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DANCE NATION

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Playwrights Horizons

Peter Jay Sharp Theater

Artistic Director
Tim Sanford

Managing Director
Leslie Marcus

General Manager
Carol Fishman

presents the world premiere of

Dance Nation

Written by

Clare Barron

Featuring

**Purva Bedi
Ellen Maddow
Dina Shihabi**

**Eboni Booth
Christina Rouner
Lucy Taylor**

**Camila Canó-Flaviá
Thomas Jay Ryan
Ikechukwu Ufomadu**

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Directed and Choreographed by

Lee Sunday Evans

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Dance Nation

Written by **Clare Barron**

Directed by **Lee Sunday Evans**

Peter Jay Sharp Theater
Opening Night: May 8, 2018

CAST

(alphabetical order)

Connie.....	PURVA BEDI
Zuzu.....	EBONI BOOTH
Sofia.....	CAMILA CANÓ-FLAVIA
Maeve.....	ELLEN MADDOW
Vanessa/The Moms.....	CHRISTINA ROUNER
Dance Teacher Pat.....	THOMAS JAY RYAN
Amina.....	DINA SHIHABI
Ashlee.....	LUCY TAYLOR
Luke.....	IKECHUKWU UFOMADU

Dance Nation went to print on May 7, 2018 and does not reflect changes made during the preview process up until that point.



All photos by Joan Marcus

Ashlee, Sofia, Connie, Maeve, Zuzu, Amina, and Luke • Lucy Taylor, Camilla Canó-Flaviá, Purva Bedi, Ellen Maddow, Eboni Booth, Dina Shihabi, and Ikechukwu Ufomadu



Luke and Luke's Mom • Ikechukwu Ufomadu and Christina Rouner



Sofia, Dance Teacher Pat, Connie, and Zuzu • Camilla Canó-Flaviá, Thomas Jay Ryan, Purva Bedi, and Eboni Booth

CHARACTERS

Dance Teacher Pat

the head of the dance studio

Amina

the star dancer

Zuzu

always second best

Connie

a talented dancer who think she should play the role of Gandhi

Luke

the only male dancer on the competition team

Maeve

the oldest and least talented dancer on the team

Sofia

knows what's up

Ashlee

future president of a post-apocalyptic USA

Vanessa

could've been a phenomenon (aka *THE CRUMPLED SAILOR*)

The Moms

Means well. Grown-up Wendy



All photos by Joan Marcus

Connie, Ashlee, and Sofia • Purva Bedi, Lucy Taylor, and Camila Candó-Flaviá



Amina, Luke, Connie, Ashlee, Sofia, and Moeve • Dina Shihabi, Ikechukwu Ufomadu, Purva Bedi, Lucy Taylor, Camila Candó-Flaviá, and Ellen Maddow



Zuzu and Luke • Eboni Booth and Ikechukwu Ufomadu

Note on casting, etc.

All characters except Dance Teacher Pat and The Moms are between the ages of 11 and 14 years old. However, they should be played by adult actors (for the most part) and should range in age from 12 to 75+ There is no need for any of the actors to resemble teenagers. (In fact, please resist this impulse!) And the more diverse the cast the better.

Think of it as a ghost play: the actors' older bodies are haunting these 13-year-olds characters. (We're getting to see who they grow up to be!) And these 13-year-old characters are haunted by the specters of what they will become. At times we should be fully in "13-year-old land" with all its ridiculousness, pain and pleasure. And at times we should be palpably aware of the actors' real ages and their distance from this moment in their lives.

The chants should be terrifying rituals that conjure real power.

The dances should take up time and space and be fully and gorgeously embodied performative events, even if the actors possess no real dance talent. (In fact, better if the actors possess no real dance talent.)

Cuteness is death. Pagan feral-ness and ferocity are key.

Everyone is nice.

Everyone is vulnerable.

And everyone is trying their hardest.

A slash (/) indicates interruption. And the character heading "ALL THE GIRLS" includes Luke.

Blinding white lights. Thirty little bodies dressed like sailors are tap dancing. They are flapping their feet and kicking their legs. They are perfectly in sync. Their faces are beaming. They live for this shit. It's the end of the number—they strike a pose.

Thunderous applause. A curtain drops.

THE GOD MIC

Alright girls. That's it. Good show. Let's clear the stage.

Thirty little bodies run in all directions.

A crumpled sailor is left behind. She is bleeding profusely and her femur is sticking out of her skin.

CRUMPLED SAILOR aka VANESSA

I can't get up

A tiny dancer dashes back across the stage without stopping.

CRUMPLED SAILOR aka VANESSA

I can't get up

Another tiny dancer comes back on stage. She sees the crumpled sailor and slowly backs off the way she came.

Suddenly, a voice from the God mic.

THE GOD MIC

Hey. You in the sailor suit. Let's go

CRUMPLED SAILOR aka VANESSA
I think there's something wrong with my knee

THE GOD MIC
Hey Minda? We've got a sailor down. Can you come get her off the stage please?

MINDA (*yelling from somewhere far offstage*)
Coming!!!!

A long moment of the crumpled sailor alone on the stage, bleeding.

One-by-one the tiny dancers come back on stage and stand in horror around the crumpled sailor.

SOFIA
Oh my god

MAEVE
Oh my god

ASHLEE
Oh my god! Vanessa! What happened?

CRUMPLED SAILOR aka VANESSA
I landed funny

MAEVE
Wow. That's really bad

One of the girls starts to cry.

THE GOD MIC
Hey Minda? Can you bring some paper towels? And maybe some—

MINDA (*yelling from somewhere offstage*)
Sorry! Just a minute!

CONNIE
Does it hurt?

One of the stage lights comes undone. It falls to the stage and lands with an enormous BANG like a cannon going off.

The tiny dancers scream and run in all directions.

The crumpled sailor—once again all alone onstage and bleeding.

A long moment of silence, and then...

THE GOD MIC
Just sit tight, honey. Someone's calling an ambulance.

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Dance Teacher Pat stands in front of an army of little girls and Luke—the one male dancer in the group.

DANCE TEACHER PAT
Alright girls
We've got a lot of work to do
Nationals is a month away
And we're a mess.
Maeve. Get that hair out of your face

Maeve pushes her hair back. It falls back into her eyes.

DANCE TEACHER PAT
Where's your hair tie?

MAEVE
In the dressing room

DANCE TEACHER PAT
Run and get it

Maeve runs out of the studio to get a hair tie.

DANCE TEACHER PAT
Now we all get to wait for Maeve...

They wait for Maeve.

...
...
...
...
...
...

Maeve comes running back, her bangs awkwardly
pinned back with butterfly clips.

Dance Teacher Pat clears his throat.

DANCE TEACHER PAT
Alright. Where was I?

MAEVE
...sorry

He holds up a thumb.

DANCE TEACHER PAT
This week? We're off to the Legacy National Talent
Competition in Philadelphia

He adds a finger.

DANCE TEACHER PAT
Next week? We take the bus to Akron, Ohio, for StarPower
USA

And a third finger...

DANCE TEACHER PAT
Then it's Lanoka Harbor, New Jersey, for The Boogie Down
Grand Prix

He starts with his thumb again and counts up.

DANCE TEACHER PAT
If we win in Philadelphia...
If we win in Akron, Ohio...
And if we win in Lanoka Harbor, New Jersey, at The Boogie
Down Grand Prix
(And I'm talking Overall 1st Place finishes or nothing)
We will pack our bags...
And we will get on a plane...
And we will fly all the way to TAMPA BAY,

FLORIDAAAAAAA

ALL THE GIRLS
Yes!
Yes!
Yesss!

DANCE TEACHER PAT
FOR NATIONALSSSSSSSSSSSS

ALL THE GIRLS

Yes!

Yes!

Yesss!

DANCE TEACHER PAT

IN FLORIDAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA

He silences them.

They hush.

DANCE TEACHER PAT

Now some of you are bumpin at the top of the pre-teen division, and next year I'm gonna have to bump you up to teens. (Connie. Ashlee. Zuzu. I'm talking to you.) You're gonna be at the bottom of the pile again and you're gonna have to crawl your way back to the top...

ALL THE GIRLS

...

DANCE TEACHER PAT

But right now you're Big Dogs...
How're you gonna cap off your prepubescent years?
Will you be winners?
Like the Elite Pre-Teen Competition Squad of 1992?

He raps a framed photograph of The Elite Pre-Teen Competition Squad of 1992. They are in sequins and face-paint and grasping a 4-foot-tall trophy—vicious, victorious.

