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Jellybeans and Popcorn

Children grow up in places like down in their basement playing dolls, some at the park down the street, and others at their grandma's house ten minutes from home. As adults, everyone knows that place. It's where a good collection of their childhood memories is held, tucked away, unable to be forgotten. That place shaped the direction their lives took to become who they are today. As children we are mounds of clay, waiting to be molded and manipulated; the influences that smooth us into our future define who we will become. For me, that special place was somewhat strange. I grew up at the movie theatre.

The AMC Lennox Town Center 24 movie theatre was the place to be. It sat on Kinnear Rd., just on the edge of my home city, Upper Arlington, where the streets began to morph into the urban campus life of the Ohio State University. On one side connected a long strip of shops and restaurants cemented in their spots and on the other ran an old railroad track where trains traveled often. If my friends and I picked a movie that happened to be showing in a theatre room on the train side, we'd often hear the loud chug of the train-engine plugging away over the steel track. It was always hard for us to tell if the noisy ruckus was the train or another loud movie next door; we'd only know for sure when the seats began to vibrate beneath our bottoms and the walls slightly shake from the train's power.

In a child's eyes, the movie theatre was simply *grand*. Although only two stories on the inside, it looked at least three high from its exterior. The front of the theatre bowed out in a curve with tall rectangular pillars poking from the top like spokes on a fairytale castle. The parking lot stretched far out in front of the theatre in uncountable rows, as if the movie theatre were a barn overlooking its vast fields of corn. On a Friday or Saturday night, finding a parking spot was near impossible. In the winter, which was a particularly good time for movies, the theatre's neon lights of purple, pink and blue illuminated the iced pavement that was always cracked into crumbling potholes. The snow and slush collected in mounds, scattered about, colored gray from the blacktop.

Whenever there was a big movie coming out, the theatre would prepare for the crowds of people that would undoubtedly cover the sidewalk and street out front. The dedicated fans that would show up on these crazed nights were far beyond passionate supporters; but how could you blame them—who doesn't love movies? Often times these fans were about to see words on a page from their favorite books turn into visual works of art for hours of enjoyment. Movies were pure magic. Sometimes they were even about magic.

Ever since 2001 when I was in first grade and the first Harry Potter movie came out, I absolutely had to attend all of the seven following Harry Potter movie premieres. I recall as a young first-grade girl, my dad took all of my siblings and me out for a big Friday night to see the new movie interpretation of the first much-loved book. It was the first day showing of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* and this was a big event for us as kids; there was something about the movies that just held

our attention so easily. Grasping our hands, my dad walked us past the ticket lady and into the huge and open common area. Bright lights of different colors lit up the hanging uneven panels that made up the retro ceiling. From the center hung a large, metal, spherical globe, and on it neon lights spelled out, "AMC Entertainment." The carpet is still the same today as it was back then—a dark royal red decorated with confetti shaped designs of bright colors. I inhaled the unmistakable butter and salt smell of fresh movie-theatre popcorn as I watched swarms of people in dark robes and round glasses create a buzz with their chatter, making their way to their theatre room. Throughout the movie my dad complained about a headache from the loud wizardry volume, while one of my brothers and I snacked on the Harry Potter jellybeans you could only buy from the movie theatres. For a reason I no longer understand, the flavors boogers, canned dog food and moldy cheese were overly enticing to our young pallets.

As I outgrew the jellybeans and gained enough years to reach middle school, the Lennox became the cool place to hang out with friends. Outside the theatre rooms in the hallway, arcade games from Dance Dance Revolution to the classic claw game lined the walls and always kept us with pockets full of quarters. My favorite arcade toy was the first one along the wall of the hallway on the left, the picture-strips camera. For the cost of two dollars, my friends and I would pile into the two by three foot little room and squish our butts together onto one little seat. A timer would count down four times to take a picture of our wacky poses and faces. This machine was the first I'd ever used of its kind, and it started my collection of picture strips that today reaches almost sixty. In addition to picture strips I also found it

amusing to hold onto my movie tickets from every movie I'd gone to because printed on each of the at least three-hundred tickets I've kept by now, is the time, date and movie title. To me these tickets are a little piece of my past—whenever I flip through them I not only see the changes of ticket styles from the original red and blue to the light orange that now colors the tickets, but I can know exactly where I was and what movie I was watching on certain dates that I've long since forgotten.

One ticket and movie I will never forget was from *Indiana Jones* on the night of Friday the thirteenth, 2007. My friend and I sat side-by-side in the farthest back corner of the movie theatre, sandwiched between our dates. Spilled popcorn covered the floor, the lights were dim and the movie theatre was barely packed, only sprinkled with a few groups of people. My date and I whispered back and forth, as I giggled with my best friend about what we thought might happen. At approximately eight o'clock on that Friday night, my date held my hand and leaned towards me to ask for a kiss; I answered him by tilting my head and shyly leaning in. A few minutes later my best friend followed my lead and did the same with her date. Both my best friend and I had our first kisses in the back of a movie at the Lennox theatre on Friday the thirteenth.

Although the AMC Lennox Town Center 24 movie theatre is a public place where thousands of people have and continue to shuffle in and out, I still feel that it is mine—the movie theatre is a part of me, and I feel that I own part of it. Movies have and will forever surround me. Not only do I constantly quote lines from movies in my everyday life, but I also experienced things there that no one can ever take from me. Even though it's frustrating that today the tickets are a steep ten dollars

from the original four dollars and fifty cents, the comfortableness of home that I feel there will forever keep me coming back. The Lennox will continue to change, but the childhood connection I feel to it will not, because I grew up at the movie theatre.