

## Flowers in a Crystal Vase

In the corner of my studio on First Avenue behind the Gem Store deep within the maze of alleyways that created a web that trapped too many it sat: flowers in a crystal vase.

Green, yellow, purple and pink flowers with a floral and fresh lemon aroma engulfed and illuminated that corner of my studio. They stood in a glittering crystal vase like a Star Wars lightsaber glowing in the darkness of my studio.

We all have dreams. Dreams create hope for the future. We all have ambitions. Ambition creates motivation. But we do not all have the talent. Talent is the skill that manifests the dream into reality.

But are we born with talent, or can talent be learnt?

We all want to be somebody. Some want to be singers. Some want to be sports stars. Some want to be doctors. Some want to be chefs.

But I, I wanted to be an artist.

To plan, to sketch, to paint. My tools are simple: a pencil, a brush, paints, a canvas.

To paint is to create and to create is to inspire, motivate, transform.

To be an artist I wanted, but to be an artist I struggled.

Sitting in front of my white canvas and with my magicless wand in my hand, I stared into the abyss of my own darkness.

My canvas...blank. My thoughts...blank. My wand...powerless.

To be an artist I wanted, but to be an artist I stagnated. Standing at the window. Observing the people like ants running up and down the alleyway like the delta of the Nile in different directions. I needed inspiration but no inspiration came.

To be an artist I wanted, but to be an artist I wondered. I picked up my wand and pleaded with it to begin drawing. But it refused. I started to question the loyalty of the wand, "was its allegiance to another wizard."

Engulfed with self-doubt drowning in the abyss of my own darkness, my own doubt...I sat. I stared at the illuminating vase and flowers sipping my green latte and transcended to a garden. Far, far away.

To be an artist I wanted, but to be an artist I had to imagine.

A secret garden. No abyss. No darkness.

Only mockingbirds' singing, flowers blossoming, the laughter and chatting of children, and the tantalising smell of fresh cherries and strawberries.

I sat on the metallic bench, took out my sketch book and my pencil. I sketched.

To be an artist I wanted, but to be an artist I had to strive.

A garden...a secret garden of my own creation. My wand, infused with a mythical power, began to draw. To weave. To create.

To be an artist I wanted, but to be an artist I needed to believe.

To believe in myself. To believe in my imagination. To believe in my ability. The Flowers in a Crystal Vase I painted.

To be an artist I wanted, and an artist I am.

My story “Flowers in a Crystal Vase” is about an aspiring artist who is struggling to become an artist. My central moral of my story was “never lose hope.” Throughout my picture book, the yellow frame symbolically represents hope similar to the yellow brick road from the film “The Wizard of Oz.” Moreover, I want my audience to understand that through resilience and determination they can achieve their goals.

The writing of my story was inspired by many other composers and texts. For instance, I made intertextual references to “Harry Potter” through references to the “wand”. In my story, the “wand” was the paint brush and the paint brush – being the main tool of an artist – was the tool used for creating. However, through the intertextual reference to the “Secret Garden” I wanted my audience to understand that it is not just the tools and talent that matters but rather your imagination and your own belief in yourself.

The motif of “To be an artist I wanted, but to be an artist I...” was inspired by Shakespeare’s “Hamlet” in which Hamlet famously stated, “To be or not to be:

that is the question". Here, I wanted my audience to understand that the demons that prevent our growth and development are mostly internal and that we needed to defeat our own doubt to be successful.