As I watched my teammates hit the tennis ball back and forth, I looked at my phone: great now I’m missing another fifteen minutes of my dance class. This make-up game wasn’t supposed to be this long and the frustration started to boil up inside of me. By the time my mom picked me up tears were streaming down my face. Although I have my license, I asked her to drive because she could go faster, and even then I begged her to speed up the whole way there. I finally arrived, and in a state of irritation, I entered the waiting room, kicked off my street shoes and ran into the studio. The cool, refreshing air engulfed me as I jumped into the floor exercise. I felt changed, not only by the muffled pounding of bare feet or the rambunctious energy of little dancers, but by the environment that had brought me to a different universe.

This place is where I truly want to be: in the studio becoming a dancer, a teacher, and much more. This place is where I can start over when I had a bad day, and where understanding and being non-judgmental is the key to success. Even on giving-back-test-days, when I come home worried about my grades, I know dance will help. As I walk into the studio, my day is already different. The welcoming hug of the director encircles me with fruity vanilla comfort and I can feel my bad mood lifting. I breathe a sigh of relief, knowing that when I start dancing my worries will disappear. My day goes from “I hate myself” to “There is always next time”.

The dance studio is where I can share my own dreams with little children who may find the same solace there as I do. As I gently tug the tiny dancers across the floor, I realize I look forward to the touch of the soft hands that grasp mine. I watch each girl plié in her own way and I think to myself that their many different personalities reflect the person that I am today. Amy is the shy child who stands next to me and finds comfort in my open arms. Susie is the energetic one with the very high, bouncy ponytail who doesn’t listen, and pulls the other dancers hair. Sally is the tall, focused dancer who is the most mature of all. Jane is the small, spacey girl who doesn’t hear us telling her multiple times to do something. I have been all the little girls in this studio.

It’s like a chain reaction, generation after generation after generation; it never stops, from dancer to teacher. I view my dance teachers as role models. I imitate them, becoming one of them when I begin teaching little girls, hoping the students will grow up to find passion in dance as I do. My second home, Backstage Dance Center has not only been part of my life but it has shaped my personality. I have become a wiser, more confident and encouraging person.

The dance studio helped me find an inner being that I share with the world today. When I was three years old, I was afraid to go out onto the stage. Now I can look out into an audience, a dark room with bobbing heads, and feel a surge of power as I prepare to leap across the stage. Now I wait in the wings feeling like a new person, an infant being born. The metamorphosis that could only happen in the dance studio has prepared me to leap further. I once wrote in a poem:

As she

Landed her final leap,

She stopped for a moment

And looked at the

Past shadow she had

Left behind