DANCE TEACHER PAT
Or '95

He raps another photo on the wall.

DANCE TEACHER PAT
Or '97

And another.

DANCE TEACHER PAT

Or two-thousand-thirteen. *Fourteen. Fifteen!*
Three years in a row
Boom, boom, boom

...

...

Or will you not even make it to The Wall...

ALL THE GIRLS

...

DANCE TEACHER PAT

Who were the girls in 1996?
We don't know....
It's like they never even existed

ALL THE GIRLS

...

DANCE TEACHER PAT

But the girls in 1997.....
You remember who they were, don't you????

All the girls whisper, mesmerized by the memory of...

ALL THE GIRLS (*whispering*)
Sabinaaaaaaaaaaaaa

DANCE TEACHER PAT
Yes, Sabina

ALL THE GIRLS
Sabinaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa

The girls gaze admiringly at a portrait of Sabina—
beautiful, gracious, wearing an enormous crown.

DANCE TEACHER PAT
It was at Nationals in West Bend, Wisconsin, nineteen years
ago that Sabina Maratzi was first spotted by a casting agent
from the Telsey & Company in New York City and six years
later she was dancing in the chorus of a Broadway show

All the girls hiss like snakes.

ALL THE GIRLS
Sssssssssssssssssssssss

DANCE TEACHER PAT
Maybe it'll be one of *you* this time... Maybe this is the year,
this is the moment, this is the dance where your lives will
start!

ALL THE GIRLS
I want my life to start! Oh pleazz!

DANCE TEACHER PAT
Now we're shaking things up. We may have won with the
sailors in Ashley, PA, but it's not gonna cut it for Philly

ALL THE GIRLS

...

DANCE TEACHER PAT
We need something different. Something special. Something
these judges have never seen before. Something that's gonna
kick 'em in the gut and tell 'em there's a revolution coming
out of Liverpool, Ohio! *THIS IS THE FUTURE! I AM
MAKING THE FUTURE!! WE'RE GONNA MAKE THOSE
JUDGES FEEL SOMETHING IN THEIR COLD, DEAD,
PERNICIOUS HEARTS!!*

ALL THE GIRLS
!!!!

DANCE TEACHER PAT
It's going to be an acro-lyrical number

The girls all gasp.

DANCE TEACHER PAT
It's called WORLD ON FIRE and it's about the legacy of
Gandhi. Who can tell me who that is?

The girls and Luke look at their feet.

Connie and Amina tentatively raise their hands.

DANCE TEACHER PAT
Yes, Amina?

AMINA
He's a leader.

DANCE TEACHER PAT
He's from India.

Dance Teacher Pat looks at them, genuinely perplexed.

DANCE TEACHER PAT

Why don't you girls know this? He went on a hunger strike and stopped eating.

Dance Teacher Pat looks at them menacingly.

DANCE TEACHER PAT

It's going to be a really beautiful number about resistance. You'll all be playing Citizens. And one of you will play the role of Gandhi.

They all look at Connie—the only Indian-American student in the class.

Ashlee raises her hand.

DANCE TEACHER

Yes Ashlee

ASHLEE

I don't think it's fair that Gandhi is the star

They all look at Connie.

DANCE TEACHER

I don't know which one of you will play the role of Gandhi yet. It could be anyone.

Zuzu raises her hand.

ZUZU

I'd really like to play the role of Gandhi.

DANCE TEACHER

You're all going to learn the part and then we'll see who does it best

Luke raises his hand.

DANCE TEACHER PAT

Yes Luke?

LUKE

Is Vanessa okay?

DANCE TEACHER

Vanessa's in the hospital. Vanessa's doing fine.

LUKE

Is she coming back?

DANCE TEACHER PAT

Vanessa won't be dancing with us for awhile.

They all look at the floor.

DANCE TEACHER PAT

That's what happens when you don't roll through your feet properly when you land. Alright. Spread apart!

The girls get into formation.

DANCE TEACHER PAT

I want you to learn it as if it's your solo to lose

Drumroll! The girls and Luke audition for the part of Gandhi.

SOFIA
I hope I get it!

They do the dance as if we could only see a close-up on their faces. They are perfectly still except for their eyebrows, their nostrils, their mouths, etc. and the occasional dramatic arm movement. At the moment in the dance where they would leap, they breathe in deeply through their nostrils. At the moment in the dance where they would do a series of turns, they breathe out through their mouths. They furrow their brows as the music swells and then break into a radiant look of surprise. Everything is perfectly choreographed. It is a complex and exquisitely rendered ballet of the face.

DANCE TEACHER PAT
Alright. Good stuff

The girls disperse. He calls after them...

DANCE TEACHER PAT
REMEMBER TO CLOSE YOUR MOUTH WHEN YOU TURN, ASHLEE! Everybody needs to work on their faces

He claps on each word.

DANCE TEACHER PAT
Sadness, Surprise, Fierce
Sadness, Surprise, Fierce
I want you to practice in front of the mirror

No limp arms, or I'll cut them off!

Almost all the girls are gone now. Zuzu catches up to Amina.

ZUZU
Hey

AMINA
Hey

ZUZU
Good job!

AMINA
You, too!

ZUZU
You were awesome

AMINA
Oh my god. *You were awesome*

ZUZU
Your turns were crazy. You went so fast

AMINA
I loved your chest roll. You were so *intense*

ZUZU
Rea/lly?????

AMINA
You're such a diva

ZUZU
Was my side aerial okay?

AMINA
Yeah it was good

ZUZU
It felt a little lopsided

AMINA
Maybe a little but you caught it

ZUZU
But a little?

AMINA
Maybe a little but I didn't really notice, I feel like you pulled it off

ZUZU
Okay good

AMINA
What about mine?

ZUZU
It was perfect

AMINA
Are you sure?

ZUZU
It was totally perfect

AMINA
Okay cool

ZUZU
Your turns were perfect, too

AMINA
I'm always worried that I go too fast

ZUZU
No, / no it's cool

AMINA
And lose control. It's not good to lose control

ZUZU
I like it

They smile at each other.

AMINA
I hope we both just get it

ZUZU
Yeah! I hope we're both just Gandhi!

AMINA
OH MY GOD

ZUZU
What?!

AMINA
That would be *perfect!*

Connie's still there, drinking from her water bottle. She waves at them.

CONNIE
Hey

The dressing room post-auditions. The girls are changing into their street clothes. They get completely, uninhibitedly butt-ass naked in front of each other as they talk. Luke is separated from them by a little curtain.

ASHLEE

If I get a dog, it's gonna be a wolf-dog

CONNIE

A what?

ASHLEE

A wolf-dog

CONNIE

That's bad for the wolves

SOFIA

What's a wolf dog?

ASHLEE

No it's not

AMINA

Half-dog, half-wolf

CONNIE

Ask Maeve. She's really into wolf-preservation

ASHLEE

Maeve

MAEVE

I'm really into what?

CONNIE

Wolf-preservation

MAEVE

Oh. Yeah

ASHLEE

I wanna get a wolf-dog

MAEVE

That's bad

CONNIE

See

ASHLEE

Why is that bad? / They're beautiful

MAEVE

It's bad for the wolves. They're not pets. / They're wild animals

SOFIA

I'm not into wolf-preservation. I'm into wolf-extinction

CONNIE

Okay, you freak Wait.

ASHLEE

Are you serious?

SOFIA

I'm not really into wolf-extinction. I just think they're scary

ASHLEE

They're not scary

MAEVE

I want to walk to school with wolves

CONNIE

No you don't

MAEVE

Yes I do! I want to walk to school with the wolves howling / in the mountains

SOFIA
Hey Amina. Did you do it?

AMINA
Huh?

Sofia makes a gesture like she's thwacking a pussy.

AMINA
I tried

SOFIA
You *tried*?

AMINA
Nothing happened

SOFIA
Nothing happened????!!

AMINA
I don't know why. I really tried!

SOFIA
What did you do?

ASHLEE
Wait. What's happening?

CONNIE (*to Ashlee*)
She's teaching Amina how to masturbate

SOFIA (*to Connie*)
Shut up

ASHLEE
To masturbate?

CONNIE
What? I think it's cool!

SOFIA
Wait, so. What did you do?

AMINA
I don't know. I just did what you told me

SOFIA
Uh-huh

AMINA
For like a long time

SOFIA
What did you think about?

AMINA
You're supposed to think about something?

SOFIA
Amina! That's like—
The whole thing
Is mostly / just thinking

CONNIE
Yeah, it's mostly just thinking

AMINA
What do you think about?

