



*The
Ballerina
and the
Doctor*

**Sex Sports in the
2016 Olympics**

*A Romance
by
Rosella Bachelli*

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Dedication

To All

“As the abbot said, ‘We were strangers, only till we met.’”

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Chapter 1

Hard Facts

My toes were aching, my calves were cramping, and rivulets of sweat were trickling from pointe, pirouette, and fouette en tournant practice. Peeling off my wet yumis and seeking solace in the showers, hot jets needled my breasts, inflaming my nipples into turgid pegs and fading my mind into fairyland.

Am I dreaming or what? Involuntary, the scene replays itself for the millionth time . . .

I can be good at something! 'Cause I have the perception to know truth, and the will to achieve perfection.

Except it's not a dream . . . *I feel the power within, anxious to explode; the killer instinct, restless to execute; the savage impulses, bursting the reins of self-control; and love, leaking from my heart, dying to elevate you from your world.*

The shrill tone of the pencil-shaped secretary interrupted this haunting trance, returning me from the scene of fairyland, that again never shows the end.

Good at what? Fading to obscurity . . . to the reality of the reception room at the Royale Ballet Company.

“Miss Simpson, the director will see you now.”

“Thank you.”

“Please come this way,” she said, ushering me to Dame Perkins's office.

“Please take a seat, dear, I'll only be a minute.”

I sat in a red-cushioned, Victorian chair with engravings on the armrests while Dame Perkins spoke on the phone.

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On the wall behind her were black and white portraits of Maria Tallchief and Melissa Haydn. On the left wall there were two photographs: an almost life-size picture of Ninette de Valois, founder of the Royale Ballet School, and a gilded-framed one of Robert Helpmann and Anna Pavlova, sitting among a group of dancers from the Vic Wells Company, ancestors of the school.

“Well, Melissa, how are you coming along?”

“I am fine, thank you.”

“You requested this interview since last week; obviously you must have something rather important on your mind.”

“Please do not think I am being impetuous, but I auditioned for the part of the Sugar Plum Fairy in *The Nutcracker*, which we are performing in the Christmas season. Why was I turned down? During the three years I have been a full-time apprentice at the school, I have auditioned for lead roles more than twelve times, and each time I was turned down. Why? I have seen dancers who have been at the school for a shorter time and who are less dedicated than me, yet they’ve been given principal dancer and soloist roles. The only part I have been given in these three years was an insignificant character part, short as a wink.”

“I am very sorry, Melissa. You have shown great dedication to ballet and have been one of the hardest working students here. That’s true!”

“Please forgive me for questioning the company’s decision, but I really need to know to know if I have a future here. I’ve just turned twenty and my parents have made great sacrifices to finance my ballet career. You must tell me the truth.”

“Well, since you insist, I will tell you the real reasons why your auditions have not brought you any success. How you will take it, I am not sure.”

“Thank you.”

“When we accepted you as a ten-year-old private candidate, who traveled three times each week from Sheffield for instruction, we carried out a physical evaluation of your physique based on calculations of weight, height, torso, and hand and leg

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measurements, with the intention to train you for a professional career as a ballerina. I am afraid our computations have proven to be imperfect. Though your progress and development were very impressive during your teens, when you turned sixteen a latent genetic characteristic started to emerge.”

“What are you talking about, Dame Perkins? Is it something I inherited from my parents?”

“You see, Melissa, the body of the ballet dancer is an instrument, but unlike the sitar for example, whose frets can be repositioned or tunings altered to express an infinite number of scales, harmonic overtones, and micro tones, the ballet dancer cannot alter the length of her limbs, modify the proportions of a long or short back, or lessen the weight of the torso, which the hips and legs must carry through variations of postures and sequence transitions.”

“What are you going on about? Just tell me what’s wrong.”

“A prima ballerina understands her body as an instrument; she has made it subservient and submissive to her will. She has mastered the art of projecting her kinesthetic energy to make the audience experience the emotions that she proposes: suppressing their neo-cortical activity; suspending their normal perception; and activating their limbic system. The prima ballerina makes them caress her shapes; feel her sadness or joy; imagine her Heaven and Hell; and in the case of specific character roles, erotize their desires. Her body is an instrument transmitting vibrations through movement; affecting and transforming the perception of the audience and elevating their consciousness above mundane existence.”

“What characteristic are you talking about, Dame Perkins?”

“It isn’t often that we have a candidate who at ten fulfilled all our requirements of physical attributes, and then develops an unsuitable physique at twenty.”

“Can you be more specific, Dame Perkins?”

