

A Story Series by Angie Thompson

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# Becoming Samarah

A voice found. A self discovered. A journey still unfolding

## A Quiet Home, A Growing Spark

Samarah Robinson grew up in a home filled with love, gentle rhythms, and the steady strength of her mother and grandmother. While her immediate surroundings were calm and nurturing, her extended family—grandparents, cousins, aunts, and uncles—brought warmth, laughter, and high-energy conversation to every gathering. Amid their vibrant personalities, Samarah stood out differently: observant, thoughtful, and quietly imaginative. She preferred the background to the spotlight, content to take it all in. But even in her stillness, something vibrant stirred beneath the surface—a longing to express herself in her own way, in her own time.

## The Audition That Changed Everything

That time came in 2013, when she was just six. Samarah was attending Westside Community Center, a familiar place where her grandmother cooked

and where she always felt encouraged and seen. One day, a producer from Children's Musical Theatre visited and invited the kids to audition for *A Little Princess*. It sparked something. Samarah was intrigued—and brave enough to say yes.

"I brought home the papers and told my mother I wanted to audition," she remembered. "She couldn't believe it because I was usually so quiet. But she encouraged me to do it."

Head down, she sang "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star." Her voice was barely above a whisper, but the sincerity of that small voice caught the producers' attention. She was cast in the ensemble—and with that, a journey began.

## From Ensemble to Expression

The first rehearsals were in the echoing gym at Madison Middle School. "It was intimidating," Samarah said. "I was only six, and the room felt huge. I wasn't the lead, just one of many." The fluorescent lights buzzed overhead; the seats creaked with



Samarah Robinson

movement. But over time, what once felt overwhelming began to feel like home. "Eventually, I started to feel like I could own that space. It wasn't just a gym—it became my stage."

Over the next 12 years, Samarah performed in more than 13 productions with Children's Musical Theatre and Bartlesville High School, including *Peter Pan*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Mary Poppins*, *Oklahoma*, and *The Little Mermaid*. Whether in ensemble or lead roles, she grew—learning discipline, confidence, and the power of telling stories out loud. Theatre, she realized, didn't just

teach her technique—it shaped her voice.

“Theatre gave me a safe place to practice being bold,” she said. “When I stepped into a role, I could try on confidence until it started to feel like mine.”

As her characters became braver and more expressive, so did she. In rehearsal rooms, she learned to speak up. In classrooms, she grew comfortable being heard. “The more I showed up in character,” she said, “the more I figured out how to show up as myself.”

### **The Sting of Rejection, the Strength to Try Again**

Of course, growing in confidence didn’t mean it was easy. Auditioning became part of her rhythm—equal parts excitement and vulnerability. “Thousands apply. Only a few are accepted,” she said, referencing top programs like Carnegie Mellon and Elon University, where musical theatre acceptance rates often dip below 5%. “Even when you give it everything, sometimes the answer is still no.”

That rejection can sting deeply. “You start to wonder, Was I not good enough? Did I do something wrong?” she admitted. “If you’re not careful, those questions start to shape how you see yourself.”

But over time, Samarah has

“I think about six-year-old me—how brave she was, how happy she was just to sing. I remember the joy I felt—and the delight the audience felt. That helps me move forward.”

learned to face those doubts with perspective. “My mom always says, ‘A no doesn’t mean never—it means not yet.’” That mindset helps her stay rooted in joy. “I think about six-year-old me—how brave she was just to sing. That joy carries me forward.”



As “Miss Trunchbull” in *Matilda*

### **Matilda’s Miss Trunchbull and a Test of Grit**

When she was cast as Miss Trunchbull in *Matilda*, Samarah faced one of her most demanding roles yet—vocally intense, physically imposing, and emotionally layered. “I had major imposter syndrome,” she said. “But after weeks of repetition, sweat, and character work, I found my rhythm. It pushed me—and I was proud of what I could do.”

### **Eulalie and the Permission to Go Big**

In 2023, Samarah stepped into the role of Eulalie Mackecknie Shinn in *The Music Man*—a flamboyant, full-volume character that demanded comedic timing and outsized energy. “The hat I wore had a bird in it,” she laughed. “It was completely outrageous—but that’s why I loved it.”

Playing Eulalie gave Samarah permission to loosen up and embrace the joy of performing big. “Putting on the costume felt like dress-up with full permission to be loud and ridiculous,” she said. “That role helped me shake off hesitation and reminded me that fun is part of the work too.”

### **From Shrek Jr. to Fiona: A Full-Circle Role**

Later that year, she was cast as Princess Fiona in *Shrek the Musical*. Years earlier, she had performed in *Shrek Jr.* as a child. Returning to the full-length Broadway version—this time as the lead—felt deeply affirming.

“Fiona is bold, romantic, and funny,” Samarah said. “Playing

her let me bring everything I've learned—vocally, emotionally, physically—to one place.” It wasn't just a role. It was a return—with new depth, new voice, and new self-belief.

## A New Chapter at Oklahoma City University

Today, Samarah is pursuing a double major in musical theatre and vocal performance at Oklahoma City University—one of the most selective programs in the country.

“When I auditioned at OCU, I felt seen,” she said. “The faculty were warm, encouraging, and honest. They challenge me in all the right ways.”

College hasn't been without pressure—private lessons, music theory, and the push to stand out can be exhausting. But Samarah reminds herself to take it one moment at a time. “Before every performance, I tell myself: You can do it. You've done it before.”



As “Aviatrix” in *The Drowsy Chaperone*

## Why Storytelling Matters

When asked what it means to be a storyteller, she doesn't hesitate. “It's about connection,” she said. “I want people to feel seen, understood, and not alone. If I can bring someone joy or comfort—even for a moment—that's enough.”

That joy shows up in surprising places. “That ridiculous Eulalie hat still makes me laugh,” she added. “It reminded me to enjoy the moment. And sometimes, that's the breakthrough.”

## Blooming Anyway

If her journey were a stage prop? “A flower,” she said. “Not perfect—some bent petals, maybe a few scars. But I'm blooming anyway. I'm becoming.”

In five years, she hopes people say she brought warmth and light to every room—that she offered others the same encouragement she received. “I know what it feels like not to be seen,” Samarah said. “So I try to be the kind of person who makes others feel seen. Because that's what changed everything for me.”

When a quiet girl learns to speak, sings to heal, and shines so others feel safe—that's not just performance.

That's transformation.



### Author's Note:

This story is based on the personal experiences and reflections of Samarah Robinson. The views expressed are her own and may not represent those of affiliated institutions or organizations. This feature offers a glimpse into one individual's journey and the transformative role musical theatre has played in her life.

## About the Writer and Permissions

Angie Thompson is a fundraising strategist, published writer, and brand storyteller who helps mission-driven people move from generic messaging to powerful communication that inspires action. Her work has appeared in *The Office Professional Magazine* and many regional publications. She believes every good mission deserves to be seen—and remembered. Learn more at [AngieThompsonConsulting.com](https://AngieThompsonConsulting.com).

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