SOFIA
I don't know I'll tell you later

CONNIE
Swimsuits

Connie laughs.

CONNIE

I don't know why. I mostly think about like... *Luke???*

LUKE (*from behind the curtain*)

Yeah?

CONNIE

Don't listen!taking off swimsuits

ASHLEE

I mostly think about someone being really mad at me. And pinning me to the ground. And like. Yelling

Sofia pulls up her pants.

SOFIA

My sister says there's this thing called your *pica*?

CONNIE

Uh-huh

SOFIA

And it's between your asshole and your privates

Luke parts the curtain and joins the girls.

MAEVE

Hi Luke

ASHLEE

Hi Luke

LUKE

Hey

SOFIA

And it's where dance originated from. Like the first humans. They all danced from their *pica*. Instead of their core. Everything came from their *pica*.

MAEVE

I wish we got to dance from our *picas*!

ASHLEE

Where is it again?

SOFIA

The little stretch of land between your asshole and your privates...

ASHLEE

...

...

...

SOFIA (*laughing*)

What're you doing?!

ASHLEE

I'm just— Finding it

AMINA

Who do you guys think is going to be Gandhi?

MAEVE

You

LUKE

You

ASHLEE

It's always you

AMINA

Not always. Last time it was Maeve

SOFIA

That's just cuz Maeve makes the best sailor

MAEVE

ARGGG

AMINA

I don't know. I hope I'm not losing my spark

CONNIE

I think I should be Gandhi

SOFIA

I think Connie should be Gandhi too

ALL THE GIRLS

...

CONNIE

I think it's weird if Amina's Gandhi.

(to Amina)

I think you don't really *fit*

ASHLEE

I think anyone can play Gandhi because Gandhi was about loving and accepting all people

CONNIE

...

LUKE

Maybe Zuzu will be Gandhi

SOFIA

Zuzu's not going to be Gandhi

LUKE

Why not?

SOFIA

Because she's not as good as Amina

LUKE

I think Zuzu would make a good Gandhi

CONNIE

Where's Zuzu?

ASHLEE

Where's Zuzu?

MAEVE

She's talking to her mom

Zuzu just outside the dressing room, talking to her mom.

ZUZU'S MOM

Did you get intimidated?

ZUZU

No?

ZUZU'S MOM

It's intimidating, isn't it?

ZUZU

...

ZUZU'S MOM

You did great, honey

ZUZU

I know...

ZUZU'S MOM

You'll get it next time. Just don't psyche yourself out, okay?

ZUZU

I won't

ZUZU'S MOM

You're better than Amina. You just have to not psyche yourself out

ZUZU

I'm not psyching myself out

ZUZU'S MOM

She may be more technically skilled than you, you know, but it doesn't matter. It's the heart that matters, you know. She may be flawless but it doesn't matter because she doesn't dance with any *heart*, you know what I'm saying. You have heart. That's why she'll never really beat you even if she wins

ZUZU

I win sometimes

ZUZU'S MOM

I know

ZUZU

...

ZUZU'S MOM

You forgot about the pli , huh?

ZUZU

I don't know

ZUZU'S MOM

During the bridge, you forgot to do the little pli . That's why you stumbled in the transition.

ZUZU

I don't remember

ZUZU'S MOM

Other than that it was a really, really good audition.

Maeve and Luke walk past Zuzu and her mom on their way out of the dressing room.

MAEVE

Oh hey Zuzu

LUKE

Oh hey Zuzu

MAEVE

Good job

LUKE

Really really good job, Zuzu

He smiles at her.

LUKE

You were really great

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Zuzu alone.

ZUZU

People say I dance with a lot of *grace* and that I'm beautiful and above-average and stuff.

Here's what they don't say.

They don't say I'm sensational.

They don't say I take their breath away.

They don't say they could watch me forever.

They don't say they cry when they watch me dance.

When they watch Amina dance, they cry.

I know. Because I cry when I watch Amina dance.

My Mom asked me to dance for her cancer. She saw a documentary about this woman who did a dance and it cured her cancer and so she asked me if I would do a dance for her and my Mom is not normally like that but she was feeling really emotional at the time and she kept breaking down all the time so I did this solo at the year-end recital for my Mom and her cancer. And I tried to make it the best dance I had ever done. I tried to like *feel things* with my arms and my legs. I tried to make people feel things with my arms and my legs... But it was just an ordinary dance, really. A lot of people didn't know it was about my Mom's cancer at all. They thought it was about whatever our dances are usually about. Flowers. Or sailors, you know. Not cancer. I didn't make them cry. I didn't make myself cry. I don't even think I made my Mom cry. She told me that she liked it. But she didn't cry. And it didn't cure her cancer, so. Her cancer actually got worse after that, so. It was just an ordinary dance.

Luke says I'm a genius dancer but he's lying to me because he's in love with me. Luke has dandruff. I know because I was playing with his hair the other day and at the base of his hair near his scalp were all these flakes of scalp sitting in his hair like dead ants that had just crawled out of a hole and died.

Petals fall from the sky like flakes of dandruff as Zuzu dances the audition piece for Gandhi. She's not great. Connie appears and dances the part of Gandhi with her.

The stars come out.

Luke and his Mom driving home from dance.

LUKE'S MOM

You sleepy?

LUKE

...

LUKE'S MOM

You look sleepy

LUKE

Yeah

LUKE'S MOM

It takes it out of you, doesn't it?

LUKE

Yeah

LUKE'S MOM

...

LUKE

...

LUKE'S MOM

...

LUKE

...

LUKE'S MOM

...

LUKE

How was your day?

LUKE'S MOM

Oh you know

LUKE

...

...

...

LUKE'S MOM

I think that new priest candidate is coming

From California

So that's good

LUKE

...

LUKE'S MOM

Apparently it's some kind of secret

She's not telling her congregation that she's thinking of
leaving, so

We have to be all secretive about it

...

...

She's flying cross-country on a *Tuesday* so she won't be
missed, so

I don't know

It sounds kind of crazy to me but

Who knows

She's our only candidate, so

Hopefully she's not too crazy

LUKE

She's flying cross-country?

LUKE'S MOM

Yeah

LUKE

And she's not telling anybody?

LUKE'S MOM

Apparently

LUKE

That's cool

LUKE'S MOM

It's stressful. It's more stressful than it's cool

...

...

...

...

...

I just hope this lady from California does more than give good
sermons. Good sermons don't bring in crowds. We need
someone who's a go-getter. She's 52, so. I don't know. I was
hoping for someone younger.

LUKE

Yeah

...
...
...
...

LUKE

All I want

Is someone to drive me

Driving in cars.....

Driving in cars at night...

*Driving in cars at night with the rain
spraying the dashboard and a seat warmer
that makes my butt hot. Hot like when I used
to sit my naked ass on the radiator at home
growing up. A hot butt makes me sleepy. And
I'd get so sleepy. Riding in cars at night. But
it's the delicious kind of sleepy. Where you
wish you could stay in that liminal state
forever watching the raindrops on the
windshield and the world blurring
by.....and my Mom...listening to my
Mom... remembering listening to my Mom....
all I want is to be in a car at night, sleepy
and listening to my Mom*

...
...
.....

LUKE'S MOM

How's dance?

LUKE

Huh?

LUKE'S MOM

How was dance? Did you learn something?

LUKE

It was fine

LUKE'S MOM

What are you working on now? Are you still doing that sailor—

LUKE

No we switched. We're doing Citizens

...
...
...

We're doing this whole thing with Gandhi

LUKE'S MOM

That sounds fun

...
...

And you're liking it?

He shrugs.

LUKE'S MOM

Because you don't have to keep doing it if you're not liking it.
You could do ice skating / or music

LUKE

No I like it!

LUKE'S MOM

Just as long as you're liking it

LUKE
I like it

LUKE'S MOM
Okay

...
...
...

That's good

...
...

LUKE

...
...
...
...
...

LUKE'S MOM

...
...
...
...
...

Somewhere,
moon, window etc.

CONNIE
Dear God
Please
Please

Please give me
the part of
Gandhi
I promise I'll do
a good job,
please Lord
Please let it be
me, just this one
time, please, just

this once,
let it
be
me
...
...
..
.

6

The girls and Luke are lined up in leotards and
spandex, ready for class. A little army.