“When we accepted you as a full-time apprentice at sixteen years, your bosom appeared below average, but during these

last four years the growth of your breasts has accelerated. You possess a short torso and very narrow hips, which has to carry the weight of a 34D-inch bustline, and it'll be extremely difficult for you master the technique required of a principal dancer to perform ballets, such as *Rite of Spring*, *Les Sylphides*, *Swan Lake*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Mayerling*, *Antigone*, *Decadence*, *Pas de Deux*, *Aida*, *Exactitude*, *Giselle*, *Nutcracker*, *Coppelia* and *Persephone*, etc.”

She had pushed me off the top of the Dubai Tower. . . . Bang! Hitting the ground in a million splinters of shattered emotions, I fell into a silence, so loud you could smell death.

“Are you saying I could never become a principal dancer with an established company?”

“If I may go on. . . . For example, during your audition for the lead role in *La Fille Malgardee*, the director pointed out that during your ‘grand battements derriere’ and ‘arabesque’ movements, you resorted to twisting your hips, destroying the technical line of symmetry and revealing a faulty, precarious sense of balance. He added ‘her aesthetic style was tasteless’ and ‘her protruding chest created an ugly prominence.’ This genetic feature is also dangerous, because the extra weight of your large breasts may injure your spine. Many years ago, I was chatting with Selia Spargen, who has written extensively on ‘Variables in Predicting Growth in a Ballerina’s Physique,’ and she suggested that there would be little improvement of strength and technique in short-torso and narrow-hip students like you.”

Nervously, I was trying to dodge the raining shower of sharp splinters intent on piercing me here, there, and everywhere, and despite the tears dripping down my cheeks, I summoned the will to speak.

“What am I to do? I have been a student since ten at the Royale Ballet and suddenly you tell me I haven’t got a future in ballet.”

“I am sorry, Melissa, but we failed to predict the physical changes that occurred in the last four years.”

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Taking a box of tissue from Dame Perkins, I mopped up my tears of painful disappointment. “Thanks. What advice can you give to me?”

“The fact is you possess a structural defect: a lack of balance between the upper and lower half of your body, which will hamper your technical development and prevent you from attaining the ‘slyph’ or ‘svelte’ physique, currently in vogue with the great ballet companies. It would be nearly impossible for you to develop and combine the athletic strength and vigor of Maria Tallierchief, the strident distinct power lines of Melissa Haydkn, or the artistic and exquisite perfection of Galina Ulanova. This is a difficulty that cannot be overcome with training, perhaps only by surgery. However, there are other questions you need to consider before making a decision: What are the possible negative effects of undergoing surgical breast reduction? How will your ballet training be affected after you have had surgery?”

“Dame Perkins, do you think I should undergo surgery?”

“This is a first for me, Melisa. Never before in my forty years in ballet have I been in want of a definite answer. Ultimately, you are the one who must decide. There is no precedent for your case, and I cannot say you should or you shouldn’t. Of course there are less lofty goals than becoming a principal dancer with a renowned ballet company. You know the saying, ‘Aim for the stars and you’ll reach the sun . . . ’”

“What sort of goals can replace being a principal dancer?”

“You may continue your training and be content with special character parts or join a company that does ‘avant garde contemporary’ style. But I am afraid you may find this rather boring and unchallenging, since the trend in contemporary dance has ushered an influx of unorthodoxy; away from classical and neo-classical styles, so diluting the ‘pure’ form of ballet.”

“What about choreography?”

“My dear, you will need many more years of dancing, and a mastery of a wide-ranging dance repertoire, before you can consider choreography; it’s a career for the retired

principal dancer. There is the technical department, such as the backstage aspects of lighting, set design, props, costuming, and so on, which some consider as lower in status, though very important.”

“Dame Perkins, in light of these revelations, I am afraid I must request a leave of absence from the school. I need to talk with my parents and discuss the options, which might save my ballet career.”

“That’s a sensible idea, and if you like, I can provide an introduction to an old friend of mine. You are not to repeat a word of this, but several years ago, our principal dancer, a very famous Russian ballerina, became stricken with breast cancer. Fortunately, the growth was diagnosed in its early stage and the only sure cure was surgery. The operation was successfully performed by her . . . Dr. Kuntz, the head surgeon at the Hurwitz Center for Cosmetic Surgery in Switzerland.”

“I certainly appreciate your offer. Thank you.”

We hugged briefly, saying goodbye.

“Please call me as soon as you have made up your mind.”

As soon as I got to my apartment, I grabbed my laptop and headed for St. Pancras Station. I was in no mood to stand in a line or get bullied by the 3:55 p.m. rabble, so I bought a First Class ticket to Sheffield and settled myself into a plush seat with a table. As we headed out of St. Pancras, I waved to the waiter, who scurried across.

“Have you got any twelve-year-old whiskey?”

