

PIANO LESSONS

– Alice C.



The tiny hands of a child don't quite fit on the keys of the piano. My fingers used to stumble upon rhythms, clumsily trying to piece together melodies. I spent hours crying on the piano bench in frustration the first time I'd ever sat on it, legs dangling over the side, insisting I would never learn to play.

But my dad always insisted back, "Yes you can."

The stage lights always seem to burn fiercely onto the stage, a flood of blinding white.

Dressed in a sparkling yellow dress, my heart pounded anxiously in my chest as I took a deep breath, reminding myself what chords came first in the Mozart Sonata I was about to perform from memory. I looked out into the auditorium, but the audience looked faceless from where I sat. I'd been nervous to take the stage before my first concert, afraid I'd forget the piece, afraid I couldn't play it well. But my dad assured me, "Yes you can."

In a tiny room, a single judge sits in a chair next to the piano, a pen in her hand and sheets of paper strewn across the table in front of her.

Playing a song for a single person had never been so nerve-wracking before. I stopped myself from twisting the skirt of my dark blue dress as I entered the contest room for the first time, hiding my anxiety behind a smile. I sat down behind the piano, carefully placing my fingers on the cold keys. My foot rested on the pedal naturally, and I pushed a strand of curled hair behind my ear, heart still racing and mind wondering if I could really impress this judge who had likely been listening to students much more talented than me for hours. But I shook those thoughts away, remembering what my dad would say, "Yes you can." The nerves turned into adrenaline, rhythm flowed naturally and the melody reminded me why I loved to play music as it told a story of great trial, sorrow, and hope, without any words at all.

For me, the piano will always be the symbol of how to live my life. I never thought I could learn it, and I did fail, so many times. But it taught me failure was not the end. The truly greatest moments are those of triumph after suffering defeat after defeat. I learned not to be afraid of diving into things I never thought I could do because they seemed difficult, because a life not spent taking on challenges is one not spent experiencing life. And most importantly, I learned not to discourage myself. There are so many people in the world who already try to discourage you, so don't be one of them. Live confidently, striving for success and taking each failure as a lesson and a step closer to becoming who you choose to define yourself as.

*ActuallySheCan*SM