ALL GIRLS

If I could change the world through dance
If I could change the world by dancing with my body
If I could dance away my mom's cancer
And my friend Alyssa's depression
And the way she won't stop eating skittles when she's hungry
Instead of eating proper food
If I could dance away world hunger
And all violence against women
And all pets without a home
And all the sadness
Alllll the sadness
All the sadness and the meanness
If I could dance and nobody would ever want to kill another
person again
Or be racist again
Or feel alone at night again
Or abandon their pets without a home again
That's what I would do
That's what I would do
That's what I want to do with my LIFE

DANCE TEACHER PAT

Alright girls

Great auditions

It wasn't easy but I've made my decision

They all hold hands—nervous, expectant

ALL THE GIRLS

I want to dance

I want to dance

I want to heal the world through DANCE

I want to dance

I want to dance

I want to feel alive through DANCE

I want to dance

I want to dance

I want to dance

DANCE TEACHER PAT

And the role of Gandhi will be played by...

ALL THE GIRLS

I want to dance

I want to dance

I want to dance

I want to dance

I want to dance

I want to dance

DANCE TEACHER PAT

Connie!

All the girls gasp and grunt. They gather supportively around Connie who is beaming.

DANCE TEACHER PAT

But there's a twist...

The girls freeze—terrified.

DANCE TEACHER PAT

In addition to the role of Gandhi, I have created another role.

The role of the *spirit of Gandhi*.

(Oh my god! Another chance at a featured part!)

DANCE TEACHER PAT

And the role of *the spirit of Gandhi* will be played

by.....

.....

.....

.....

.....ZUZU!

The girls scream bloodcurdling screams. They gather around Zuzu supportively, who is on the verge of tears. Luke throws his arms around her. All genuine.

MAEVE

Congratulations!

LUKE

Congratulations!

AMINA

Congratulations, Zuzu, you're gonna be great!

ASHLEE

That's so exciting

ZUZU
Thanks guys

DANCE TEACHER PAT *(to Zuzu)*
Are you happy?

ZUZU *(barely able to speak)*
Yes

DANCE TEACHER PAT
It's a big responsibility, Zuzu. Think of all the people the spirit of Gandhi has inspired. Martin Luther King... John Lennon... That's *you*. You have to show us that.

She nods.

DANCE TEACHER PAT
Alright, Citizens spread apart. Connie, sit on the floor.

He points to the floor.

Dance Teacher Pat teaches the girls the chorus part.
Connie sits on the floor as "Gandhi."

DANCE TEACHER PAT
We're going to start with a nice sternum expansion...

He demonstrates—his arms extended, his chest open...

The girls copy him.

DANCE TEACHER PAT
Let your heart go out - out - out - - - - -

7

Later. Sofia and Amina are huddled outside the dance studio in their tracksuits with their dance bags hung over their shoulders.

SOFIA
It's not that big of a deal. The Gandhi dance is lame anyway

AMINA
Yeah

SOFIA
Gandhi doesn't even do anything. Connie just sits on the floor

AMINA
But the *spirit* of Gandhi...

SOFIA
Whatever. Zuzu's going to mess it up

AMINA
...

SOFIA
You know she's going to mess it up. Dance Teacher Pat's just trying to be nice. He can't give you the solo *every time*

AMINA
You don't think he's mad at me?

SOFIA
Nah. The dance is lame so he gave it to Zuzu

AMINA
You think so?

SOFIA
Oh yeah. I know so

Zuzu in the other room working on the Spirit of Gandhi solo with Dance Teacher Pat. We hear him as we've never heard him before—mean, vicious, punishing...

DANCE TEACHER PAT (*offstage*)
Are you an idiot?

ZUZU (*offstage*)
I don't know

DANCE TEACHER PAT
Then why are you acting like one?

ZUZU
I don't know

DANCE TEACHER PAT
You don't know?

ZUZU
I don't know what you're asking me!

DANCE TEACHER PAT
I'm asking you to do it again. And do it right this time.

...
And don't try so hard. It's embarrassing.

Sofia and Amina listening to Zuzu and Dance Teacher Pat in the other room...

SOFIA (*hushed*)
<Should we wait for her?>

AMINA (*hushed*)
<I don't know>

DANCE TEACHER PAT
No. Again

SOFIA (*calling out*)
Bye, Zu...

AMINA (*calling out*)
Bye, Zu...

They listen, a little terrified...

DANCE TEACHER PAT
Again

SOFIA (*not unkind*)
Bet you 50 dollars she has a nervous breakdown by the end of the week

AMINA (*to Sofia*)
Zuzu's a good dancer

SOFIA
I know

AMINA
She's really talented

SOFIA
She is!

Zuzu left alone in the studio, working with Dance Teacher Pat.

8

The next day. Zuzu's Mom has come to the studio to speak with Dance Teacher Pat. Zuzu is sitting on the toilet in her tights and leotard, mortified.

The girls are at the barre, warming up.

AMINA

Alright so assume first position and then we're just going to go through the pliés

Classical music plays...

AMINA

Demi plié and...

...

...

Demi plié and...

...

ZUZU'S MOM

Zuzu is not allowed to be the best dancer she can be. You don't let her

Grand plié...

...

DANCE TEACHER PAT

I don't let her?

...

...

ZUZU'S MOM

You purposely intimidate her!

...

...

DANCE TEACHER PAT

That's my job!

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

(The girls ears perk up. What is going on???)

...

...

...

Fourth position

...

Demi plié and...

...

ZUZU'S MOM

You put her down. You make her think she can't do it!

DANCE TEACHER PAT

I teach! I correct! It's up to her whether or not she thinks she can do it!

ZUZU'S MOM

Listen to me.....

There's no such thing as talent

People plant it in their minds

Whether they're good at this

Or bad at that

And they become whatever *you tell them they are*

DANCE TEACHER PAT

...

...

Do you honestly believe that?

ZUZU'S MOM

I'm just saying that geniuses have had their cocks sucked by / a lot of people

DANCE TACHER PAT

Okay, please don't talk like that

ZUZU'S MOM *(back to hushed tones)*

You are destroying my child

DANCE TEACHER PAT

What do you want me to do?

... ZUZU'S MOM
... I want you to tell her that she's special
Demi plié and... I want you to tell her that she's a genius

... DANCE TEACHER PAT
... I can't / do that

... ZUZU'S MOM
... I want you to whisper in her ear that
... she's *amazing* and that she takes your
... breath away *every. single. time.* she
... dances. *That's!* What I want you to do

... DANCE TEACHER PAT
... If I don't see it / I can't [say it]

... ZUZU'S MOM
... She's only a child

... DANCE TEACHER PAT
... Yes, well
... Children live *in the world*
... And it's not some special world
... Where everyone gets a chance
... There is such a thing as talent
... And we all know it when we see it
... And there's such a thing as charisma
... And momentum
... And destiny
... And we know it when we feel it, so
... Don't tell me
... To go against the world

(They stop
dancing...)

... ZUZU'S MOM
... You make her! You make her! I'm
... saying that you make her!

...
...
... So make her!
...
... I'm asking you to make her

Other side

...
Demi plié aaannnddd....

...
Demi plié aaannnddd....

....
Grand plié.....

...
Bend.....

...
And come up.....

...
Second position

...
Demi plié and....

...
Demi plié and.....

...
Grand plié....

...
...
...

ASHLEE (*whispering*)
Pussy

AMINA
Bend at the waist...

...
...
...

ASHLEE (*whispering*)
Pussy

SOFIA (*whispering*)
Pussy

AMINA
And...come...up...
Fourth position
Demi plié

CONNIE (*whispering*)
Pussy

ASHLEE (*whispering*)
Pussy

MAEVE/SOFIA (*whispering*)
Pussy

CONNIE (*whispering*)
Pussy

ASHLEE (*whispering*)
Pussy

LUKE (*whispering*)
Pussy

AMINA
Bend and...

...
...
Come...up...

ASHLEE/CONNIE/MAEVE/SOFIA/LUKE (*whispering*)

...
...
Pussyyyyyy

AMINA (*normal speaking voice*)
And move your pussy into fifth position

(*Victory!!!!!!!!!!*)

AMINA
Demi plié and...

...
Demi plié and...

...
Grand plié

...
...
Bend at the pussy...and...bring your pussy back up....

Dance Teacher Pat comes back into the room.

DANCE TEACHER PAT
How's it going, girls?

AMINA

Good. We're almost done with warm up

DANCE TEACHER PAT

Where's Zuzu?

Blank stares.

(Zuzu still alone on the toilet. Somehow, some way she's grown little sharp teeth. Like fangs. She bites her forearm hard. Harder. Blood spurts out. She chews off a chunk of her arm.)