“Yes, we have Glenlivet.”

“I’ll have a double.”

“With soda or ice?”

“Naked!” I answered, drawing a double look from him.

“Here you are, ma’am. That’ll be £8.80!”

I paid him, slipped off my shoes, and googled “Dr. Kristina L. Kuntz, Switzerland” on my laptop. It bought up several sites, including the Hurwitz Center for Cosmetic Surgery. The banner on the homepage read: “We can give you the perfect figure by

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performing procedures with skill and precision . . . ” I then clicked on her name and her bio popped up:

“She is a surgeon who has the experience and skill to help you attain the beautiful, natural looks, realizing your desires with sworn confidentiality. Winner of the Maimonides Award in 2012 and reputed to be a luminary in the field of cosmetic surgery . . . ”

I got out my iPod and inserted my earplugs; with lazy eyes, my mind and body soon drifted into its beta wave state with the lyrics filtering into my ears: “Portal to who knows where, don’t wanna know . . . portal to Hell, just don’t wanna know.” My thinking was knotty, my mind cloudy, and moving trains offered stability in motion and a place to see clearly. Watching the sun sink behind flower-dressed hills, I wandered into pastures of wilderness and velvet green forests with no thought of return; with crested, foaming waves of thoughts rising and falling in unspoken apprehension.

I got into Sheffield at 5:37 p.m. and caught a black cab.

“Where to, ma’am?”

“Crookes, Shelly Road, please!”

Snake started barking and jumped up to greet me.

“Mom! Mom . . . I’m home!”

“I’m up in the bedroom, dear. Will be down in a sec!”

“Meow! Meow!” Elvis crawled onto my lap as I sat on the sofa.

“Hi, Elvis, handsomest cat you are!”

“I’m going to make us a cup of tea.”

“Thanks, Mom!”

“I wasn’t expecting you till Saturday,” she said, looking up at me. “Why are you crying?”

ROSELLA BACHELLI

“Dame Perkins said I’ll never become a prima ballerina. She said my boobs are too large to become a principal dancer and I’ll have a lot of difficulty advancing my dancing skills.”

In between sobs, I gave snippets of the discussion I had with the director of the Royale Ballet School.

“Dry your eyes, dear, I can’t bear to see you cry.”

“I sorry for disappointing you and Dad. I remember you and Dad not going on vacations so you would have enough money to pay my tuition when the recession started.”

“We wanted what was best for you, so the vacations didn’t matter. We were happy as long as you were progressing with your ballet career. Maybe the fault is mine. I never told you this but your grandma had 42DD breasts, and when I was eighteen years old I had 35DD. That’s when I met your dad, so it is natural that you should have a full bosom. That’s what God gave you!”

“But I never had big boobs; in fact, the boys used to call Sharon and me ‘flat-chest’ in junior school. It is just these last four years they have become noticeable. . . . I’m so sick of them. Dame Perkins said the genetic quality was latent in me. She suggested having surgery, and she said she would introduce me to Dr. Kuntz, a famous surgeon in Switzerland.”

“What did you say, Mel?”

“I told her I needed to talk with my parents, and she gave me a leave of absence to think things over. I really don’t know what to do or how this surgery will affect my future ballet training, and there is also the matter of money to pay for the operation. When I asked Dame Perkins for her advice, she just said that she wasn’t qualified to give her opinion and it was me who had to decide.”

“Don’t worry, Mel, when your dad comes home I’ll talk to him. If you want to go to Switzerland and hear what this doctor has got to say, that’s fine. Remember we are behind you whatever you decide, and we have enough money saved to pay for the cost of the operation.”

“Thanks, Mom.”

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Snake climbed on the sofa, pressing his paws onto my thighs, while Mom made another cup of tea.

“Did you miss me, Snake?”

“Woof! Woof!”

“He misses you, Mel. You can take him out for his evening walk while I fix supper.”

“Thanks, Mom.”

I slipped into a pair of jeans, a thick pullover, and sneakers. It was early March and a little nippy.

“Mom, where’s Snake’s leash?”

“It’s on the hook above his water bowl.”

“Come boy . . . come boy!” I called, whistling.

Running to me, Snake barked, exhilarated with the prospect of escaping the confinement of domestication.

When I came back with Snake, Dad was helping Mom set the table for dinner.

“Mel, Mom and I talked about the operation, and we want you to know that we’ll pay for it.”

“Thanks, Dad!”

After dinner, we all sat and watched “Coronation Street.” I excused myself, kissed Mom and Dad goodnight, and went up to my room. After a hot shower, I went to bed contemplating my predicament.

