

*Graduation.* A time to reflect on the things that one has learned. It's a time filled with tears, laughter, and the question, *'So what are you going to do now'* getting tossed at you like a boomerang in the Australian Outback. It's not like I'm not happy that I'm finally getting out of school- I'm freakin thrilled- and yet that little fear bubble inside of me, I often call Mildred, likes to yap at me about all the things that could go wrong in my life. So as I sit here at my laptop, preparing for what I know will be an exciting summer, I am ready to reflect on what the past five years of my life have taught me. And no, not just the school smarts, but life smarts. I've come a long way from being a chubby bubbly actress, insecure and constantly clumsy. Ok, well I suppose I'm still most of those things. But I'm not just five years older, I'm five years more awake. I'm more awake to what this world has to offer, both the good and the bad. I've come to realize that the good trumps the bad any day. And that the old fairy tale notion of good winning out over evil is true. There are things in this world we may never understand, but it is the love and compassion that we feel from one another that will truly get us by. So now I will look back at the five years of my life that brought me laughter, tears,

heartache, accomplishment, and occasional bumps and bruises- Amanda B. Goodman- *The College Brick Road*.

### The Fragile Freshman.

Lets start at the beginning. Lets hop in our Deloreans to the year 2006. After spending the summer abroad with my wonderful Aunt, Uncle, and cousin and then immediately having to say a tearful goodbye to my childhood best friend as she went away for college, I returned home with the sudden realization that, *oh shit*, I'm starting a new school. Now believe me, high school was never a breeze for me. It was filled with humiliation, mean girls, cookie-dough cry fests, and more cuts and scrapes than I'd like to admit. But it was familiar. I had a place there. I may not have been at the top of the food chain, considering how the drama club was often viewed, but my place was set. I had friends, I had *great* friends. And amongst all the sadness, I had some incredible times that I will never forget, and knew people that I will never forget. But I was still very much a child.

August came and went and by the end I was ready to begin attending Queens College. I knew what I wanted to study since before I even knew that SAT stood for

Standardized Assessment Test and not Silly Achy Testicles. Catchy though right? Any who, my plan was to study theatre and be on Broadway someday. At that current time in my life I was OBSESSED with The Wedding Singer Musical. It's still one of my favorites and the memories that I associate with it will always make me smile. When I made my schedule for my first semester, I had no clue what I was doing. Ratemyprofessor.com was as foreign to me as un-fried anything is to Britney Spears (love you Brit Brit). I chose to participate in a special freshman bloc system, which would have me placed in three courses with the same people. It was kind of like high school, except we could say things like 'shit' 'fuck' and 'pussy' in class, and it was probably just in the syllabus. The other two classes I chose were of random interest, Philosophy and Music. I figured what the hell? I'd love to learn what life is about and I love to sing- yay for music. Not to mention the attraction to the music program was strong since I learned my idol Cyndi Lauper studied there.

So my schedule was set. The travel from my house to the school would end up being anywhere between an hour and a half to two hours, depending on the time of day. I had been on the subway a million times in my life, but I had never fully traveled so far completely by myself

for so long. I was scared. My fears were of many. I worried that I would get on the wrong train, the wrong bus. I thought I would lose my money or be harassed by someone wanting a few bucks to buy themselves some wooze booze. Everything in my mind that could have gone wrong ran in my head over and over again. So as a compromise and since she's the most amazing woman in my life, my mother decided to ride the trains with me my first whole week. I'll never forget the sadness I felt as I hopped on the M34 bus on Main Street, turning briefly to see my Mother who was hopeful and rooting for the A-team wave me goodbye. As I took a seat I looked out the window again as my mother finally began to head back to the train station. A tear ran down my cheek. I was so scared. But I took a deep breath and I said to myself *"Amanda today is the first day of the rest of your life."* At least I'm pretty sure I said that, it was either that *or I really have to pee-first thing I'm doing when I get to school is find a bathroom."*

I arrived on campus early and ready to explore this new independent world I was entering into. I found the building that would have inside of it the room of my first college class ever: Intro to Acting. I wasn't necessarily a beginner to acting, but once again I was so desperate to

have a schedule that I figured I'd take anything related to acting on that damn sheet! As I walked over to the building, trying to find the little theatre, another student, a young man, looked as if he knew where he was going, so I asked him if this was the correct spot. He told me he believed so. I knew that he was a freshman too. You can always tell. The same red-faced look, face down at a schedule, walking one way then going back the other cause you realized you went the wrong way and then back the first way cause you finally asked someone and found out the first way was the correct way all along, and of course the eagerness to please. Being a college freshman is kind of like being a tourist in another country: you don't speak the language, you get lost easily, you carry big wads of emergency cash, you eat food that you would never eat at home, and since you no longer have to get up the same time every morning you feel the time change as if you crossed through different zones.

This kid's name was Harvey (Just so you know, I'm going to use fake names in this essay to protect the identities of the awesome and the atrocious) and he was in my first class. I sat next to him cause I figured I kind of already knew him. The room was small but the class wasn't. I looked around wondering if there was anyone

else just like me. Of course they were all freshman, so they had that going for them. But there was no way to really tell if any of them had theatre experience or even liked it. Theatre Intro courses usually had a reputation of being cake classes in order to complete a certain general education requirement. The professor was late. Five minutes late. Immediately I began to doubt that I was in the right classroom. I pulled out my printed schedule and stared at it for what seemed like a decade. And finally, he entered. Professor Theatre, as I am calling him, was a short man with glasses with an immediate presence. He was funny, sweet, and had tremendous credentials (Broadway anyone?). I remember our first task after Professor Theatre gave us the rundown on the rest of the semester, was to stand up and introduce ourselves. We went in order of where we were sitting, and of course I was near the end. I've always hated going last because I feel like my energy levels go down a little because I get nervous. Most of the answers were exactly the same: I'm a freshman, I don't have a major yet, I like movies, I have an older sister, I have a dog who eats cat food - I mean hey - what else were they going to say? Most eighteen-year-olds don't have a clue what they want to do with their lives. I however, was always a freak. When it got to me, I

stood up and pled my case. Ok, well I said my name, that I had a passion for acting, and probably something about *The Wedding Singer*, I can't fully remember. But I do remember what Professor Theatre said right after. He said, *Class, this is how you introduce yourself. The confidence that Amanda has shown is exactly how you should be when introducing yourself. That's what acting is all about.* "Crap. Crappity crap crap crap. Although I was really happy that my Professor liked me, I was convinced the class probably hated me. I mean, saying my name and area of interest wasn't exactly like reciting a Shakespearean sonnet while doing a handstand, but it made me feel good about myself. And for the first time all morning, the butterflies having a wing-war in my tummy stood down. I really really thought though that the other kids were going to dislike me because of what Professor Theatre said. But I later found out as the weeks went on that I was wrong. Ok, well one girl hated me, but we'll get to her in a second. Turns out most of the class was filled with students with no desire to act, but to just have a fun first college semester course. And we did have a blast. Professor Theatre always gave me great advice, and pushed me to keep pursuing my dreams.

Now we move on to the one girl in my acting class who hated me. I feel like in every acting class, there's always one. One girl who thinks she's going to be the next Patti Lupone, who possesses no talent yet walks on and offstage glaring at you like she's Carrie having just realizing she didn't win prom queen just because everybody liked her dress. This girl's name was- actually I can't even remember her name at this exact moment, so the name I give you is just random, should it be her name, my apologies- Olivia. Olivia was one of the worst actors I have ever met. Now I strongly believe that anybody can study hard at something and succeed. I mean, I'm no Meryl Streep and I don't know if I'll ever get to that stage of awesomeness within my craft, but even if I was or do, I would NEVER look down upon anyone else. It's about community and compassion. Having said that, this girl was selfish, witless, and extremely mean. She loved to make comments about everyone else's performances as if she had done anything herself that was remotely noteworthy. And I'm pretty sure I saw her pick her nose once. She just wasn't very nice. And although she was the biggest ass-kisser to Professor Theatre, I smiled when I found out a year later that he gave her a B in his class.

That's where I learned that you can succeed on hard work alone, I received an A plus.

Also in my first college class ever, I made a few pals. Since the beginning, Harvey and I bonded over our love for musical theatre. Although Harvey wasn't exactly the most talented performer in a natural sense, his enthusiasm and passion for music and dance always made me smile. He could and would often recite the entire opening dance number from A Chorus Line, impressive and hilarious. Although our class goofed on him, myself included, he was sweet and always a supporter of mine, and I consider him my first college friend. A few weeks later I began to hangout with "The Trio"- Kitty, Reese, and Avenue. Avenue had one of the coolest names ever. It's not really Avenue, but it's similar, and he was a pretty awesome guy. He played guitar and had a wicked sense of humor. Kitty, was a force to be reckoned with. She spoke her mind and wasn't afraid to be herself, even if others thought it was strange. Then there was Reese, whom I became friends with first out of the trio. We sat together in Sociology class and we would chat about idle things such as TV shows, homework assignments, and how douchey our Soc professor was. The best part about the Trio was that they all hated Olivia. We were in mutual

agreement that this girl was pious and reminded us of an ugly troll about to eat someone's head. We goofed, and we vented, and we hung out. The Trio made me feel like I was part of a gang again. Although we didn't remain incredibly close throughout college, I like to think that they made that first semester feel like old times for me. I had friends, I wasn't alone in this scary new world. The only thing scary about Queens College now, was on Wednesday mornings at nine o'clock when Olivia would come into class, drop a pencil, and our eyes would be burned by the sight of her extremely large binder-man that thing was shiny.

