

Chapter One:

Pride and Imagination Flashdance-Style

Little Girl Lost and Found

For the longest time, I couldn't listen to the song 'Flashdance (What a Feeling!)' by Irene Cara. And here's why:

When I was in elementary school in the early 1980's, every day in gym class we started out doing exercises to this song. And since I was shy, fat, and so klutzy I gave new meaning to the term, I was always at the back of the class struggling to keep up. So after so long being at the back of the class trying to keep up and failing miserably, I grew to hate this song. But before those awful months in that huge gym, I loved that song and that movie in all its' cheesy Eighties glory.

So for over thirty years every time that song came on the radio, I immediately changed the station. Because every time that song came on, I was thrown back in that awful gym struggling to keep up with everyone else.

But that all changed about three months ago when I was driving in heavy traffic one morning and I couldn't change the radio station. The song came on and

it brought a smile to my face because I suddenly remembered the movie and hearing the song for the first time instead of being in that shitty gym class. So when I got home I decided to play it again while I made breakfast. I turned it on and when I got to this line in the song, ‘All alone I have cried/Silent tears full of pride’, I lost it.

Yes, I stood over a plate of breakfast tacos listening to a thirty-plus year-old song while bawling my brains out. But that was a moment I needed to go through in order to find my love of this song again, and take back something that had been stolen from me.

And what was stolen from me?

The hope and joy of being a child and feeling like dreams could come true.

Back then, I was terribly shy, fat, and I gave new meaning to the term ‘klutzy’. Right there those three things were not a recipe for social success and from as far back as I could remember, I never fit in anywhere because of that. I knew I was different, and that different wasn’t good. Because no matter how hard I tried to fit in, I could never figure it out and failed miserably.

But in in my imagination, I wasn’t the shy, fat, klutzy little girl that I was. I was a bright shining star who was going to dance her way to a bright future though maybe not literally dance. I loved that imaginary me very much and her world was where I retreated more often than not.

Yet every day in that shit-hole of a gym, I began to lose hold of that imaginary world and that little girl who lived there quit dancing. The song became a daily reminder that I would never fit in, that I would never be a dancer, and that I would always be at the back of the class.

But after that fateful morning in my little kitchen after bawling over my breakfast tacos, I found that little girl inside me. She'd been still and quiet for a long, long time but eventually she trusted me enough to take my hand. I told her it was alright to feel like she could dance in her mind, and that there was nothing wrong with her. And as I began to get to know her again, I realized she had never given up on her dreams even though she'd been silent for so long.

I hadn't realized my silence went back that far until that day I got that song back in my heart.