DANCE TEACHER PAT

ZUUUZUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUU

ZUZU
YESSSS???

(She jumps up off the toilet and dashes out of the bathroom into the studio, her arm still pulsing blood.)

ZUZU *(still with her fangs)*

I'm here

DANCE TEACHER PAT

We're going to run through the number
Everybody ready?

They nod.

LUKE *(to Zuzu)*

You okay?

ZUZU

I'm fine

DANCE TEACHER PAT

5-6-7-8!

They dance.

Except it's not really like Gandhi.

It's more like baby sexy robots. Bloodsucking robots who want to destroy the world and then fuck it after it's dead.

They are barely wearing any clothes. They are touching their bodies. They are gnashing their teeth—all of them have fangs now. Sharp, pointy teeth.

*You say you're a big boy
But I can't agree
Cuz the love you said you had
Ain't been put in me
I wonder...
If I'm just too much for you, wonder
Please don't make me just wonder
Duh-duh-duh-duh-duh-duh
Take a chance to recognize that this could be yours
Baby, can't you see?
How these clothes are fitting on me
I'm about to blow
I don't think you know.....*

They are climbing up the walls. Maeve is chewing on the light bulbs—glass in her mouth. Glass is crushed beneath their feet. Zuzu does her special part. She's awesome.

DANCE TEACHER PAT

Alright girls. I don't know what **THE FUCK** this is. But it's not Gandhi.

Zzzzzz. The lights go out with an electric hiss except for one bright light shining down from Heaven on.....Ashlee...panting, still baby sex robot power, etc. Half-dressed, her hair sticking to her forehead.

The buzz of the music beneath her. She talks to us. Not vein, not bragging. Just genuinely pondering the possibility...

ASHLEE

I think I might be frickin' gorgeous
My ass, especially
Might be frickin' gorgeous
I wish I could show you my ass but I'm only 13
My ass has been described as "epic"
An "Epic Bottom"
Someone said that to me once. He said: "You have an Epic Bottom"
It sounds a little creepy now, but it didn't sound creepy when he said it
Men like to stroke my ass when they see it
They pull me over their laps
And they stroke my ass
Like it were a talisman
Or a worry stone
Worn perfectly smooth and round

By time
Except it's the opposite of time
I'm young
I just got popped out like this
Me and my perfect ass
Like two little deer droppings
Smooched together
Frickin' epic
Also I have a pretty face
I have a really nice face, I think
I really like my face
And I have great tits, so
I feel really lucky
I feel really *blessed* or whatever
Let's just admit it
I'm a frickin' catch
I walk down the street and I feel everybody looking at me, you know
I'm not trying to brag
I'm serious. I promise. I'm not
I'm just trying to figure this out
I'm just trying to be real for a moment
I think it's important to be real about things like this
Like sometimes people post pictures online
And all of their friends are like
Whoa. Gorgeous
Look at you girl. You could be a model. KaBOOM!!!!
Why do people lie to people like that?
I'm serious
I don't get it
Just say: That's a great picture of you! Nice shot! You look great!
Not: "You're gorgeous"
Not: "KaBOOM"
It's like what exploded? Nothing exploded. I don't see anything explosive about that picture.

Why are you pretending that something exploded?
I don't get it
Just tell the truth

She's off-track, she catches herself, she starts again...

ASHLEE

Here's the other thing
I'm really frickin' smart
I am. I'm smarter than most people I meet
I'm probably smarter than you
And not just liberal arts bullshit
I'm good at math
People are always like lolllllllll
I'm bad at math wahhh
Like that makes them cool
No it doesn't
You suck at math
That doesn't make you cool
Math makes you cool
It's not that hard to be good at math
Math is actually the easiest section of the SAT to get a perfect
score on, so
If you just study
It's the most "study-able" section
So I guess you didn't study
That doesn't make you cool
That just makes you lazy and shortsighted about your future
Seriously people, it's not that hard to be good at math if you
frickin try
Are you even trying people???
"Wahhhh I'm bad at math"
Shut the fuck up and stop whining and just think about the
problem for a minute
It's not that hard
It's not like you have to write a fucking poem

There are like *rules*
There's like *an answer*
I don't even have parents who can help me and I *still* ace it
Because I'm not a moron

She collects herself. A little nervous from saying all
this out loud.

ASHLEE

Anyway. So I never say this stuff to anybody because I'm
afraid they're going to hate me. But I think about it sometimes.
And sometimes it makes me feel ashamed. Like I'm a bad
person. And I want to bury it down deep. Never acknowledge
it. Keep my eyes on the pavement when I feel men looking at
me and just pretend I don't exist.

...
Like every time someone has ever told me that I'm beautiful I
say: "No."

...
This guy, he said to me, "You're really beautiful" and I just
said: "No." It's like a reflex

...
You're beautiful. *No*. You're smart. *No*. You're funny. *No*.
You're beautiful.

She shakes her head. *No*.

ASHLEE

But sometimes I wonder what would happen, if I really went
for it

...
I mean, I'm a little afraid of what would happen if I really
went for it

...
...

Over the course of the following, Ashlee grows taller. Her shadow becomes 12-feet long. Her eyes turn red. Her fangs lengthen. Her voice becomes the voice of some vengeful, ancient pagan god. The girls stare at her in awe. The baby sexy robot music still humming...

ASHLEE

Like if I tried. If I really, really tried. Like if I acknowledged it. Just embraced it. Like if I walked down the street and looked those men straight in the eyes and said: "Yes, I'm beautiful and I'm gonna get a perfect score on the SAT, Math, Reading *and* Writing, motherfucker, and yes I'm only thirteen years old now but just wait ten more years because one day I'm going to be a **FUCKING SURGEON**, one day I'm going to be a **FUCKING GENIUS POET** and running my own company, one day I'm going to be even more ridiculously attractive than I am now and **GREAT AT SEX** and I'm going to cut people open like it's my fucking job because *it is my fucking job* and I'm going to make you my bitch, you motherfucking cunt-munching piece of shit prick. I *am* your god. I *am* your second coming. I *am* your mother and I'm smarter than you and more attractive than you and better than you at everything that you love and you're going to get down on your knees and worship my mind, my mind *and my body* and I'm gonna be the motherfucking **KING** of your motherfucking world, I'm going to be the **KING OF EVERYBODY'S MOTHERFUCKING WORLD**, and you're going cum just by eating my cunt, the taste of my cum is going to make you cum because it'll be the greatest sexual pleasure you have ever known

just tasting me and the words I say are going to be the greatest fucking words that you've ever heard and the things I do are going to be the greatest fucking things you've ever witnessed. That's what I've got inside this tiny fucking body of mine and I don't have to deny it I don't have to disown it I don't have to be ashamed of it I can shout it from the rooftops because you are all my **motherfucking BITCH**

She shrinks.

The lights snap back to fluorescents. The light of Heaven is gone.

Ashlee stands alone, a little scared. A little exhausted. A little perplexed.

ASHLEE (*a genuine question, she asks us*)
What am I going to do with all this power?

...

What am I going to do with all this power?

...

Huh?

...

...

I don't know.

...

...

...

...

...
...
...
...
...
...
...

I hope I don't pussy out.

Maeve howls like a wolf.

The girls gnash their fangs and strike a final pose—
Zuzu, fabulous as the Spirit of Gandhi and in the
middle of the pack.

9

Amina catches Zuzu after the run-through.

AMINA
Hey Zu

ZUZU
Yeah?

AMINA
You looked really good out there

ZUZU
Oh. Thanks

AMINA
You totally killed that solo

ZUZU
Really?

AMINA
Yeah your turns were really good. They were really centered

ZUZU
Yeah they felt good. I felt on top of myself

AMINA
You were really, really on top of yourself. And you looked
clean

ZUZU
Okay good. I was worried

AMINA
Don't be worried. You're doing awesome

ZUZU
Thanks I need to work on my side aerial but—

AMINA
You'll get it

ZUZU
Yeah

AMINA
It took me like two years to get my side aerial

ZUZU
Yeah

AMINA
You'll definitely get it

ZUZU
I hope so

AMINA
For sure

They smile at each other.

ZUZU
Hey. You wanna come over? My mom's making pizza

AMINA
Oh ... I don't think I can

ZUZU
Oh

AMINA
I just— I wanna get to bed early

ZUZU
Okay

AMINA
Sorry. I just—
I hate not sleeping before competitions

ZUZU
No, I get it. I hate not sleeping, too

They smile at each other.

ZUZU
Have you thought about what you're doing for the summer?

AMINA
Oh!