The rest of the semester was an adjustment. My Philosophy professor was absolutely insane. He was about nine hundred years old. He probably has memories of the Mayflower, but I never thought to ask him, I thought he might bite. He yelled at anyone who dared come in late. I was always early, except the one morning the stupid train decides to get delayed. It wouldn't have been so bad either. I made it on campus with enough time to run into the building exactly on time. But of course, my life is never that simple. Yes, I arrived on campus with three minutes to spare. But being stuck on a train for almost two hours, my bladder wasn't as willing to

cooperate with my getting to class on time. I cried. I actually cried on the train, that's how badly I had to pee. I also didn't want to be late, because this guy scared me. He looked like Jesus-after the resurrection. So I made the decision that Professor uni-bomber would just have to wait. I peed and man did it feel good. It was like sunshine and hot fudge sundaes. When I made it to class, only about five minutes late, I took my seat, and to my surprise the professor didn't say anything. Either he was in a good mood that day, or I had discovered the power to turn invisible and just forgot how to do it again.

Being that my schedule sucked major ass, I had a three-hour break in between my morning classes and my afternoon classes on Mondays and Wednesdays. My Mom, being the cool woman she is, met me on Main Street for lunch. We would eat, shop, chat, and I'd still always get teary when I re-boarded the bus back to campus. I love my Mom, she's just cool like that.

The final thing of note on my first semester of college is that I tried out for a play. The school's student theatre group would put on their own productions of plays, directed by students. I auditioned for a contemporary play against sophomores, juniors, and probably a couple of seniors. There were only four female

roles and at least fifty students had tried out. I was nervous, but I loved to perform. This was it. I got up onstage and gave a great reading. The auditioners seemed to really like me, including a big wig in the department who I went to high school with- more about her later. I walked out of the audition happy that I was back doing what I loved, but pretty sure I didn't make the cut. I even saw a guy who ruined my life in high school on the way out. I smiled at him, even though I hated him, and I'm sure he hated me. I got a phone call about two days later from the director telling me she wanted me for one of the roles. I was so excited. Me, a chubby shy freshman beating out upperclassmen to be in show with such a small cast. I was honored and the first few rehearsals were nice. The cast was nice and I enjoyed working with them. Unfortunately the rehearsal schedule was more than I could keep up with. I lived far away, and I was scared to travel late at night. I also had a huge workload. I ended up dropping out of the play. I was hurt that they wanted to cast someone else when I couldn't keep up, but I understood. You learn things when you get your feelings hurt. I learned that with great power comes great responsibility. NO, wait, that's Spider-man, he learned that. I guess I learned that some things are meant to be, and others lead you down

another path. I wasn't ready yet. I still had much to learn about life and myself. But it was one hell of an anxiety-ridden ride for those first four months- a two hour, about to piss my pants, the guy next to me smells like Thai food- ride.

The year is 2007. For me, the times they were a-changing. The *Wedding Singer*, one of my favorite musicals to date played its last performance on December 31<sup>st</sup>. I attended my sixth and last performance. It was like a rock concert. It also seemed like another end. My love for the show began while I was in my senior year of high school and now after having completed my first semester of college, it was ending. Weird how things like that work out huh? I also had decided a few days prior to this that I was done being a chub chub. I was sick of seeing the number on the scale making me feel useless. I knew that if something were to be done, I would have to do it now, New Years Resolution be damned. So I did, I set out to change my life forever. Although this is not *that* story. *That* story is a different one entirely, but I will say that as a result of my life-changing decision, I ended up losing a whopping 70 pounds. I maintain now what I believe to be

a healthy and comfortable weight for myself. The holiday break came and went faster than the Ashlee Simpson SNL jig when the music died out. I found myself back on campus with a new schedule in hand. I was more comfortable at the school, but I was still nervous and felt like I was doing it all over again. It was strange for the first time in my life not returning to the same classes and the same people right after a school break. It was like starting a new school all over again. I didn't know if I would ever get used to that feeling. The butterflies were at it again.

This semester I decided that I would take an intro to dance course. I was never a dancer, and believe me, I'm still not. But as a fan of musical theatre I knew it would be important to at least learn basic skills in case I ever needed it in the future. Professor Holla was a masochistic maniac. There really isn't any nicer way for me to put it. She wasn't nice and she had no idea what she was doing. And she practically broke a student's neck once while adjusting their position. I hated her, and I really began to hate dance. I also hated Yoga, which I had never done before. I thought of it as interesting, until Professor Holla turned it into a prison camp roundup exercise. Of course, now, I love Yoga. But for a couple of years because of this

dictator, Yoga seemed more like a torture activity than a relaxing one. But there was an amazing life-changing positive to this class, and that would be meeting my Holla Gals. But I'll talk about those lovely ladies later. Also that semester I took a comparative literature class and advanced to Acting 1.

The semester started off slow. Typical classes, same shitty travel, and more drama. This drama would come in the form of the previously mentioned drama group bigwig whom I attended high school with. Lets just say her real name rhymes with Lonica. But for the sake of this essay, I'm going to call her Skanky McMuffin Top. I think that flows off the tongue much better. And if you're having any difficulty pronouncing it, just call her McSkanks. So I, along with many other people, always thought McSkanks was a really sweet person. She had a pretty singing voice, and wasn't a bad actress. I thought she liked me and really wanted to see me succeed in the school. But boy was I wrong. She and her little crew of drama followers, who I shall call the McSkank Nuggets, were secretly making fun of me behind my back. And I should have figured out their M.O from the start since when that same guy from high school was auditioning for the play, they were outside making fun of him. At the time I thought well, he's an ass

and they see it. But really, they just loved to be mean. And Skanky McMuffin Top was incredibly mean. I had filmed a really funny music video with my family where we dressed up like rock stars from the 1980's and lip-synced to *'Video Killed the Radio Star'*. Everyone seemed to really like it, well I thought everyone had liked it. As I was skimming through Myspace (remember this is 2007) and came across a comment she had made on one of her Nuggets' pages. It was my video. I thought, Oh cool, she likes it and she's passing it on.' But underneath it read the comment, *"This is hilarious, seriously honey, if you've got flab like that don't show it off."* Apparently they had been making fun of me for a while. Now at this time I'd say I had already lost maybe fifteen pounds, which for me was a huge accomplishment. I was still chubby, sure, but I wasn't exactly wearing a bikini in the video and lunging at the camera. OH! And here's the best part. You know the expression, *'Isn't that the pot calling the kettle black?'* Well, McSkanks was a McPudge herself. Bigger than me. What is it about girls who are insecure who feel it necessary to rip others to pieces? I had always been nice to her, I went to her shows, showed my support, and this is how she treats me? Bitch.

At first I cried. I sobbed into my pillow. I treated my parents like crap. I contemplated going out to Baskin Robbins and getting an ice cream sundae. Yep, I was back in high school. And to this day, I don't know what it was that made me get up and change my mind. But I did. I knew that I was a better person than that. I wasn't going to let this defeat me. I told my Mom and Dad what was bothering me and they encouraged me to push past it and to use it to fuel my drive. And it did. The first thing I did was write a nifty email to McSkanks telling her I knew all about her behind my back mocking. I wanted to know why she had a problem with me. What did I ever do to her? And I didn't have the patience to wait for her bullshit response, so I blocked her and haven't spoken to her since. Although I do believe she once tried to apologize through email, but it was faker than Snooki's *"I'm sober"* face. But as I look back on it, I do forgive her. We all do and say stupid things when we're young. I'm still young, and I probably do and say stupid things every day. And although I was never the type to cruelly take out my personal pain at the expense of someone else's insecurities, it's having those insecurities that I do understand. McSkanks seemed like a jolly elf, but really she was actually a miserable nelly. I hope that now or

someday she can be confident enough in herself to genuinely be happy for others. Maybe she'll be the next Dr. Ruth. Not the sex doctor stuff, just a knowledgeable woman teaching others how to stop going down and start getting ahead. Ok, wow that last sentence kind of makes her sound like a sex doctor, but hey, *whatever works*.

I was extremely proud of myself at how I handled my college nemesis. I did it all on my own with only a minimal amount of tear droppage. But I did receive some encouraging advice from a great man. My Acting One professor, who I'll call Don, was a tremendous actor. He treated his students with respect and really brought out everything he could in them. Even the students who had never acted before, who didn't even like to say their names in class, were able to put it all together in the end to give an awesome performance. On the last day of class we performed our final assignments. I had a great time, and got some great feedback. On my train ride home, Don walks into the same car as me. We chatted for a while and he thanked me for taking part in the class. He told me I was an asset to the class and that I should keep performing. Then he asked me how I liked the college. I was always told that if you don't have anything nice to say, don't say anything. But as an actor, I also knew that

acting is always about telling the truth. He was an acting teacher, and I wasn't at home anymore, so I went for it. I told him all that had been going on with McSkank, but I didn't name her of course, and how it had made me feel, and even how I handled it. He gave me terrific advice. He said, 'There will always be people in this world who are jealous of others. They do what they can to tear them down, to make themselves feel better. Never let these people get in your way.' I thank him for that, He is a great man. He got off at his stop and he told me to have a great summer. And I did have a great summer. Especially since after this semester, I had two new friends, who would become two of the best friends I've ever had.