I was awakened by Snake’s barking. When I looked at the time it was 5:30 a.m., and I could hear Dad downstairs, getting ready to drive up to Bannercross to open the shop. He had to get all the newspapers counted and arranged into piles for the paperboys to get on with their deliveries. The remainder had to be stacked on the shelves and everything, including deliveries of fresh milk and orange juice, had to be packed away before opening at 7:00 a.m.

I went downstairs and made myself a cup of tea.

ROSELLA BACHELLI

“Morning, Dad . . .”

“Morning, Mel. What are you doing up at this time?”

“I couldn’t sleep and I heard Snake’s barking. I’ll take him out to Bole Hill after I’ve had a drink. The fresh air will do me good.”

“Have you decided what you are going to do?”

“Yes. Dame Perkins has offered to introduce me to Dr. Kuntz. I’ll call her later, and I’ll go to Switzerland and discuss the operation. Then I’ll make up my mind.”

“We both think you should have the operation,” Dad said, and then began to head for the door. “See you later.”

There were a few stars in the chilly March sky and the grass was frosted wet. Bole Hill was west of the city center, and from the top you could see the Rivelin Valley, beyond the blocks of condominiums to the rolling hills dotted with sheep and cattle. Snake and I walked through the soccer field and around the kid’s playground to the edge of the hill, where it dropped for 70-80 meters. I used to play a game with Snake here. Snake would first eye the ball and track its trajectory as I threw it. Dodging rocks and clumps of briar, he would sprint downhill as fast as you could imagine, directly to the spot where the ball had landed. After he located the ball, he would start the ascent at full throttle. I remember a morning when he did this circuit twenty-nine times, without force or cohesion, just a pat of encouragement. I’d never scolded him or harbored a bad thought toward him, and I was certain he understood human speech, clearer than many a person did. Sadly, Snake had grown older and now suffered from arthritis in his legs. Sitting beside me, Snake was silent and thoughtful as we watched the sun rising behind the concrete towers that grew out of the green fields yonder.

Other dog walkers had started to fill the park and we headed home. I got Snake a fresh bowl of water and sat with Mom to have some toast and a poached egg.

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At 9:00 a.m. I called the Royale Ballet School.

“Hello, Dame Perkins.”

“Hi, Melissa, how are you? Have you decided what you’re going to do?”

“Yes, I have discussed the matter with my parents and I would like to meet with Dr. Kuntz.”

“Good! Would you like me to make an introduction for you?”

“Yes. At the earliest date. I can fly out today.”

“Okay. I will call you back.”

Anxiously, we both waited for the phone to ring.

Rrrrng! Rrrrng!

“Hi, Dame Perkins . . .”

“Melissa, I have made an appointment with Dr. Kuntz for Wednesday at 2:30 p.m. Have you got a pen? Here’s the address and telephone number.”

I scribbled down the address. “Thank you so much.”

“Well, good luck, dear. Call me when you return.”

I booked a flight for Geneva, and Dad transferred £10,000 into my Visa debit account to cover whatever initial expenses I would have to pay. After dropping Mom off at the shop, we headed to Manchester Airport, chatting about the shop and how much he missed Sharon.

“Are you a going to get a replacement, Dad?”

“I don’t know. Business has dropped off since the recession. Besides, I have little to do these days.”

“I’m sorry, Dad. I have been thinking of maybe getting a part-time job in London, so you won’t have to pay so much for my dancing classes.”

“Mel, you mustn’t worry about that. Your mom and I have saved throughout the good years. Besides, you are our only child. Who will we give it to?”

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“I know, Dad, but you and Mom have paid for my dance classes since I was five. It’s about time I do something to support myself. . . . I’m already twenty.”

“Mom and I just want you to have everything you need. Soon you will be getting the big parts. Nothing will make us happier than to see ‘Melissa Simpson’ in neon lights.”

“Yes, Dad. I hope I’ll make you proud of me.”

“We know you are dedicated to ballet, Mel. Last night Mom was saying how you don’t even have a boyfriend.”

I realized how devoted my parents were to me and I felt a heaviness in my heart for the disappointment I’d been to them. For twenty years, they had worked and saved to pay for my ballet education, yet all I had to show was a 34D bustline.

After Dad dropped me off, I checked in at the British Airways counter and headed for customs and security clearance. I had thirty minutes to kill and I felt like having a drink. So I headed into the champagne fountain bar and ordered a single flute of NV Bollinger Special Cuvée Brut Champagne. Feelings of guilt suffocated my being as I sipped £9.99 of paradise from a flute. I thought I had wasted Mom and Dad’s whole life and I was a worthless child on whom they had spent their life’s savings. I didn’t see the people around or hear their chatter of this and that. . . . “I, me, mine” was all I cared about.

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