

*"Did you steal that from Mommy?"* Zoza whispers to me as I stifle giggles, sitting down on the soft, beige, carpet of my little sister's room. In my hands is a tiny little podium that I had carefully lugged all the way up the staircase like a skilled ninja (or so I thought, at the young age of seven).

"Mhm," I confirm, setting down the little podium in front of her. "Now you can be a real teacher, because you've got the right equipment!"

"Equipment?" Zoza repeats, furrowing her brow in confusion.

"The right things," I clarify, setting up her stuffed animals in neat little rows as I simulate a classroom on her bedroom floor.

"I don't think I want to play teacher anymore," Zoza admits but I continue to set up the plushies in those neat little rows. "Basile," she whines, repeating, "I don't want to play this!"

"But I went and got that for you!"

"I never asked you to!"

"Come on, this'll be fun!"

"But I don't think I want to be a teacher."

"Well, then, what do you want to be?"

"A ballerina!"

I gaze over the neat little rows and then back toward my sister, turning over this revelation in my mind.

"Ok," I resign. "Well, then lead this like a ballet classroom."

"You'll be my assistant," she smiles, handing me one of her toy microphones. I smile at her as we direct our imaginary classroom, happy that I salvaged playtime.