The best thing about the end of my freshman year of college, was meeting Celia and Ruby. They were in my dance class, you know the one with Professor Holla? We all bonded over our dislike for the Professor and our passion to shake our booty's like no ones watching. Celia and I were also in the same Comparative Lit class, so we bonded there too. For our final dance project, we had to choreograph a dance. We decided to do a mash up of classic film scores. We practiced over Spring Break and had a blast. We gyrated to Madonna's 'Like a Virgin' and Sixties-grooved our way through the Austin Powers

Theme song. These girls were really fun. And throughout the rest of college, I would learn what amazing friends they'd turn out to be.

### The Skinny Sophomore

The summer came and went and my sophomore year had arrived. This time around I would tackle Math class, Journalism, Jazz, and move on to Acting Two. I was ready to go and less scared that I had been the year before. Plus, I was fifty pounds lighter than I was the year before. I was a new me. Well, I was kind of the new me. On my way to the Quad, I tripped over a sinkhole causing my papers to get all mashed up. Damn sinkhole. But on my first day, I joined my Holla Gals, Celia and Ruby and some other new friends on the quad. We hung out, recited our dance again, and chatted about our summers. It was great seeing them, and I couldn't have been more excited to start this semester.

I was dreading Math because I was and still am terrible at it. Me and numbers just don't equal any sense. Fortunately for me, my Professor, a young Asian guy, who

clearly never taught before made it extremely easy to pass-IF you were willing to crack open the book and teach yourself. And that's what I did to pass. No one in the class understood what he taught. He was a sweet guy, and I felt sorry that the class made fun of him, but he did allow me to prove that Math isn't so scary if you apply yourself. And I did apply myself. I ended up getting an A plus in my college Math course. Me! The girl who still counts on her fingers and recites music numbers from *School House Rock* to remember her multiplication table. He may not have taught me anything about Math, but he did teach me that if one applies oneself, they can learn anything. Thanks Dude!

I also advanced to Acting 2. Although I was still more experienced than most of the class, I learned probably the most I had ever learned in a college acting course from this professor. She was amazing! She called people on their bullshit and MADE them good actors, or at least for the class' sake. Her name was Professor Callahan. I call her this because she reminded me of the awesome family friends that we have that go by this name. I could have sworn she was related to them somehow. I was stuck doing a scene with a partner who was always absent. I worked my butt off for the scene, traveled to school to

rehearse on days when I didn't have to be on campus, and still she'd not show up. She sucked. She's a big ball-sucker. But she's the one who needs to deal with her own irresponsibility in this business. That taught me that sometimes you have to rely on yourself to get things done. But fortunately, another girl in my class, Mimi, was in the same boat. Her partner ditched her as well. Mimi was great. She was spunky and an awesome scene partner. Finally, we showed up to class ready to tackle the scene and we blew it out of the ballpark. Professor Callahan's reply: Now *that* is how you do a scene.' From Professor Callahan, I learned how important listening is as an actor. I learned how the stakes must always be up, and that saying fuck 'in class is ok. Oh, and she also told us about this freaky kid in one of her past classes who always did monologues and scenes about masturbation. *That*, I maybe didn't need to know. But that was part of her humor. She taught me that as an actor, you can never go too far. Maybe that's why I'm so fucking foul when I perform.

Journalism class was insane. The professor was a great guy who really knew his stuff. But I quickly learned that it takes a lot of hard work to become a journalist, and I knew it just wasn't meant to be my chosen path. But I

did come to truly appreciate the journalists of the world. They work much harder than most people probably realize. If I get to play one someday, I know a lot more about how that game works. I also had Olivia in my class. Yay for me. She was still a kiss ass, but she was also still not getting straight A's. She wasn't the best, but she still thought she was better than everyone else. And she still had that shiny binder.

Prior to this semester I had landed a job working at Blood Manor. It was a dream job. I stupidly dedicated myself to working every show of the season, which would require me to work Thursday nights. That meant that I would go straight from class to work. It was tough, and I often found myself studying for exams while performing. But it was a great experience that allowed me to really tap into my killer instincts as a performer. It also had me being responsible in a big way. I got up to go to school early in the morning, packed my lunch, went to school, grabbed some dinner, and then off to work. Yes, I was a working girl. Well, I was kind of a working girl, in October anyway. The best part about the gig was having Celia and Ruby come see me perform. I scared them so badly I think they almost walked into the wall. That's the great thing about being an actor with friends. You can

make them cry, laugh, or pee their pants, but at the end of the day they love you anyway.

I could not believe it was 2008 already. At the start of this semester, I was dealing with some difficult medical issues. I was never one to fully broadcast my illnesses to anyone outside of my immediate family, and of course my soul sister Sab. But Celia, Ruby, and I began meeting up on our lunch breaks. Suddenly I felt comfortable telling them about my health. And to my surprise, they were extremely concerned, interested, and caring. I could update them without rolling eyes or annoyed grunts. These girls had my back. During these lunches, we laughed, we vented, and Ruby and I spent a lot of time engaging in conversations which had us drooling over our favorite foods. On Valentines Day, Celia brought us chocolates. And towards the end of the semester I baked some cookies. They were great times. They were and still are great people. This semester would test me. I would not only be tested in my classes, but also by the challenges and decisions I would have to make about my future and myself.

I took Movement for the Actor because Acting Three was filled up. But I was excited and nervous. The professor of this course had a reputation for being a hard-ass, and many students didn't like her. I'm calling her Professor Glare, because it was all in the eyes with this woman. She wasn't hyper like Professor Theatre, she was not kind like Don, and she wasn't funny like Professor Callahan. But she was one hell of a woman. I quickly realized that my pre-conceived notions of her and how hard her ways were, had been an extreme exaggeration. Yes, this woman knew her stuff, and she wasn't afraid to express her opinions. But whether right or wrong in what she said, she was brilliant. And, she liked me. She liked me so much that she pushed me hard to go with her and other students to Ireland for a few weeks in the summer to study Irish Theatre. I wanted to go. I knew we didn't have the money, but that somehow my parents would have found a way for me to go if I really wanted it bad enough. Professor Glare encouraged me to try and get a scholarship. But my insecurities and health issues prevented me from taking that risk. Even though I had come a long way since I started school, I wasn't independent enough. I just wasn't ready. It broke my heart not going. It's my one college regret. It would have been an

amazing experience, but it wasn't meant to be during that time of my life. I know I'll get to see the beautiful isles some day, that day just wasn't in the summer of 2008.

I learned a lot about my craft from Professor Glare. I learned about what my body could do, and how my voice went along for the ride. I expressed my emotions through movement and my words, which were felt greatly by the other students. They were a supportive bunch, and we had fun. Professor Glare could be a tough cookie, she probably still is, but I think once you start to bite into the cookie you realize that the sweet sugary goodness outweighs the cracks on your teeth from biting into its hard exterior. Don't know if that makes any sense, but in that class, our exercises usually didn't make much sense to normal sane non-actors, so what the hell right?

Also during the spring semester, I took my first Theatre History class. I would take all of my QC Theatre History classes with the same woman, Professor Willow. I thought Professor Willow was just the coolest, most mellow teacher around. She reminded me of a hippie. She had such passion for the things she taught from early Renaissance Theatre to Contemporary Stage Productions, she knew it all, and she loved what she taught. I also took a special studies course on Jewish Theatre. As a half-Jew,

I LOVED this class. I learned the things I should know and got to present on both Mel Brooks and Fanny Bryce, I'd say win win.

Finally that semester, the only thorn in my side was my Comparative Lit class. The Professor, HalaNa (I really don't know what else to call him) was strict, strange, and didn't really teach well. His concepts were difficult to understand and so was his accent. But I applied myself as best I could. I ended up getting a C plus in the class, but I was happy to have made it out alive. The one thing I did take away from his class and its format of him randomly pointing at students (always calling them YOU) asking them about random plot points in the books, was the importance of truly reading something. Whether that be an article or a novel, skimming just isn't going to cut it. Even though I read those books including *Heart of Darkness* twice or more times, I still didn't get him. But I tried, and from that class forward, when something was assigned to me, you can be sure I *read* it.

### A Jittered Junior

Ok, so another summer, another Welcome Back to Campus week. This semester at Queens would be my most crucial yet. It would also be my last. My courses

consisted of more Theatre History, Intro to Directing, Folk Dance, and Theatre Tech. It was also time for me to take the fabulous CPE exam- not Compulsive Penis Episode, but rather the Cuny Proficiency Exam. It was basically required to see if you were actually taking the college courses and not just having someone pretend to be you and sign your name to everything. Apparently, Buellers were not welcome here.

I once again worked at Blood Manor and in December I agreed to be an Elf at Macys. Both were interesting experiences. And both had me pulling double duty in regards to my studies and my performance life. It was stressful, but I managed. I remember studying for the CPE while at Blood Manor. The paper, which we were to bring to the exam with us the day of, was covered in fake blood. The proctor must have thought studying had really begun to take its toll. I met up with Celia for the test. She was bubbly and ready to begin and I was exhausted. I have to say the test was a breeze. Everyone makes such a big deal about it, but if you actually have a brain, and use it on occasion, you pass this test. And I did pass, and I got an exceptionally high score on my essay. I don't remember which one, but I was pleased.

The tough part about working this season at Blood Manor was that when I worked on selected Thursdays till Twelve am, I would have to get up at six thirty the next morning to be in class at eight. One day I had my midterm and the next morning and I was sick. I rotated, while performing, between studying up on the pulley system and blowing my nose. Things didn't compute well. I failed my midterm, but fortunately passed the class by making it up on the final. In fact that midterm sucked so badly, I think I had been writing demonic symbols in the answer spaces from working at BM the night before.

