The following Monday, after an especially long shift, she checks her mail. She pulls out an envelope dedicated to her and tears it open. She scans the page and sees five words jump out to her, *You have qualified for auditions*. She reads the text over and over in disbelief. The audition is for the upcoming Saturday at the local theater. The requirements consist of acting out a scene of the play to see if it is a good fit for production. She makes it through another week at her job with anticipation.

Saturday arrives quickly, and Ellia prepares her lines and is bubbling with energy. She is lined up with at least thirty others outside the theater. The numbers slowly trickle down as she awaits her turn to approach the stage. Finally, she is up. She takes a deep breath and walks up the steps. The bright lights obscure her vision of the judges. She steps onto the middle of the stage. As she begins to speak, she starts to feel at home. She no longer feels like she is living in her shadow. She finishes the audition and breathes a sigh of relief, and then she picks up her phone to call her mom. She finally feels like the dancer in the snowglobe.