

I've never understood why people cry on the podium.

Why, after winning gold at a gymnastics meet, in the middle of all that glory, there are tears and not plain, simple happiness.

When I think about the different girls I've watched step up to take their place at the very top spot, receiving flowers and waving at the cheering crowd, I can't help but wonder how many of them cry crocodile tears, faking emotion because that's what people expect, or because it makes for a better photo opp.

Take Sarah Walker of the Jamestown Gymcats. She's the best tumbler in the state, but she's better known for chewing out teammates in public than for her double twist into a punch front tuck on floor. Then there's Jennifer Adams, probably the biggest standout on the uneven parallel bars Rhode Island has seen in a decade. But she shrieks at the top of her lungs during rivals' routines to psych them out, just before someone dismounts from the beam or starts her run for the vault. Jennifer Adams is merciless. Not to mention without class.

Put Sarah or Jennifer in that number one spot, though, and tears automatically fall.

I don't get it.

Then again, it's never been me up there.

It's not that I don't want it as badly as the other girls. Believe me, I do. I want gold so much I'd eat it for breakfast if it would make a difference. Sprinkle it on my spaghetti like Parmesan cheese and pour it over my ice cream like it's hot fudge. I'd even coat myself head to toe in gold paint if it meant getting to march up to that number one spot and duck my head so the judge can drape that medal around my neck.

If gold medal glory *does* ever happen to me, Joey Jordan of the Gansett Stars, lover of beam and floor, hater of the vault, proud wearer of a sparkly leotard, tears will not be on the menu that day. I'll be smiling as big as ever up on that podium.

I promise.

That's just who I am.