Tech class sucked. It was another pain in my side. In fact, I hated it so much, that I made the ultimate decision to transfer schools because of how angry I was at this class. Ok so it wasn't the only reason I was transferring, but it did set me over the edge and made my decision easier. Aside from sitting in the most boringly taught class ever for three and a half hours, we students were expected to also spend fifteen hours working on the sets for the school shows. You do also remember that this semester I was working at Blood Manor and Macy's Santaland right? Ok, just checking that you're awake. Now fit that in with the other four classes I was taking and that leaves me how much time to actually take a breath?

Oh yeah, none. And if we didn't complete our fifteen hours during the semester, our grades for the class would be withheld till the next semester. Are you kidding me? This was an outrage. I understand how colleges want their theatre students to learn about all aspects of the theatre, I get it, its important. I did some crew work at Hunter as well. But don't they understand that students have the most insane schedules and to force them to become work slaves because you're too lazy to hire actually technicians is a travesty! Somehow, I completed my hours. I tried my best and I did what I could. I'm not a builder, I'm not a painter, and I'm pretty sure I screwed up the lighting color scheme- but hey that's what you get when you expect inexperienced co-eds to do your work for you.

But I did like my classmates, and even though I was annoyed that I had to slip in extra work during my waking hours for Tech class, I made the best of it and had some fun. But that fun would turn to annoyance when I would encounter my very own stalker.

I quote, "*Amanda? You ever see that episode of The Simpsons when Bart makes the phone call to Moes? I'm looking for Amanda Hugandkiss. A Man To Hug and*

*Kiss.*” This is what my stalker told me after I told him my name. And since we’re already talking about The Simpsons, I’m going to keep up with that theme and call him Comic Book Guy. Not only was he a douchey lame-o but he very much reminded me of that character. And if you don’t know what he looks like, Google it, he looks like the character too. So Comic Book Guy was in my Tech class. He was also in my Directing class. And early on he chose to sit next to me, in both classes. How lucky was I? I was always nice to him, engaged in idle chat because why shouldn’t I? But then he began to get creepier and creepier, I never knew what the hell he was talking about. Our first assignment in our Directing class was to tell the class a great story. He gets up there and starts talking about some Zelda/Unicorn/Wizard King shit that nobody understood. I clapped for him because I felt sorry that others were unkind. I will always be kind to someone unless they give me a reason not to be.

So after a couple of weeks he hints that we should go out. I turn him down, clearly. I was very nice about it. We continue to have classes together, and we talk about things, and he still continues to say creepy things- you have a nice smile- bla bla bla. Then one day after class he

asks me out again. Only this time, he invites me to attend a Renaissance Fair with him. When did I ever allude to that as being something I am vaguely interested in? Sorry, dude, I was too busy living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century surrounded by sex, drugs, and rock and roll to understand you. Not that I was involved in that scene either, but come on! A Renaissance fair? Once again I politely turned him down and explained that I was not interested in dating anyone at that current time. From then on, he stopped sitting next to me, but would still bother me on occasion. He pissed everybody off, and I stopped feeling sorry for him because he proved to be an arrogant annoying fat fuck! Again, go Google Comic Book Guy- He really is him to a tee.

I reached my boiling point with Comic Book Guy when he volunteered to direct a scene that I had written in our Directing class. The scene involved a Mother and a Daughter as the Mother comes to terms with her daughter's eating disorder. It wasn't exactly autobiographical, but having struggled with an eating disorder, the words that the daughter spoke were true to life. He thought it was funny and decided to turn the emotional climactic scene into a comedy. He had the actresses speaking to the audience and reciting the lines

in strange monosyllabic ways. I don't blame the actors at all. They were just listening to their director. Our Professor, who I will call Professor Murray because he is Bill Murray's doppelganger, was not pleased. It was not right for him to tear apart the playwrights words without consent and it didn't make a lick of sense. That would be of course because it was not a freakin comedy! The class did not like what he did either and I was extremely glad at the heartfelt comments I got on my writing. They had my backs and Comic Book Guy was about to be ripped a new one. After class he had the audacity to ask me what I thought of the scene. *What did I think?* You single-handedly took a daughters painful admission of a disease to her mother and turned into the unicorn happy hour, you arrogant dick, just fuck off, I am not happy."Yeah, I went there. I think I got a few claps from some of my class chums. I didn't want to have to say those things, and I never lose my cool like that to my peers and I haven't since. But I had just had enough.

After the semester was over, he sent me a wonderfully written message on Facebook. It stated how unattractive and unappealing as a whole I was. How could I not like Shakespeare, I must be an alien. My writing was tremendously bad and I was one of the worst actress' he

had ever met. And apparently he had never wanted to go out with me, something along those lines. Normally I would get upset that someone would say those things to me. But I laughed. I actually sat at my computer and laughed. The fact that this douchebag didn't have the balls to say these things to my face proved what a loser he was. It was my first piece of hate mail, and I treasure it even today. Comic Book Guy, you had me at HugandKiss.

I enjoyed Folk Dance that semester. I got to learn some really fun social dances and got to demonstrate to the class how to do the Twist. Now, I know before I said that my only college regret was not going to Ireland, but I have another one. The other one would be not telling a certain someone how I felt about him, or rather not wiseing up to my own feelings at the time. I had seen Hot Fudge Sundae around campus and in the department before. He is nicknamed Hot Fudge Sundae because, well I don't really remember why. I think I was high on sugar at the time, but my Holla Gals know all about it. Any who, I'm sitting in Directing class waiting for Professor Murray to arrive. I was with familiar students, chatting, talking about our summers, when in walks Hot Fudge Sundae. I'm thinking, well, he's probably just here to discuss something theatre related to the teacher. But No,

he's IN my class. Not only is he in my class but he sits next to ME. I smiled and shut my mouth. I was so thin at that time, I'm surprised I didn't slide in between the spaces of the chairs. I kept my cool and later got to know Hot Fudge Sundae. He was an amazing guy and a terrifically gifted performer. I also made friends with sweet Vinny, another classmate and department member. They were cool guys, and I could bond with them on class projects and the dreaded tech hours.

I began to tell Celia and Ruby about my new crush on Hot Fudge Sundae. They insisted I invite him to have lunch with us, but I kept forgetting. But Hot Fudge and I had some really great deep conversations. He was funny, and yet he understood what I was telling him. I opened up to him about some of my struggles, and he listened and was supportive. He was bummed when I said I was transferring to Hunter, but he wished me the best. I realize now that it might have been more than your average flirtation. I think of that Adelle song that uses the line, *We could have had it all*, and it reminds me of him. Well kind of, I'm not that mushy, I mean the guy had nice hair. But like I said about Ireland, if it's not meant to be, then it's not meant to be. I don't think that was our time. He was a good guy, and he still is. He'll always be my

college crush and from him I learned, don't be shy, because chances are that the other person is just as scared as you are to express themselves. Letting others into your world is challenging, but when the time is right, it's right. It's amazing what you learn in college isn't it? I was ready for something more, and come 2009, I would get it.

### Vote for Change

2009 was a year of immense change. First off, we were getting a new President. No longer would we have a douche monkey as the head of our Country. When Obama was elected, I was so proud of my generation. I attended the Hunter College transfer Orientation excited and determined. It also happened to be on the exact same day that Obama was being sworn into the White House. It was a great day over-all. I learned more about Hunter, from the classes I would have to take to complete my basic requirements to the location of the counseling office, which I believe was called the Wellness Center. After my orientation was over, I got to see Obama all over the school screens being sworn in. It was exciting.

Let me tell you why I left Queens for Hunter. Queens was a great school. I learned some valuable lessons about growing up, my craft, and the kindness of others. The Theatre Department was fantastic. However, I had taken almost all of the courses I needed as a Theatre Major. I felt like I didn't have much more to learn during my time there. I needed more. I needed more training, more knowledge, and a change of atmosphere. The travel to Queens was still daunting and not fun. I had many more full bladder train rides and I was over it. Hunter was the perfect change of locale and morale that I needed to complete my journey. When I got accepted I celebrated. I think I ate like three pieces of cake. Ok, so back to 2009, or flash forward to 2009, sorry this time travel thing is getting confusing even for me please bear with me here. So I finished orientation and within a couple of weeks my first day in what would be the first day of the rest of my college career commenced.

This first semester would have me taking History, Intro to Computing, Latinos in America, Film 101, and finally Play Analysis. My first class of the day was my first Theatre course taken at Hunter. I find this interesting that my first class at my new college was from the same department as my first class at Queens. I

got there early, as usual. I was the first one in the classroom. I thought I was in the wrong class and once again, like a silly freshman of sorts, I pulled out my schedule to double check. No, I was in the right place. Finally a few other students began arriving. I knew I was in the right place when I over-heard some of them talking about recent plays they had seen. Then the professor entered. Professor Fall, as I will call her, entered the room with such enthusiasm, she'd make Kristin Chenoweth look like Eyore from Winnie the Pooh. And she was always like this. But don't underestimate Professor Fall, when students didn't do the work, she'd let them have it. Of course, since I was so interested in these plays, I always did the reading. And after what Professor HalaNa taught me, you can never skim and sometimes you need to read things more than once to fully grasp it. So I was ready to grasp this class and all that it had to offer. I got to read some really great plays and discuss my thoughts with the class. From the very first day, we moved our desks in a circle so that it was not a lecture class but instead a discussion. I had never experienced this format at Queens, and I liked it.