ZUZU
I was thinking about maybe applying for the ballet fellowship
at Pittsburgh Ballet?

AMINA
That'd be cool

ZUZU
Yeah I don't know if I'll get in. But it'd be so cool

...
...
I need to focus on my ballet

AMINA
Yeah Dance Teacher Pat wants to send me to Russia

ZUZU
To Russia?

AMINA
Yeah, he wants me to go and train with this ballet company in
Russia. I don't know. It sounds kinda intense

ZUZU
Intense is good, though

AMINA
I'm kinda scared

ZUZU
That's how you get better

AMINA

...
...

Yeah I think Sabina went

ZUZU

Oh?

AMINA

Yeah like when she was in high school

ZUZU

Cool.

...
...

AMINA

Pittsburgh Ballet is supposed to be really good, though.

ZUZU

Yeah I don't know

AMINA

I know this girl Eliza who went, and she really loved it. She made a lot of really great friends

...

Maybe you could also apply for the Philly program? That's supposed to be good, too.

ZUZU

It's expensive, though

AMINA

I bet there are like scholarships and things

ZUZU

Yeah I should probably look into that

AMINA

...

ZUZU

...

AMINA

...

ZUZU

Is Russia expensive?

AMINA

I don't know. I'm not paying

They smile at each other.

AMINA

I think Pittsburgh will be awesome

ZUZU

Hey Amina?

AMINA

Yeah

ZUZU

Don't be mad at me

But I think I need to stop talking to you about dance for awhile

Like I still love you a lot

You're still my best friend

But I just might not be able to talk to you about some things

AMINA

...

ZUZU

And I may have to close my eyes, sometimes, when you dance

But it's not because I don't love you

It's just because I might need to take a break from watching
you

And from talking to you

For awhile

...

...

...

Sorry

AMINA

Uh

ZUZU

Is that mean?

AMINA

Uh. No I don't think so

ZUZU

I still really really really love you

AMINA

I know

I just—

ZUZU

...

AMINA

I don't know...

I don't know what to say

ZUZU

...

AMINA

That's fine

ZUZU

Yeah?

AMINA

I totally get it

ZUZU

You do?

AMINA

Yeah

ZUZU

Thanks

AMINA

...

ZUZU

...

AMINA

...

ZUZU

...

AMINA

What kind of pizza are you having?

ZUZU

I don't know

...

Canadian bacon and olives. That's what my mom likes

AMINA

Cool

ZUZU

...

AMINA

...

ZUZU

...

AMINA

Sorry

ZUZU

What?

AMINA

I just don't really have anything to say

Dance Teacher Pat appears. He's locking up.

DANCE TEACHER PAT

Hey girls

ZUZU/AMINA

Hiii

DANCE TEACHER PAT

You're still here?

ZUZU

I'm going home. Goodnight, Amina

AMINA

Goodnight

Zuzu bolts.

Amina stands there watching Dance Teacher Pat lock up.

AMINA

Are you mad at me?

He looks at her.

DANCE TEACHER PAT

I'm not mad at you

AMINA

...

DANCE TEACHER PAT (*crouching down to her height to look her straight in the eye*)

But Amina

AMINA

Yes?

DANCE TEACHER PAT

Next time you audition for me I want you to remember that *I can tell* how much you want it

AMINA

...

DANCE TEACHER PAT
Understood?

She nods.

DANCE TEACHER PAT
Don't get lazy

He sort of swats her butt. *It's not sexual?????????* But also weird and uncomfortable for a grown-ass man to be swatting a 13-year-old's butt. Amina is horrified. And also, she loves it.

AMINA
I won't

She scampers off.

DANCE TEACHER PAT (*calling after her*)
SHOW ME YOU WANT IT

Amina scampering, from a distance...

DANCE TEACHER PAT (*half-hearted down the hallway*)
I WANNA SEE THAT YOU WANT IT...

She's gone.

Dance Teacher Pat alone in his studio. It's late. He should pack up his things and head out for the night. But he doesn't feel like moving.

He sighs a world-weary sigh.

DANCE TEACHER PAT
I guess I should go home

10

Philadelphia. The day of the competition.

All the girls in a different dressing room getting ready. They curl their hair, paint their faces elaborate colors, apply fake eyelashes. Connie is dressed like Gandhi. Zuzu is in a brilliant gold Spirit of Gandhi costume distinct from the Citizens.

All the girls still have their fangs.

SOFIA
If I have a child he is *not* getting circumcised

AMINA
Really?

SOFIA
Yeah

AMINA
Why?

SOFIA
Because it's barbaric to cut-off a piece of your baby's penis

CONNIE
My dad is circumcised

SOFIA
I'm not judging. Just not my kid.

Ashlee sneezes.

CONNIE
Luke are you circumcised?

ASHLEE
<sorry!>

LUKE
Um

Ashlee sneezes.

AMINA
Everyone is circumcised

ASHLEE
<sorry!>

SOFIA
Everyone is not circumcised!

ASHLEE
My kid's going to be circumcised because my mom is Jewish
so I sorta have to

CONNIE
I'm not Jewish and my kid's going to be circumcised too

MAEVE
What about you Luke?

LUKE
Um

ASHLEE
The thing is—you have to think about the locker room.
Because my dad says that boys who are uncircumcised get
made fun of a lot in the locker room. And that's really not
something you want to do to your thirteen-year-old kid, you
know

SOFIA
Yeah but sex is better with an uncircumcised penis

ALL THE GIRLS

...

SOFIA
It's true

MAEVE
How do you know that?

SOFIA
Everybody knows it. It's like a fact.

CONNIE
I bet you're circumcised, Luke, aren't you?

SOFIA
It's like I will never, ever, ever, ever, ever marry a man who's
going to make me circumcise my kid. That's just a deal
breaker, you know?

MAEVE
Maybe Amina was circumcised when she was a baby and
nobody told her and that's why she can't masturbate

CONNIE
What are you talking / about?

ASHLEE
No!

CONNIE
Maeve!

ASHLEE
That's just wrong!

CONNIE
You're crazy

AMINA (*despondent*)

Do you think there's something wrong with me?

SOFIA

Nah, you're probably just slow

ASHLEE

Yeah you're probably just developmentally delayed or something. Don't worry about it

SOFIA

Yeah, you're probably just a late bloomer, Amina

ASHLEE

Yeah. Everyone's on a different time frame

ZUZU

Hey Luke? Can you sew this into my head?

LUKE

Sure

Luke sews a flower into Zuzu's hair.

SOFIA

I bet you're not going to have any sex until you're like thirty-five and then one day you'll just explode with all these sexual feelings and you'll be like way more sexual than the rest of us and we'll all be married and you'll be like a sexy, older woman with all these lovers

CONNIE

Totally. That's totally you, Amina

AMINA (*even more despondent*)

But I don't want to wait until I'm thirty-five

MAEVE

Maybe it's already happened
Maybe it just feels different for you
And you've already felt it
And you didn't even know

LUKE

Connie, did you bring your lucky horse?

CONNIE

Yeah, it's over there

There's a beautiful Appaloosa amidst the carnage of the table.

Sofia hands it to Luke.

LUKE

Okay, *phew!*

AMINA

I need to touch it, too

ASHLEE

What about you, Zu? When do you think you'll have sex?

ZUZU

I don't care

ASHLEE

What do you mean you don't care?!

ZUZU

As long as I can dance, then I don't care

SOFIA
She's lying

ZUZU
I've wanted to be a dancer since I was two years old. That's all
I want

SOFIA
Two year olds don't even have wants

ZUZU
Yes they do
I was two
And I wanted to be a dancer
The best dancer
In the entire world
I wanted to be a professional dancer when I was two

CONNIE
Me too

MAEVE
I don't know what I wanted when I was two
I think I just wanted
You know
Water
And stuff like that

Their faces are painted now—bright, freakish colors.
They look like monster aliens with their little fangs.

CONNIE (*applying her eyelashes*)
I remember this dude from Germany who used to visit my
parents
I don't even remember why he was there...
He was my parents' friend?

He was German?
He was only in town for a short while
This was like 3 years ago
I don't know
He would come and he would put his belly against my back
and he would put his hand on my shoulder and he would sing
along when I played the piano
Like is that normal?
I got very nervous that it wasn't okay
But no one said anything about it
My parents saw him do it and everything
So I guess it was okay?

ASHLEE
Did you see his penis?

CONNIE
No!

ASHLEE
Then it's fine

AMINA
I don't know, I find it all very confusing

SOFIA
What's confusing?

