

# ***BALLERINA***

**Pauliina Tuulivaara**



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I saw the same nightmare every single night. It wasn't really a nightmare at first rather just a piece of a memory. It turned into a nightmare towards the end. In the dream I was a second grader or maybe I was at third. I had a pale pink skin and very light coloured hair, almost white. I wasn't necessarily fat but a little round ish. My mum called it baby weight and that I would quickly grow out of it. I wasn't so sure about that. Anyway... I was a second grader and there was a hundred meter race. I tightened my shoelaces and put a double knot. Just to be sure I don't trip to loose ends. Teacher starts to yell: Get ready.... Set... When the teacher shouts out GO I run. I feel like I have never been so quick. I run like I have axe murder-



ers behind me. Finish line is getting closer. I sense that I'm leaving other kids behind. I win, I'm sure I win. I will win the first race ever. The first sports event ever in my life. I will get friends now, become popular. I will win... Then I turn into a little piglet and fall to my face. Oink Oink.

- Was your tummy in the way? Someone asks.

- Anthony Fat-Tony! Anthony Fat-Tony!  
Echoes through the sports-field. I never have to calculate any sheep. I just close my eyes and hear the same thing over and over again. It has the rhythm of an old fashioned train. Listening to that is the best and worst sleeping pill. *Anthony Fat-Tony Anthony Fat-Tony...*

- Anthony! I heard my sister's voice coming through the thick curtain of sleep. She's pulling off my blanket.
- Hey! What are you doing? Get out!
- You are late, she says while briskly opening the curtains.
- Late from what?
- Have you forgot? The ballet show you've been talking about the last month and you tell me you've forgot all about it?
- Oh shit!

Ballet. A blessing and a curse really. It wasn't my hobby at first. I just went along with my sister, wasn't old enough to be left home alone. I remember it so clearly. In the car mum is telling me to find a hobby for myself.

- How about some sort of a sport?
- I'm not good at any sport.
- But there's plenty to choose from.
- No.
- No is not an answer. You need to figure something out.

And then my sister's ballet teacher told me to attend cause she didn't want me to just sit around. And something just clicked, and it clicked loudly. The ballet teacher told my mum that she should let me start ballet. I had the flexibility and determination. She saw something in me and it was quite shocking. No one had ever believed in me before. I had not even believed in myself. When we got home mum sent me and Anna, my sister, to upstairs. She would have some things to dis-

cuss with dad. Our parents fought a lot. Usually about money and mum's unemployment. I sensed fight in the air. I went upstairs to play tea-party with Anna. We were each other's best friends. We only had a year or so between us. Soon I was eavesdropping at the door, trying to keep Anna quiet so I could hear what mum and dad were talking about downstairs. I knew it was about ballet. About me.

- A ballerina?! Are you seriously telling me that my son should become a ballerina? Dad laughed.

- The right term is a ballet dancer, mum corrected him.

- What ever, it means pink tights and tutus. Girly stuff.



- Anthony is lonely! And I don't want him to be home alone when Anna already does ballet four times a week. This would be good for him. Anthony can always stop if he wants to but maybe we should let him try.

- I really don't like this idea at all.

- Why don't we ask him how he feels about it?

- Lets go get the boy downstairs.

I quickly backed away from the door and poured my sister some more tea from a pink plastic tea-set.

- Really Susan. He's already playing home and you are telling me to let him start ballet? Soon he'll just figure out that he's g..., mum punched dad to his shoulder. Dad laughed.

- Son, come downstairs we want to talk to

you about something.

- In a minute, I said and took a loud sip from my cup just to push some buttons in my dad's soul. In the living room I stood like a soldier.

- Are you sure you heard right. Anthony is a bit chubby, dad said and didn't sound insulting just matter-of-fact.

- How can you talk like that!

- I'm sure Anthony knows it, don't you?

- Yes dad.

- Mum here thinks you should start ballet.

Any thoughts?

- I'd like that.

- Really? What about ice hockey or football?

- No. I don't really care for sports.

- Fine. You can start ballet. Let's see how soon you'll quit.

\*

Now years later, Anna had quit ballet soon after I started but I still continued. I had become rather handsome even if I say so myself. Constant training and strict diet had made me muscular (but still graceful enough to ballet) and strong for the lifts. I was quite tall but thanks to ballet, I had a good posture and carried myself well. Though sometimes, especially in school I would have wanted to know how to make myself smaller and shorter. Unnoticeable. My white ish hair

had become sort of golden brown that I liked to keep sort of short.

Today I was getting ready for yet another ballet show. I had danced with my pair Sarah for a few years now and every summer we had a semester ending show. This year's theme was The Beauty and the Beast. I took a look around the audience and saw my family. Mum had got dad to attend as well. He did come to each show probably because mum told him to. I wondered how many times mum had put the divorce papers on the table if he said no. Anna played with her phone and mum tried to figure out her new camera. She always recorded every show. I went back to the dressing room to get ready. Sarah walked to me. She looked beautiful in



her costume.

- Hey! How's it going?

- Good.

- Nervous are you?

- No. It's just... Dad's at the audience.

- Oh. Why don't you tell your mum to say your dad to stay away. If it makes you upset.

Why does he have to come.

- It's a flip coin really. I would want him to have a moment of realisation. Like “oh that's my son”. That he could recognise the time, effort and practice I've needed to come this good. But I guess I could just wait for the cure for dementia while I'm at it.

Sarah laughed a little.

- I just want you to remember what ever your dad is thinking you are phenomenal! Okay?

Anthony has never been good at anything.  
Not in any single sport or getting friends.  
Then he finds ballet and is becoming the  
best. When Anthony moves to a small town  
with his family, he promises to his sister to  
write a completely new book of his life.  
Now that there's a fresh new start and all  
that. But things don't really go that way.

*Hey Angelina Ballerina! Spin.*

*Well, it was inevitable. At some point ballet  
would have had to come up anyway. Should  
have mentioned it right then and there, and  
not keep hidden like a dirty little secret.*

What is left in Anthony's life  
if the joy of dancing is taken away?