After my first day of classes at Hunter was over, I spent a good hour or so in the city just walking around

the neighborhood. This was my city, my time, and my life. I felt like I belonged and that this place would be incredibly crucial to my future. I still walk around various locations in the city with nowhere to go. I do this because I can. Here is a beautiful city around and available for the taking. Why not take advantage of that? Plus I find I come up with the best ideas when I'm walking around with nowhere to go. Aimlessness really does aid the creative soul. Try it sometime.

Play Analysis Class had us reading various types of plays from various types of playwrights from Shakespeare to Beckett. Our final assignment would test our creativity and knowledge of a play structure. We were to outline, scene by scene, our own play. The play I wrote was called *Playing with Dolls*. It was about a boy staying with his Aunt for the summer. He breaks his leg at the top of the play and has to remain bed-ridden up in his Aunt's guest-room by a window the entire play. Sound like *Rear Window*? *Disturbia*? WRONG! He doesn't spy on his neighbors but rather he begins to hear strange sounds coming from the room he is staying in. His little sister annoys him and he refuses to entertain her. He makes friends with the girl next door, and his Aunt thinks he is crazy. Weird things continue to happen in the room.

Oh, did I forget to mention that in this room is a huge collection of creepy life-like porcelain dolls? Yeah, well they're there and trouble goes down. This boy is convinced that the dolls are alive. The play culminates with him giving in to his fears as he forces himself, broken leg and all to go out his window to escape the madness. He lives, but at the very end of the play it is revealed that the little sister was seeking revenge against her brother for not playing with her, so she in turn played with him. It was a fun idea, and Professor Fall loved my story, so much so that she made a point of making me go first to read it to the class. The class liked it to. I think this was the first time when I realized my strange writing style might be worth a damn. And it felt damn good.

History class was great because I got to learn more about America's history. I began to remember many of the things I had forgotten from grade school, and this time around being older, I understood what things meant. I now know who the Axis Powers were and who the Allied powers were. Hitler's a douche monkey, Lincoln just really wanted to see a show, and McCarthy was definitely high on something. The class gave me a wider appreciation of the past. And now, any chance I get to study history, I grab.

Intro to Computing was simple enough. It taught me basic computer skills and vocabulary that I had been fairly familiar with before. The class was fun though. Professor Sweetie was young and relatable. She was damn smart too. Not at all your typical computer geek. You could tell this woman had a social life. From her I learned about how to make a website, the differences between a mac and a pc (other than the commercials), and got to do extensive research on Chris Farley's death. One of our assignments was to write about a dead celebrity and report our website findings. Who better to chose than one of my hero's right? I cried, yes I did. But it was a great class.

Then there was Film 101. Film has always been one of my passions. In Queens, they seemed to lack a Film department, which was a huge disappointment to me. But at Hunter, Film is repped in a big way. So I took the first step into learning all I can about a medium I love so much. We had a lecture class for an hour, then later that day we would have a two-hour film screening. It was great. I got to learn about Film's early history from The Lumiere Brothers to Bwana Devil and it's 3D spectacular. I also got to see classic films that for some odd reason, I hadn't seen before. I finally watched The Godfather and damn is it

good. I enjoyed Taxi Driver but hated Casablanca. This class really got me thinking outside the box when watching movies. I fell in love with the cinema all over again, and got an A in the class to boot.

Finally in my first semester at Hunter, I took a cultures class on Latinos in America. It was one of the basic requirements to take a class on another Non-Caucasian nationality. I wanted to take African Americans in politics, but it was full. So I grabbed up this one. I have to say that I was probably the third white kid in the class. Which was fine, I was just concerned at my being able to follow the curriculum. Professor Bee was an awesome teacher. She had a thick accent, which at times could be difficult to understand, but she made the class interesting. And I studied my balls off for the exam, of which I got an A on. And my balls did come off, as I'm fully a woman now, yay for estrogen. For our final group project in the class, we had to present on an assigned article to the class in any way we could. Most of the class gave us boring PowerPoint presentations that caused most kids to secretly text on their iPhones. But one of my group mates came up with a great idea: *How about we do a game show?* I jumped on that idea and he and I spearheaded the group to victory. I printed up the

category cards, the script rundown, and volunteered to be the host, since I wasn't shy to be bold in class (at least as someone other than myself). The other group members submitted questions for the game related to the article and we were set. The game format was that three contestants, all Latinos straight from the article we read were going to be quizzed on things about finances and such from the article the class had read. I was the host of what we called *'Latineopardy'*. Most of it was improvised. I threw in the occasional joke and cheesy game show host enthusiasm. I was Alex Trebeck with a vagina. The class and Professor Bee ate it up like cake. It felt great and my group and I had a blast. It was an amazing way to end my first semester. And I have to say that I learned many things in Latinos class. I pride myself on not being a person who fully buys into stereotypes. But living in this society, you can't help but hear about the many "assumed" characteristics about various minorities. Whether you believe in them or not, they still exist. And I was so inspired by all the stories and histories I learned about people I never had much in common with before. I know now that the negatives of one, speak none for the positives of many.

I was officially a Hunter Student on my way to success, and the best summer break parting gift would be surprisingly making the coveted Deans List for the first time in my college career. I was pleased with gas that was giddy.

Over the summer, I underwent surgery. Because of this, most of my summer was spent in recovery. It was kind of a bummer, but looking back on it, I'm very pleased I went through with it. I get asked about my surgery a lot. Most people close to me know all about it. I'm not one to broadcast it to the world though. But I will say this: No, it wasn't a boob job. Although I think you'd be able to figure that one out by just looking at me. So in the fall, I returned to Hunter with jubilation and as a member of a newly formed theatre group, The CnC Players. We performed weekends in October doing improv and sketch comedy. It was a good semester for me to be apart of something like that because I could fit it into my schedule. We rehearsed mostly on weekends. And during the week, since I was already in the city for school, I could walk over to the studio and be there in less than a half hour. The CnC-ers were great, we had a blast and I learned much from them

and I hope they learned things from me. That's what's great about this business both in school and out of it, you're always learning.

In school, I had to take another English class in order to be able to take additional English courses. Kind of a stupid rule, but I really enjoyed the class. We studied poetry, short stories, Kafka, and got to watch selections of that wretched Ethan Hawke movie version of *Othello*. And best of all, we had to present to the class one of the readings for the semester. I randomly selected Dylan Thomas, and boy was I pleased when I realized that I had been reciting some of his works with my acting coach Grace, way back in the early days of my craft training. I had fun with that. It's amazing to me how the things you learn at one point in your life, though they may be forgotten for a while, somehow find a way to make an appearance once more.

Cultural Anthropology, which had been taught by two teaching students who shared the course, was in a huge lecture hall. I didn't care too much for lecture hall classes, because I always felt funny raising my hand amongst such a huge crowd of people. But on the bright side, it was always easy to sneak out early if you sat all the way in the back. The male teacher was great. He was interesting,

knew how to teach, and made sure we were actually doing the work. The female, however, had no clue what she was doing. Lets just say that I definitely missed more of her lectures than I did the males. I also walked away learning that Vampire and Zombie movies seemed to come out more frequently during Republican and Democratic Administrations, respectively. I forget which one goes with which, but I found this really cool.

I got to take another film class this semester, and this one also allowed me to fulfill my womens studies requirement. I took Women in Film, in which I learned about the struggles women in this industry face to make a name for themselves and to put out quality work. We dug way back into the forties, and then ended with Katherine Bigelow. I think it was the perfect semester to take this class, considering the first female to win an Academy award happened to do so a few months later. That woman of course was Katherine Bigelow, and the film she won for was *The Hurt Locker*. I watched the film before the Oscar buzz because we learned about Bigelow in class. Great timing. From this class I also began to really dig deep within film. There is more beauty to some pictures that go far beyond special effects and primed up starlets. For my final paper, I chose to write an extensive essay

that compared female relationships in film. The nasty, the cattiness, the closeness, and the sanctity of sisterhood were all examined as I compared the Lucille Ball film *Dance Girls Dance* with the modern horror film *Jennifer's Body*. You'd be surprised at how similar these opposite genre films actually are. It was a fun paper, and I got an A in the class. I think someday women will have a huge voice in the world of cinema. And it won't be just gratuitous sex, violence, and drug use. It'll be because of legitimate sex, violence, and drug use. I am woman, hear me roar, just don't touch my chocolate and we're all good, ok?

My pain in the ass class this semester was Weather and Climate. I decided that instead of taking Biology, Chemistry, or Physics as my Science Lab course, I would take Weather. I figured maybe I'd take to it and could go down a career path as a weather girl. I have the on-camera skills, I just don't know how to tell the difference of which way the wind blows, other than waving a piece of paper in the air and seeing which direction it goes off in. This course was part lecture, part lab. The lab portion wasn't so bad. The teacher was a nice Indian woman who made sense. She did get me mad once though, well actually not her exactly. My lab group consisted of a bunch of

dipshits. Every class we'd have a quiz. Usually I failed because they were hard. One class, she steps out of the room, and several of my tablemates decide to cheat. I already turned my paper over, and knew I failed. I didn't care that I failed, at least I failed honestly. It's not like it counted for much anyway. And if I were going to cheat, I'd cheat off of the Asian guy with a head shaped like a blimp, not these kids. So when the teacher comes back, she tells our table to speak to her after class. I assumed since my paper was not with theirs that she couldn't have meant me. Turns out she did. And the next class me and two other girls (who were cool and actually didn't really cheat either) were in trouble because we didn't talk to her after class, meanwhile the cheaters went to her afterwards and lied through their teeth. Fortunately, the teacher was just hurt and was never considering turning us in, she just wanted to prove a point. And I get that, it must be hard sometimes when kids don't respect you. Damn kids. She let us off the hook without any trouble, I thank her for that. I also blame her for making me have to almost throw away my underwear, not cool.