AMINA
I don't know

MAEVE
I saw this penis once

ASHLEE
What?

SOFIA
Was it romantic?

MAEVE
No

CONNIE
Was it your brother's penis?

MAEVE
Never mind

SOFIA
Was it your dad's penis?

MAEVE
I SAID NEVER MIND!

DANCE TEACHER PAT (*entering*)
Hey girls how's it going

ALL THE GIRLS
Good, Hi Dance Teacher Pat!, etc.

DANCE TEACHER PAT
Are you ready to go?

ALL THE GIRLS
Yeah we're ready, etc. pretty much!

DANCE TEACHER PAT
Let me see what you look like

They line up in their costumes, face paint, etc. They look good.

DANCE TEACHER PAT
You look good. Alright. Circle up

They do.

DANCE TEACHER PAT
Now I know there's a lot of pressure on you
But I want to take a minute
And I want you to close your eyes

They do.

DANCE TEACHER PAT
And I want you to forget about all the steps...
Everything we've worked on...
I want you to forget about being in Philadelphia, away from
your families...
And Nationals and going to Tampa Bay...
It doesn't exist

...

...

Just breathe in

They do.

DANCE TEACHER PAT
And let it all go

They exhale

DANCE TEACHER PAT
Now I want you to take a moment
And I want you to think about alllll the people in the world
People who are struggling
People who aren't as fortunate as you
People who don't have parents like you do
Who pay for them to go to dance class
Who buy things for them
I want you to think about children

Who don't get to go to school
They have to go to work

Maeve suppresses a giggle.

DANCE TEACHER PAT
I'll wait

MAEVE
Sorry! I just get nervous <when I have to close my eyes...>

He glares at her.

DANCE TEACHER PAT
You ready?

Maeve nods.

DANCE TEACHER PAT
I want you to think about children
Who don't have anyone to turn to
Who don't have anyone they can trust
Or they can talk to
Who are being abused
Who are living in garbage, sometimes, *literal garbage*
Their beds, their houses
And no one touches them, no one loves them, no one wonders
when they're coming home at night or asks them how there
day was

The girls are somber now. Maybe Sofia is crying a
little.

Amina and Connie have their eyes cracked open, a
little skeptical. They catch each other's eyes and smile.

DANCE TEACHER PAT

You girls don't realize how lucky you are
You don't realize that the problems you struggle with
Are not real problems
That the world is full of suffering
And you're tasting only a tiny part of it

...

...

... *(it shifts, slightly... becomes very small, quiet, internal...*

... *like a tiny, private vigil...*

... *the audience should register what he's saying*

... *as something that's really happening in the world,*

... *right now,*

... *as he speaks...)*

...

You breathe in.....Someone dies.....

He snaps his fingers, quietly.

DANCE TEACHER PAT
Another person just died

snaps

DANCE TEACHER PAT
Another person just died

snaps

DANCE TEACHER PAT
Another person just died

snaps

DANCE TEACHER PAT
Another person is on their knees...

In their closet...
Crying, in so much pain...
Right *now*, right in this instant

ALL THE GIRLS

...

DANCE TEACHER PAT

I want you to think about all the people in the world who are suffering...

...

...

And I want you to go out there

...

...

And I want you to *dance for them*

They open their eyes. They all smile at each other—full of purpose, very powerful.

DANCE TEACHER PAT

You ready?

They are.

DANCE TEACHER PAT

Knock 'em dead

ALL THE GIRLS (*this is their studio chant; they bark it*)

LIVERPOOL DANCE WORKS

EAT

SLEEP

DANCE

EAT

SLEEP

DANCE

EAT

SLEEP

WIN!

The girls and Luke run out the door in an impassioned flurry.

Dance Teacher Pat calls after Zuzu.

DANCE TEACHER PAT

Hey Zuzu

ZUZU (*mumbling, dying*)

Yeah???

DANCE TEACHER PAT

Come here for a second

She does.

DANCE TEACHER PAT

I took a big chance on you, you know that, right?

She nods.

DANCE TEACHER PAT

Prove me right. Okay?

He puts a hand on her shoulder. It's intimate. Almost kind.

DANCE TEACHER PAT

I like to be right

(*It's almost a joke.*)

DANCE TEACHER PAT

Philly. Akron. Lanoka. It all starts here.

He points to her heart.

DANCE TEACHER PAT

The moment you decide to win is the moment you win. A new chapter for Zuzu.

She nods.

DANCE TEACHER PAT

You can do it

Zuzu blinks and then bolts to catch up with the other kids.

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Backstage. The girls are nervous—shaking out their feet and hands.

Amina holds Zuzu by the neck, nose-to-nose. She coaches her.

AMINA

Just focus on your breath
Your breath and your feet
And remember to use your face

ZUZU

I know

AMINA

I know that you know. I'm just reminding you

SOFIA

Guys

AMINA *(to Zuzu)*

You've totally got this

ASHLEE *(to Connie)*

Are you nervous?

CONNIE

No

ASHLEE

You're gonna be great!

SOFIA

Guys

CONNIE

All I do is sit on the floor

AMINA

Come on guys, let's pray
(indicating)

Connie.

They circle up and pray. Connie leads them.

CONNIE

Dear God
Please help us to do our best
And please help us to win

SOFIA

Guys

AMINA

Shhh!

CONNIE

It's been a hard week

And we've been working really hard—

SOFIA

guys

LUKE

Shhh!

CONNIE

And we deserve this

So please anoint each girl and bring us to victory

ASHLEE

Amen!

EVERYBODY

AMEN!

SOFIA

Guys. I think there's something wrong

Sofia pulls down her tights. There's blood everywhere.

SOFIA

Oh no, oh no

ASHLEE

You're fine! You're fine!

MAN ON THE MICROPHONE

Girls, you're on deck! This is your two-minute warning

CONNIE

Oh my god, / we're doing it

ZUZU

I'm going to throw up

SOFIA

I can't go out there!

ASHLEE

Sofia! Look at me! It's 2 minutes and 30 seconds. You're going to be fine

LUKE

Where's Maeve?

CONNIE (*shaking out her hands, in the zone, under her breath*)

Fuzz, fuzz, fuzz, fu-fuzz, fuzz, fuzz

LUKE

Guys?! Where's Maeve???????

AMINA (*calling*)

Maeve!

Maeve comes sprinting around the corner.

AMINA

It's two minutes, Maeve!! Get in line!

MAEVE

You guys, you guys! I just got wind of our competition

ZUZU

And?

MAEVE
They have boys

AMINA
We have boys

MAEVE
We have Luke
But they have like *advanced-level* boys
They have boys that do turns

The girls gasp.

LUKE
(I do turns sometimes)

MAEVE
And flips

The girls gasp.

MAEVE
They have like: *dancing boys*
Boys who can do fouettes
BOYS DRESSED UP AS NEWSIES
WHO ARE DOING LIFTS
WITH OTHER GIRLS!!!
THEY ARE LIFTING THEM OVER THEIR HEADS
AND SELLING THEIR NEWSPAPERS
AND SPINNING SO FAST
AS FAST AS AMINA

SOFIA
No!

MAEVE
YES!

SOFIA
<Fuck!>

ZUZU
We're going to be eliminated / in the first round!!!!

SOFIA
This is so humiliating

AMINA
What are we going to do????????

ASHLEE (*quietly*)

...
...
...

We're going to destroy them

CONNIE
But the judges are partial to—

ASHLEE
We have to destroy them

CONNIE
But dancing boys are—

AMINA
She's right. Dancing boys are unbeatable.

ASHLEE (*in a huddle, whispered, mean...*)
WE'RE FUCKING MONSTERS, BABIES, AND WE'RE
GONNA MAKE THEM EAT THEIR DICKS AND DIE

TAMPA
TAMPA
TAMPA
TAMPA
TAMPA
TAMPA
TAMPAAAAAAAARR
RGHHHH

CONNIE

Luke. You coming with us?

LUKE

Yup!

SOFIA

It's show time

Sofia reaches down her tights and gets a glob of period blood. She wipes it across her face like war paint.

ASHLEE

You better frickin kill that solo, Zu

ZUZU

I will

MAN ON THE MIC

Girl's you're up

ZUZU (to herself)

I will. Or die

MUSIC! The girls strut onstage in their Citizen costumes—a weird, robotic little strut—bellies sucked in, beads of sweat on their forehead, stiff smiles across their faces.

