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Origin Story Part 2

Each time I've had to write a personal narrative in recent years, I've chosen the same one over and over; I was an art student from a STEM high school. I've let where I come from define who I am but forgotten that I've changed drastically each year since then. I've outgrown my origin story. That's okay. In fact, that's a good thing.

If you ask anyone I know, one of my defining characteristics is that I am a planner. I think two, five, ten steps ahead. After going through a tough few years, I had promised myself that I would never go back to a depressive unproductive state again. That I'd be a new me. Along the way, I was so focused on who I thought I should be and what my plans were. I had it all figured out. Until eight months ago, when everything I had built for myself came crashing down.

It was a normal day of spring semester junior year. I was busy as always with a full schedule that included classes, an internship, and leading three organizations (one of which competed nationally, and another that puts on a gala with hundreds of attendees). No biggie. I had emailed previous professors and internship bosses to catch up on what was going on in our lives. I planned a coffee because I wanted to ask for my previous professor's advice on the job and internship search. I wanted to pick his brain of where to apply that I hadn't already and what roles to apply for. A direction.

I bought coffee for the two of us, sat down at a small round table in the corner, and waited. The door opened and blew in a gust of cold air as my professor shivered, unzipping his heavy winter coat. It started like any other meeting. We talked a little bit about his career and the changes he went through and then he asked about me. I pulled out my resume and a pen for the expected edits and list of companies to apply.

Then came the long string of questions. What do I want in a few years? What are the skills I think out have that would fit in a job? Where did I previously apply? Why do I want to be in this

industry? I thought those questions were going to be easy but then I couldn't figure out how to answer them. I explained that I still was trying to figure out where I fit.

I remembered to ask about CBX, where he previously worked, and a place I had visited a few times before. I loved it there. It was the perfect environment that I desperately wanted to be a part of. He laughed, remembered his comments on seeing the gears in my head turning and my eyes light up when I walked around. I was confused for a moment about why they didn't have an internship application process. He said he would forward my resume and give his recommendation, but that they only hire from three schools. My heart sank. How am I supposed to break through if no one will give me a chance? I knew that even entry-level positions ask for two to five years of experience and look for well-known companies when scanning through stacks of resumes. He saw I started to get panicked and told me not to get discouraged because I was very qualified for someone my age, but that it is a very tight world.

I was trying not to let any emotion through as we finished our conversation. When I left the coffee shop and started walking home, I replayed the conversation through in my head over and over. I got so frustrated, I started shaking through my body and felt my face get hot. Tears started to stream down my face as I thought that I would never be good enough, no one would see that I am so excited about what I do, that I would work so hard to prove myself. What did I need to change to get them to see that? I had tried asking professors for contacts, the company application process, job fairs, any way I could but nothing seemed to work. I feel so alone and hopeless in the process because my family doesn't understand the industry. Even though my friends have become my support system, Parsons can make it seem like we are all competing against each other.

This made me question my ability, career path, and entire future. Everything rode on this application process. Everyone has always said that "junior year summer is the biggest" and "you need a big name on my resume or no one will notice you." So I put so much pressure on myself and my value.

Why do I let one moment of doubt get to me? One sad moment and I get into a funk — can't sleep, not productive or focused. Looking back, I've had a lot of moments like this one in the last eight months. I can't help but think about the future. If I don't know the next step it gives me anxiety. But I can't put my self-worth into whether I get a certain job or not. I don't have to have a stiff upper lip. I can ask for help. I can appreciate the small accomplishments. I can open myself up and talk to friends or family.

In the spur of the moment, I had called my roommate, who reminded me that I do have skills and confidence. But if I forget that and stop trying, then I don't even have a chance. "You've got to

be the baddest bitch in the room,” she said, “if you don’t believe in yourself then nobody will believe in you.”

In times like this, so many others face the same demons I do. You’d think this realization would be obvious. Say it with me, “I am not alone.” I realized that if I didn’t talk about it, I wouldn’t know others go through the same thing. We all think one moment is this impending doom. The closer and closer we come to graduation the more it is counting down like a ticking clock.

So I knew that I just had to push through. If people don’t see your value, you have to show them your value. I’m not a religious or spiritual person but I believe in the power of positive thinking. If one opportunity didn’t work out, it is because it wasn’t meant to be and some things can be a blessing in disguise. I am going to be myself, work hard, and persist because eventually the way that they are supposed to. Change is inevitable.