Our lab instructor really took the time to help us students understand the material. I almost always got A's on my labs. But phooey on that, since the lab portion only

counted for about twenty percent of our overall grade. The stupid midterm and final took up the other sixty-five percent, while fifteen went to just showing up. I showed up, but I still didn't get what the hell Professor Blunder-Man was saying. You could definitely tell that by the way he talked about many on-air weather personalities that he was probably a failed weatherman himself. Maybe it was the glasses. Could have been the hair? Whatever the reason was, this guy had a pretty lame sense of humor. I never quite got him. I struggled to pass since I failed the midterm. I studied my ass off for the final and it paid off. I ended up getting a grade of 70 on the final, but it was passing enough to get me a C plus in the class. I was happy to pass and be done with College Science. The only downside was that despite having A's in every other course that semester, the stupid C dragged my gpa just below the Dean's List Minimum. Shitty Shit Shit Shit! Professor Blunder rained on my parade, and I hope it rains on his next vacation to Melmac. Got to say though, I did get to learn that Alf is from Melmac. So thanks for that. At the end of this course, I had come to an important conclusion. I was too blonde to be a reputable meteorologist, but not blonde enough to be the on-air weather girl who's sleeping with the main anchorman who

thinks a Cumulus cloud is ~~something~~ else. Damn my strawberry blonde roots. I guess I'll just have to settle for playing a Weathergirl someday on TV. Calling all casting directors, I have the terminological knowledge, that's got to mean something right?

### The Stable Successful Senior

Ah, springtime. Every time I say or hear that word I immediately think of springtime for Hitler from The Producers. It reminds me of Germany. It's an odd way to start my story about my spring semester of 2010, but you'll see by the end how it all relates. I had a nice relaxing winter break which consisted of my last CnC performance and a birthday bash for myself that really sucked. It was vampire themed. So getting back to school was the name of the game. At the start of the semester, I received an email informing me that I was about to be a lower senior, which meant I should start learning about the graduation process. I thought, Ok shouldn't be too bad. Well, I was kind of wrong. Although now, I see how easy it is, back then that graduation audit workshop was a

nightmare. I was convinced it would take me ten years as a transfer to earn my degree. Bad news in the end is that I would have to go to school longer than four years. Good news was that it was only one extra year. I have to say I treasure that last year, this last year. But more about *that* next semester. *This* semester, I would come face to face with fear, scandal, controversy, stage plots, and amore, amore, amore."

My first class of the Spring semester was Visual Elements of Theatre. I was annoyed that I had to take this class initially, because I had slaved away in Tech class at Queens that I thought it futile. But, as it turns out, much of the material we would cover, I had already been introduced to. But this time, I actually learned something. Professor First-Name (cause he liked us to call him by his first name) was a very interesting dude. He had a wry sense of humor. He was like a British King meets Christian Slater. Like Professor Theatre, he also had an impressive career (Broadway, we meet again). And he knew how to teach. My fears came when our final assignment was to map out a stage plot for *A Zoo Story*. Me and measuring things out with numbers, not so good. But he was very encouraging and saw the effort that myself and other students put fourth. I ended up getting

an A plus in the class. Not too shabby. Professor First-Name also used to tell the best stories. Sometimes they were random, but they were always funny. I think he'll always remember our class by the reaction he received when asking us if we had seen the movie *Edward Scissorhands*. He had asked us if we had seen another famous movie, maybe it was *The Wizard of Oz* or something, I don't quite remember. I also don't remember the point of his story, I think he forgot too. But when he mentioned *Edward Scissorhands*, and every class member raised their hands as having seen it, Professor First-Name laughed. Actually, he chuckled. He could not process how most of the class hadn't seen a classic like *To Kill a Mockingbird* (or maybe it was *Titanic*, who knows anymore?) but yet we all had seen the movie with the guy with the scissor fingers. Professor First-Name also taught me a great lesson earlier that semester. When asking how many of the class members were aspiring actors and what not, he gave us great advice. He said you need to decide early in life, if the thing that you're doing is going to be a career or a job. I think that statement has to be one of the most amazing things I have ever heard. Who knows what jobs and how many I'll hold from now till the rest of my life, but one thing for sure, entertaining will always be

my *career*. Thanks for the perspective Professor First-Name, and the final class pizza party, neat.

My continual fascination with film classes had seen me taking a course on Films of the 1960s. But it wasn't comprised of American films. We didn't watch *The Graduate* or *Bonnie and Clyde*, but instead focused on the theme of subjects watching and being watched. It was an eye for an eye kind of thing. Basically there were lots of eyes. I have never been more challenged intellectually in a film class than I was in this one. We watched the classic Italian film *La Dolce Vita*, a must see for any film buff. If you've ever wondered why those pesky TMZers are called paparazzi or why Lady Gaga sings about them, then watch this film for the answer. It is a visually beautiful film, scored to perfection. Having said that, I hated it. It is almost three hours, and I have to say that I was more entertained and interested sitting in the Dentists chair having my tooth pulled out then watching this film. I get why it is so important, and it is a great film, just not my cup of tea. The first class was cool though. We watched Michael Powell's *Peeping Tom*, the premiere movie that started the slasher film genre. It would be the perfect lead-in to my favorite film class of all time and my personal genre of expertise, the horror film- more of that

later. Films of the 1960's class allowed me to explore moving images from an era that I desperately would have loved to take part in. Of course, if I was part of the flower power decade, I'd be kind of wrinkly now, so I'll just get on my thigh-master and shut up. But seeing such raw footage from a powerful time in our nations history, as well as other countries was a treat satisfying enough for little far out me.

Banned Books had me hooked at the start. I didn't care if the course was taught by Hitler, I wanted in. We read classics such as *Lolita* (She totally led him on), *Fahrenheit 451*, and the graphic novel *Persepolis*. My essays were well received by the professor. I think that's because I approached the novels in a different way. Most students chose to write their essays on serious topics such as sexual content, religious back-lash, or *'Why it's important to read books and what I did on my summer vacation,'* by Marcia Brady. One of our essay prompts during the first half of the semester was to write about male/female representations in the book or books of our choice. I decided to tackle *Lolita* since it was the last book we read. But I didn't write about the little female and her adult femininity, or even Humbert Humbert's self-proclaimed hairiness. I instead framed the novel in terms

of Humbert being extremely feminine himself. I argued that his interactions with the females in his life have a huge affect on his behavior and views of the world around him. At first my Professor had her doubts, but after a thought-out re-write, I received an A plus. I also scored big on my second paper of the semester on the humor in *Persepolis*. I loved writing in that class. My professor also recommended to me one of the most useful writing books I have read to date, that of my favorite author, Stephen King in his book *On Writing*. I think we also said penis many times throughout the semester, so that was cool.

I have to mention one final thing that I learned from my Banned Books class. We read books about other cultures. We read books dealing with Iran and the Muslim religion. We didn't just read the books, but we also read articles showing a different side of the coin. In today's world, there are many things that can be assumed about groups of people. I think it is wrong, however, to treat any one person as part of a group. From reading *Persepolis* and *Reading Lolita in Tehran*, I got to see how difficult it is to be loyal to your home, and yet determined to defy all that you are told is right. There is a fine line between law and rebellion, right and wrong, good and bad. I loved *Persepolis*, the book and the movie. And although I still

don't know a whole lot about Muslim women or their personal struggles, I like to think that through the heroine of *Persepolis* I can feel that much more alike to a girl just trying to find her way in this crazy world of ours.

Ok, so the worst part of my semester was the week in which I thought I was going to be kicked out of school. Maybe I was over-reacting, or maybe I was just a huge pessimist at the time, but I was sure that I was done for. In my World Theatre 3 class, taught by one of the most pompous and boring instructors ever, Professor Turg (I use turg in place of his self-proclaimed title of dramaturge, but I think turd sounds better, so I'm changing it) ah-hem, Professor Turd. I was accused of plagiarism. Now all semester I had done really well. I received one of the highest scores on the midterm in the entire class. The material was interesting, how Turd taught it, was not. I didn't care much for him, he didn't leave me with any life lessons from his teachings nor was he filled with interesting stories about masturbating acting students or major mistakes made on the Broadway Stage. He was just a turd, excuse me dramaturge. Ok, so now to my research paper. It had been a while since I had written a full-blown research paper. I had been so used to citing films and novel authors in my wacky essays. I had

quoted my sources for my paper and thought I had paraphrased quite well. Apparently though, I cited incorrectly and didn't paraphrase enough. He called me into his office and stated that it was plagiarism. I wanted to shit my pants and make him eat it. My face turned white and my knees were shaky. I knew I didn't knowingly plagiarize, but I did feel it wasn't my best work. He told me he knew it wasn't done on purpose and it was just a mistake on my part. He said the paper deserved an A, but that he would have to lower it to a B because of my mistake. Ok, fine, whatever. But he also said it was his duty to send it to the Dean. Fuck.

