

I grew up just a little further south over the state line in Maryland,
up in horse and cow country.
And I don't think I'd ever seen anything more beautiful
in my whole life
than the big boy tomatoes in my Pap-paw's garden.
Perfectly fat and ripe.....
that if you leave on the vine 8 more minutes
it will split itself in half with its own juicy goodness.
(I really like a good tomato.)

At least I had never seen anything more beautiful.....
Until.....

I went away to college and at UMD
and took a dance class that required me to attend a live ballet performance.

SO I figured that if I had to watch someone ELSE dance,
it had better be good.
I got tickets to see the Stuttgart ballet straight from Germany at the Kennedy Center.
I don't think I'd ever even been there before.
So I don't know why it seemed like such a right idea,
except that the student tickets rate was dirt cheap.

And what I remember so vividly
was just one number
that seemed to me to be about everything in life.
Birth and death.
Pain and glory.
Missing... really, longing for loved ones....
and being so brave and even helpful in the face of danger and tragedy.
(Rings particularly relevant today.)
It really seemed like that one piece did all that in under like 10 minutes.
With no talking at all.

I remember that I cried....
Actually,
I sobbed so hard that I remember blowing my nose,
in public,
on the skirt of my little summer sundress.
It was probably the single most beautiful thing I've ever seen in my entire life.
It made me breathless.
It was so achingly gorgeous it made me feel confused.

For the very reasonable price of a \$7 student ticket.

So i'm not sure that's exactly the kind of story you are looking for
(even if it is mixed in with a little gross.....as so many truly beautiful things are.)

But i'm planting tomatoes every year these days
to see if I can grow a tomato prettier than my grandfather.
I'm not even close in all truth.
But my failures are delicious.