O curses, curses, wherefore art thou curses?

By Jessa Bateman

stood, eyes closed, as part of the circle onstage. My right arm was crossed over my left, and I held hands with two people I barely knew. The only sound was deep breathing as we all inhaled and exhaled in unison.

I tried to ignore the peculiar feeling settling in my gut. This was the craziest thing I had ever been a part of. The air felt electric, alive with something ancient and unnamable.

Our director told the person to her left to pass the squeeze. They squeezed the hand to their right. It went around the circle, which was still silent except for breathing.

The squeeze arrived at our director. “In every theater,” Asia Nared began.

“In every theater,” we echoed.

We repeated the statements. It took me a moment to realize that the full phrase was, “In every theater, there is a ghost of the past, that the full phrase was, “In every theater,” we echoed.

Nared began.

“In every theater,” Asia

To make any sort of sense.

The reasoning behind a curse cannot be understood until one joins the department that believes in it.

The drama club manages to perform at least two productions per school year, typically at least one play and one musical. From the actors and run crew that appear onstage, to the light and sound tech crew members that are never seen, almost everything is run by students.

Success depends on everyone pulling their weight. Actors must learn their lines and choreography (officially known as “blocking”). Tech has to construct and paint the sets, along with ensuring that the light and sound systems work, the stage is properly lit, and we have all needed musical selections.

Productions operate on tight schedules, particularly when unexpected events occur. I joined run crew about a month before opening night. Jennifer Castello, drama club advisor, had a family emergency when her grandmother died. She was absent for several days. A week and a half before opening night, Castello injured her knee and had to miss a day. She could not find someone to cover drama club that evening.

Blaming a curse for all the issues that could possibly occur is easier than admitting that there is no real reason for these problems. Building sets requires the use of power tools such as saws and drills. An unforeseen occurrence, like the saw blade chipping, is easier to blame on circumstance since nobody was directly responsible for the accident. Other bizarre events, such as only having three working drills, could be due to a curse.

I have absolutely no idea how we chipped that blade, or how our lack of drills had gone unnoticed.

And, well, everything that could possibly go wrong escalates from there. Incorrectly assemble a set piece, requiring us to re-saw and re-drill it? Check. Spend three and a half hours practicing the balcony scene? Check. Get a prop lantern, open it, and discover that it will not work? Check. Buy a bed for Juliet, only to find that it doesn’t fit the steampunk/Victorian theme? Check. Finish the periactoids two days before opening night? Check.

At least we got Halloween presents – new paint, new paintbrushes, a drill, a broom, a dustpan. The tech crew celebrated for five minutes before getting back to work.

Noemi Acosta-Perez, assistant stage manager, loaned the department her bedframe for the three performance days so the bed looked better. We found two decorative brown pillows in the basement storage room called the “Dungeon” and placed them in a white pillowcase to create a realistic-looking pillow.

I had heard about the “Friday Night Curse” before joining the department. Basically, Friday night has the worst performances and the highest possibilities for disaster.

I believe it. My periactoid started tipping while I moved it during the 3:00 Friday show. It would have squashed me if Katelyn Stewart, my periactoid partner, and I had not stopped it. My heart raced until the performance was over.

I later asked some friends who had attended that performance if they had seen it fall. They had not.

I could practically hear Handel’s “Hallelujah” chorus in the background.

The drama department has bizarre numbers of supplies. They have two major storage spaces, the basement room known as the “Dungeon” and the scene shop backstage.

Sure, it was the closest I have ever come to death or a major injury involving broken bones, but the audience didn’t notice.

There is a massive possibility for error in theatre, and the chance of a malfunction or other problem cannot be ruled out until the production is over. Actors can get sick, the sound and light boards can glitch, costumes can rip, someone can mess up a line or their blocking or miss their cue, a prop can fall at the absolute worst moment possible, run crew can forget to take a prop offstage, microphone batteries can run out, someone can get wounded during a fight scene.

The old drama moniker is correct, though. We will overcome all the problems, all the setbacks, all the challenges thrown at us, simply because the show must go on.