I told my parents when I got home that night. I cried. I was so scared and so ashamed. I knew I didn't do anything wrong, but I still felt like I had failed somehow. They were understanding, and optimistic that things would turn out all right. I, on the other hand was convinced that I would be thrown out of school or have a permanent blot on my record. Turd told me that it was just protocol and that I wouldn't have to go see the Dean because Turd had written a glowing letter in my favor. Well, if I'm so glowing, then why are you telling on me, you fucking tattletale. Yes, I had reverted back to grade school. If I could have taken glue and stuck a bunch of

Popsicle sticks to his ass, I would have. A week passed by, I thought it was over. Then I got a letter in the mail stating I would have to make an appointment to talk with the Dean. If I didn't do this by a certain date, registration for the next semester would be withheld and I could face other issues. I turned Casper-esque again. I called his office and made an appointment. I had to wait a whole week before I could see him with our schedules. That whole week was the longest week of my life. Every time I was in school, I felt ashamed. I felt like a loser. No matter how hard I worked, how long I studied, how pathetically honest and enthused I was about my studies, I was the one being punished. Punished, for an unconscious mistake. Kids knowingly cheat everyday. I forget to mix up the order of two words, and I'm suddenly Mark Zuckerberg, without the millions of friends.

That final walk to the Deans office was like walking on coal. My feet were sweaty, my upper body ached, and my vocal abilities were shot. I went prepared with my records, my paper, Turd's recommendation letter, and a give em hell attitude. When I met the Dean, he smiled and shook my hand. He was certainly pleasant for a man about to send a student off to the gallows. We discussed the issue and he could tell by looking at my work and my

records that it was all a mis-understanding. He explained to me how sometimes it happens. He could see I was hard working and honest. He recommended I take a plagiarism online workshop for further tips to make sure I don't make further mistakes. He wished me luck and apologized for the mix-up. Dean Dude rocks! He was such a great man. Suddenly I had color in my face again, my knees were stable, and I could form basic sentences again. I was back baby! And my walk down the halls was as confident as ever. The birds outside were singing and I felt like a million bucks. Well, not a million, maybe just a few hundred. But I was fucking ecstatic. It proved that sometimes good things can happen. And because of that experience I always make sure to triple check my citations. I also learned what a dramaturge actually is. I wasn't that impressed. Not to say that most of them don't work incredibly hard, and aren't incredibly intelligent people. I just don't think I'll ever date one. Even more importantly though, I learned to trust the people who love me. My parents told me it would turn out ok, but instead I spent an entire week in fear. It's no way to live. Sometimes you have to swallow your pride and just listen. Just like springtime for Hitler, sometimes good and bad things can go together. Springtime brings flowers and

sunshine, while Hitler brings terror. Spring semester brings the summer vacation, and World History brought me an absolute terror attack. See? I told you I'd sum it all up. And wherever Turd is today, I hope he's enjoying sipping his mimosas and sitting out in the sun, because those singing birds are friends of mine, and should they fly near him, they'll be giving him my regards.

### New Trips, Same old slips

Another summer arrived, my final summer vacation before starting my last semester of college. After a disastrous cruise vacation, I returned to school in full-on breakdown mode. I was suddenly experiencing post-grad syndrome at least ten months too soon. Looking back on it now, I'm ok with it. At least now I'm raring and ready to go without any freak-outs. So amidst the panic attacks and shaky hands, I was enrolled in four courses. My most exciting class was obviously my film class focusing on the horror genre. Well duh, that's a given. I also had to take another theatre course, and I chose Costuming for the stage. To round out my semester I took an English course on Heroines in Literature and Anthropology of

Food. The start of my semester was rough all around because of my physical nerves. I was going through a lot early on. It was difficult to focus on school, but I forced myself to stay on track. I had dilemmas of deciding whether or not to drop out for a semester to clear my head, go to Italy for a month, or commit myself to an institution. Ok, well that last one was never really an option, my pessimism just had me thinking that could be an outcome if I didn't get my shit together. Looking at it now, I realize it was my fear of leaving school and entering the real world. I know now that I've always been in the real world. But back then I was terrified, and for a short while this fear ran my life. I wasn't myself. Watching Buffy didn't even cheer me up, so I must have been really sick. Thankfully with the support of my family, good friends, and my inner determination, I pulled through. To those who helped me (you know who you are), Thanks, I owe you a fruit basket.

So back to school. My Anthropology of Food course looked like fun. But having an odd relationship with food at the time, it proved difficult for me to stick it out. So I dropped the class, the only course in my entire college career that I withdrew from. In my college career I've dealt with learning math on my own, trying to tell if it's

going to rain, and pre-Jesus era Philosophy freak, and yet a class about food had me beat. But I sucked it up and ran with it. Now, I was only taking three courses. And by the end of the semester, I would be thrilled with the outcome.

Heroines, I have to admit, was really boring. We read Jane Austen and other novels featuring strong female characters. But I just didn't connect with them. The Professor was a sweet woman, but I was just bored. It was really easy for me to space out and start thinking about my problems in this class, which didn't help. I'm all about femininity, but sometimes the heroine just proves to be whiny and annoying. I just didn't care about their problems. And maybe it was just the selection. I'd recommend reading Stephen Kings' *The Girl Who Loved Tom Gordon*. And not just because I'm an SK freak, but because this little girl is the ultimate heroine. She's a survivor. She feels alone in the world (even though she actually is lost in the woods) and yet something within her guides her forward. I can relate this girl. My semester was just like her journey to find her way out of the woods. Maybe it wasn't the voice of Tom Gordon in my head, but there was someone telling me to keep going. And *that's* more influential than a bunch of stuffy 18<sup>th</sup> Century gals whining about marriage and social status. Not to say

that the novels aren't great works, because they are. And this is only my opinion. I'm open to disagreements, so please, shoot me an email and we'll debate.

In order to complete my degree requirements to graduate, I needed to participate on a crew for two semesters worth of department productions. What I loved about Hunter is that they understood that as students we have insane schedules. At Queens, they didn't seem to care. With all that I had going on in my life between doctor visits, auditions, school work, and family obligations I was pleased to learn that I would be able to usher several shows and have that count as my RCA's. And I have to say that I had a blast working on these shows. I met some really cool people and truly admired the productions that the students took part in. They worked really hard and were dedicated. Even if some were more skilled than others, I admired how the newer actors were really trying. And maybe ten years from now, they'll be accepting their Emmy's with a Hunter college pin on their purse or tux. You never know right? Ushering these shows during this Fall semester also helped me get the anxiety issues off my mind. It brought me back to what was important to me, acting. How I ever thought that I'd have to give it up is beyond me. Thanks Hunter!

I met some amazing people while working in the Hunter Theatre Department. But I can prove to be too nice and too trusting. I would learn this in my costuming class. In my costuming class I learned I had a newfound love for creating. Not baby-making creation, but character creation. Designing costumes helps bring the character to life. My very pregnant professor (Professor Preggo) was a pretty swank gal. She knew her stuff. She could be tough, and on occasion she could be extremely moody. But in the case of her extreme crabbiness, I just looked at her bump and figured she was probably just having a fat day. Other than that, the class was great. It was a lot of work, which could be tough at times. We would read plays and then have to create costumes for several characters. I believe we had to create like twenty-five costumes for the first play we did. It was tough in the beginning, but once I got the hang of it, I loved it. I wasn't the best, but I tried and had fun putting the wacky images in my head onto paper. I also appreciated the work of my fellow classmates. Some of their ideas were wild and imaginative and others were simple and brilliant. As a creative mind myself, I always enjoy seeing other peoples risks put out there for the world (or in this case, class) to see. I ended

up with an A plus in the class. Even I was surprised. And as a bonus, I had acquired a brand new stalker.

I'm not going to get into too much detail about this person. I won't even reveal their sex, age, or give them a nickname. They are just going to be referred to as IT. Which I guess is a nickname. And yes, I'm an obsessive Stephen King fan, deal with it. IT was a strange person. But I thought that IT and myself had a lot in common. We enjoyed many of the same things and had similar goals. But I soon found out that IT was a bit of a psychopath. I don't believe that IT is a bad person, I just think IT is an extremely strange and troubled person. I hope the best for IT. But I think right now IT doesn't know how to prioritize their life. And I am extremely put off by IT, seeing as how IT had no problem telling me that they were late for class because they had to take a "number two." *Really? I needed to know that because?* And of course, this person has extreme delusions about the business and hard work in general. I just can't really be bothered by people who think things just happen. As someone who has never had things just happen for them, I don't believe in luck. Hard work wins out over slackers any day. IT was also a bit prejudice, which I found kind of funny considering IT wasn't exactly a child of the damned

in all their blonde haired, creepy-eyed glory either. So IT became my additional appendage that semester, and would not leave my side, and kind of stalked my life. But I think I'm free of IT, for now. Who knows what the future holds, but I really hope IT isn't a part of mine. This taught me, that being a nice person is ok, but being too trusting, can prove to be a major pain in one's ass, a backed up number two pain in the ass.

Between all of this I began auditioning outside of school more. It gave me the push back into the business I needed, and now I'm more driven than ever. I also auditioned for another student production. This one, I did not make. But I was still satisfied with the experience. My audition was freakin phenomenal. I don't usually label my auditions as phenomenal. I usually use the words: eh, all right, shitty, ok, decent, I got all my lines right, ect. Usually after an audition, all you can do is leave it all behind the door with the casting directors. But I know that I gave a great reading. And even though I may not have been cast because of politics or what not, I still say that it was one of my best auditions given to date. And I do believe in the saying that *when one door closes, a window opens.* Shortly after not getting the role I was after in this student production, I was sent out for a

professional pilot and began an important business working relationship with an awesome agency of people. So I'd say, to quote a current media darling that I am, *'Winning.'*

Now we get to the fun stuff. My favorite class of the semester, and a close second to my favorite class of my entire college career, was of course Horror Film class. I came into the class with an extremely odd pre-conceived amount of knowledge of the genre already. I knew my Freddy's, my Jason's, and my Pinheads. The professor was a peppy woman, I call here, PinPorn. It may sound strange, but it makes sense to me. Any who, PinPorn knew her stuff and she knew how to teach it. I probably knew more than most the class because I was not only a fan of horror films, but I read up on them like a freak. In fact, I've read about so many horror films, from Wes Cravens early works to Tod Browning's, *Freaks*, and yet haven't seen many of the films I know so much about. PinPorn taught me all the things I needed to know, and elaborated on the things I already did. She showed me scenes that challenged me to look past the gore and to the heart of the genre. That's right, Horror has heart. It's not all about blood, sex, and monsters with odd longings for virgins. Sometimes there's more than meets the eye, or eyes if

you're a giant human eating spider. Filmmakers often use their films to tackle the world's issues of the time. From the violence of the Vietnam War, to the dangers of backpacking in foreign countries, there is always a message behind the carnage. PinPorn taught me that you sometimes need to take a closer look to see what's behind the mask. She also recommended some great horror classics that I had never seen before. She also semi-traumatized me with the film *Cannibal Holocaust*. I do not recommend it, and I do not want to talk about it. My papers in the class were an absolute blast to write. For my final paper, I wrote about the anti-hero in the genre. And I got to use two of my favorite films to prove my point, *An American Werewolf in London* and *The Frighteners*. Another thing that was great about this class is how much I participated. I don't think I've ever raised my hand so much in a class my entire life. I loved it, and I wish I could do it all again. I contemplated failing it so I could take it again, but didn't, I'm too much of a goody goody for that. I'd probably cry even though it would have been pre-conceived. And the final thing I learned was that torture porn isn't pornography with bondage. It's actually a sub-genre. Films like *Hostel* and *Saw* fit into the category of torture porn. And since I've never cared for either torture

or porn, its still my least favorite sub-genre. I witnessed some brutal things in that class, and I loved every blood-soaked minute of it.

Finally, my semester was coming to an end. It was a tough one for me mentally, but I made it through. Now I would be starting the graduation process. I would laugh, I would cry, and I would stick a needle in someone else's eye if they touched my cookies, but I would do it. I would finish college and be on my way to accomplishing bigger goals and eating bigger bowls of ice cream. To end my semester, I took the last school photo I would ever take. I donned the gown and the irritatingly pointy hat and smiled with immense cheesiness while other students passed by and giggled. I've never taken a more surreal picture in all my life. It captures my own realization that life starts *now*, perfectly. Big teeth, wide eyes, and rosy cheeks (both ends). My face hurt for the rest of the week.

It's the final countdown, de dee de dee, de de de de dee, de de de de dee, and so it goes. Spring arrived and I was on my way to finish the race. My last semester had me taking only three courses, just enough credits to

qualify me to graduate. I took Playwriting, my final theatre requirement, Yoga to help me deal with my lingering anxiety, and Children's Lit. Isn't your last semester supposed to be your most difficult? I don't know if that's true for some people, but it couldn't have been more the opposite in my case. I loved this last semester. I had great professors, and was generally interested in all that I learned. Children's Lit allowed me to re-visit such childhood classics as *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* and *Winnie the Pooh*. And I got to write a research paper on *Spider-Man*. Isn't that like every kid's dream? I loved it. And for my final creative project, I let my creative juices take over as I ended writing and illustrating my own children's book called *'Switched, a Childhood dream'*. The class really helped me appreciate the art of the children's story and to read them with a critical eye. Who knew *Peter Pan* was filled with racism, sexism, and ageism.

Yoga was great for my body, mind, and soul. I still do my practice almost every day. It revs me up for my day and stretches out the muscles that need a good stretch. My breathing has improved and I can even put my legs over my head now. Somehow I feel that will come in

handy much later in my life than right now. For now, it's just a neat trick.

Now, I end with my favorite college course of all time. That would be playwriting. I've always been a writer. Writing has fueled my acting, and my acting has always been fueled by my writing. When I first came into the class, I figured we'd workshop on how to properly structure a play, and maybe work on some in class exercises. We did learn what we needed, but we also got to read each other's works in class. It was the perfect environment to work on cold-reading skills. My Professor, who I'll call Dr. Vicious, was one of the greatest most inspiring teachers I've ever had. He noticed my talent for writing and he encouraged it. He did so with respect and constructive criticism that I hold to an extreme degree of awesomeness. He always treated his students with respect and pushed them to access every writing fiber of their being. Dr. Vicious always had the best stories, including the reason why the others students also called him by that nickname. That man knew his stuff, and he knew how to bring out the best in his students. Later on in the semester I had an unfortunate run-in with a motor vehicle. And although I am still suffering the physical damage of that experience, it came as a blessing for my

creative drive. Dr. Vicious told us that anger is always a great *driving* force for creativity. I agree. And excuse my pun in using the term *driving*." When I returned to class after the accident, limping and bandaged, Dr. V wanted to see me after class. I knew I wasn't in trouble since I was always on time, always in class, participated, and my work was well received. I was planning on speaking with him anyway to hand him my doctors' note, but it worked out that he needed to see me. He wanted to know how far along I was with my one-act play, our final in the class. I had used my time in recovery to start it. I knew where it would lead, but I hadn't gotten to the meat of it yet. I spent my creative fuel writing a short mystery story. He mentioned that the department gives out awards to seniors for excellence in various areas. He praised my acting abilities as well as my writing. He wanted to submit me for consideration for an award. I was shocked, and grateful. The only catch, was that he needed a completed work of mine to submit to the other members of the department. I asked him if it would be possible if I could submit my first draft of my one act by Monday. He said if I could do that, it would be great. He wouldn't grade it, just offer me up some advice and see what happens. I've never worked so hard and fast in two days in my life.

I completed my first draft, and edited as best I could that weekend. I gave a hard copy to him after class that Monday. He was actually surprised I got it done, but I could tell he was extremely pleased. He emailed me his thoughts, which were encouraging and helped me edit a bit. Then I re-submitted it. I kept enjoying the class: reading scenes, having other students read mine, and listening to Dr. V's stories. I felt a huge accomplishment just having been asked to submit my work for an award. I figured I probably wouldn't get it, since that's how my life works, but was ecstatic to have been acknowledged. Finally, my creative twisted mind was being recognized. Another week later, Dr. V tells me the department wants me to attend the end of year party, in which they would give out the department awards. He wasn't allowed to tell me anything else, but he looked happy. I thanked him for putting my material out there, and how much it meant to me. He encouraged me to keep writing.

I finished my final draft of my play and finished up all of my other class assignments. The night of the awards came, and I was joined by my best buddy Jason. We enjoyed the show before the party and he was convinced I was going to win the award. I was just happy to be there with my drama peers. I was also a bit nervous

that Jason would pull a Kanye West if I didn't get the award. The time came for Dr. V to give out the award for playwriting. He talked about the award, and then he uttered the magic words, "For her play *Rose, Rough and Ready*." Jason didn't know the title of my play so he was ready to pull a *re-count*. But then Dr. V followed it up with my name and I accepted the award. I had won. I had finally been taken seriously for working so hard. It felt amazing. I felt like I had left something behind. It may not have been much, but it was just the amount of success I needed to prove to myself that maybe I've got something.

Maybe all of this creative fire within me is good for something. Maybe it's just me. It's who I am. People can't change who they are willingly. Change comes in time. And standing there being handed an award for something that was a huge part of *me*, caused me to suddenly have immense flashbacks. I saw Professor Theatre whispering to me that I should be acting. I remember crying into my pillow when McSkanks called me fat. I remember the pain in my bladder when I was stuck on the 7 train, late for Philosophy class. I heard my heart beating out of my chest on the way to the Deans office. And I remembered the reception I got after hosting *Latineopardy*. I saw the faces of all those who helped me through. From my parents, my

holla gals, the trio, and even hot fudge sundae. They were all there. I came a long way from being the girl who cried her first day off to college. But one thing that hasn't changed is my sense of passion. My passion for life and for my art. Some say that there is a fine line between art and real life. But I think they're one in the same. How can something that can be both brutally painful and strikingly beautiful be so different? Life is both and so is art. Art is life, and life is art. College wasn't the beginning of my life and graduating isn't the end. Everything in this life comes to an end. But with every great ending, comes a new beginning. I think it's only fitting that the speaker at my commencement ceremony is going to be the composer of the musical *Avenue Q*, in which the finale sings the lyrics, *Everything in life is only for now.* I think this is beautiful and true.

As I sit here, ready to begin again, who knows what's in store. But I know it's going to be great. I know that I'll cry and I know that I'll laugh. I know that I'll get sick, and I know that I'll be loved. I know that I'll fail and I know that I'll be rewarded. Finally, I know that people will know my name someday, and I know that it will make a difference. College gave me a degree, but it also gave me a new life. The only thing left for me to do, is stand up tall,

get my diploma, and pray to the gods of stability that I don't body surf the entire Hunter College board of trustees in the process. If that does happen, look it up on youtube, comedy is tragic and often times, so is my life.