It begins. The Gandhi Dance. Connie sits gracefully on the floor. The girls dance as Citizens around her. Everything seems to be going well—the girls are in sync, smiling. Connie looks radiant. Sofia is slowly bleeding through her tights... It's almost time for the Spirit of Gandhi to break out and do her solo. Zuzu is pale and sweating. She gets slightly out of step with the Citizens. Amina watches her out of the corner of her eye, concerned. Zuzu steps forward, determined, ready to launch into the frenzied, fever dream that is her “special part.”

She goes into her first twirl sequence and executes it brilliantly. She smiles.

She flips across the stage—backwards aerial. She nails it. She's feeling good. She's feeling really good. She's dancing. She's not dancing—*she's existing*. She's in it. She's grooving. She is *possessed*. She kicks her leg with great force—it sails up above her head and slices past her ear. But something's off. She's off-balance. She's kicked her leg too hard. And her other leg—her supporting leg—slips out from under her like a bad leg on a chair. Zuzu falls. She bounces on her ass. She is stunned. She sits there for a half-second, totally overwhelmed.

ZUZU'S MOM (*from the audience*)
Get up, get up, get up!

Everything slows down. We're watching the scene from outer space.

Zuzu looks up. Her face very pale. Her eyes glassy. Like a little wounded fawn that knows it's about to die and is too stunned to move.

ZUZU'S MOM (*from the audience*)
She forgot it. Oh god, she forgot it

Zuzu is breathing so hard that we can see her rib cage go in-and-out, in-and-out.

ZUZU'S MOM (*willing it*)
Keep going!

Thunderous applause from the audience.

ZUZU'S MOM (*slow-mo*)
Keeeeeep gooooooooooing!!!!!!!!!!

The entire audience joins in—huge, muffled, booming, slow-mo, space alien... is this even happening... They start chanting her name.

ZUZU'S MOM AND THE AUDIENCE
ZUZU! ZUZU! ZUZU! ZUZU! ZUZU!
ZUZU! ZUZU!

Zuzu looks at the girls. She's failed them. Their dreams of Tampa are dying...

Amina looks at Zuzu frozen on the floor. She leaps out of line with the Citizens. The dance resumes like clockwork.

Zuzu lies there like she's dead. Like she has died. As if this were all part of the piece. Zuzu is death. And Amina is life incarnate.

Amina dances the part of the Spirit of Gandhi, dressed as a lowly Citizen. She is spectacular.

The dance is genuinely moving. Strong and in sync and full of emotion and life. It makes the audience cry. The dance ends. There is rapturous applause. The girls exit, walking off-stage—their chests heaving, rib-cages showing...

Connie grabs Amina by the arm.

CONNIE
What were you doing??????

AMINA
What're you talking about?!

CONNIE
You should've given her a chance!

AMINA
She choked!

CONNIE
For a split second! She would have made it

AMINA
She choked, Connie, *she choked*

CONNIE

You didn't even give her *a second* / to recover—

AMINA

She needed / help! I was saving the dance—

CONNIE

You just jumped in front of her

AMINA

No, I—

CONNIE

And she didn't / even have a second to recover

AMINA

She fell down!

CONNIE

To catch her breath

AMINA

You don't have a second

You don't

A second is too long

You hesitate. You're dead

CONNIE

...

...

You're such a jerk

AMINA

Connie, no, I—

CONNIE

IT WAS NOT YOUR PART!!!!

AMINA

I didn't do anything wrong!

I was just trying to help!

I just went off my instincts

I'm not going to apologize

For just *reacting*

I just—

I did it

CONNIE

...

AMINA

My body just—

I'm sorry

I would've waited for her

I would've waited for her forever

But

My body just—

...

It just *went*

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In some forgotten corner of the auditorium...

Zuzu is still lying face-down on nasty-ass carpet like she were dead. Maeve sits beside her, holding her wolf cards.

MAEVE

Wanna see my wolf pack?

Zuzu doesn't respond.

MAEVE

They're called the Druids, that's their pack name
My mom paid \$25 and now I get their pictures in the mail

...

...

I can track them online, too, it's pretty cool

ZUZU (*into the carpet*)

Cool

MAEVE

Yeah it's pretty cool

ZUZU

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

Hey Maeve

MAEVE

Yeah

ZUZU

What do you want to do with your life?

MAEVE

I don't know

Maybe astrophysics or something like that

ZUZU

Not dance?

MAEVE

Nah, I don't think so

...

...

I want to do something cosmic, you know

...

...

I mean, I know that dance can be kind of cosmic

But I mean like *actually* cosmic

Like stars or volcanoes or something

...

...

...

ZUZU

Yeah I want to do something cosmic, too

MAEVE

Like black holes

Are so scary

And cool

ZUZU

Yeah

MAEVE

Hey Zuzu

ZUZU

Yeah

MAEVE

Can I ask you a question?

ZUZU (*still into the carpet*)

Yeah

MAEVE

Have you ever flown?

ZUZU

...

...

...

In a plane?

MAEVE

No

Like

...

...

In a room

ZUZU

I don't think so

MAEVE

Oh

ZUZU

Have you?

MAEVE

I think I *have*

...

...

Like sometimes I concentrate on it

Really hard

And all of a sudden

I'm flying

ZUZU

In a room

MAEVE

Yeah

ZUZU

Like this one

MAEVE

It doesn't have to be like / this one

ZUZU

But any room

MAEVE

Yes

ZUZU

...

MAEVE

...

...

...

It sort of washes over me. Like sleep. Like all of a sudden I notice my leg is falling asleep. And I feel it crawling up from the bottom of my feet and I'm like: Uh-oh. I'm about to fly again.

...

...

And then I hold my breath and let my eyes go soft focus and I try to concentrate on it but also I can't concentrate on it too hard or else it goes away. I have to sort of concentrate on it sideways, you know?

...

...

ZUZU

...

MAEVE

And then I just sort of float away. And I'm constantly in danger of crashing to the ground if I don't keep my mind in the right place. But if I *do*, if I do keep my mind in the right place then I just sort of float to the top of the room and sit there

ZUZU

That's amazing

MAEVE

And sometimes when I'm at the top of stairs
My body just takes off
And I just glide down
Like I'm a ghost
And I always think
Oh my god
This is the end
I'm about to fall down the stairs and break my neck
But then I just float down and I'm fine

ZUZU

...

MAEVE

And one time I flew over the Great Lakes and then up into Canada and over the Rocky Mountains? Maybe I was dreaming. But I just went out the window. And I was flying belly down over the mountains. Like right over the face of them. And I saw all their crags and crevices and pockmarks like I was looking into their faces. I don't know how I could've seen the mountains' faces if I hadn't been actually flying like that.

ZUZU

I've never flown before. Not even in my dreams. The only thing like that that's ever happened to me is sometimes I wake up and it feels like I'm falling through the bed.

Amina appears in the doorway, a giant crown on her head.

AMINA

Hey

MAEVE

Hey

ZUZU

...

MAEVE

Nice crown

AMINA

Oh, thanks

Amina reaches up and tries to take it off. But it won't budge.

AMINA

It's stuck in my hair, I can't get it off

MAEVE

What's it for?

AMINA

I won the MVP Miss Dance of Tomorrow?

MAEVE
Really????

AMINA
Yeah.....

Amina stops struggling with her crown.

MAEVE
What does that even *mean*?

She shrugs.

AMINA (*apologizing*)
It's a special award. For potential. Or something.
I guess I like... get to be fast-tracked to Tampa. I don't know...
(for the solo division)

MAEVE
You're going to Tampa???

She nods.

MAEVE
No matter what?

AMINA
I guess so

MAEVE
Cool

Amina looks at Zuzu lying face-down on the carpet.

AMINA
Is she okay?

Maeve shrugs.

MAEVE
We're just talking

Amina looks at Zuzu—a little scared. She lifts up her dance jacket and puts it over her head so that it covers her crown. She approaches Zuzu on the carpet.

AMINA

...

...

...

Zuzu?

...

...

...

I just wanted to check on you and make sure that you were
okay

...

And make sure you knew
That everyone's so happy we won the group dance!
We're going to Akron!!!!!! *Yayyyy!*
No one even cares that you fell down
They all thought it was supposed to happen
They thought it was *cool*
They thought it was really cool

...

...

Zu?

...

...

...

Are you mad at me?

Still with her face in the carpet...

ZUZU

I'm not mad I just can't really look at you right now...

AMINA

Um. That's okay...

Do you want me to like—sit with you? Or, I can get you some water??

ZUZU

...
...
...

MAEVE

I think she just needs some time and space

AMINA (*smiling weakly*)

Okay. No prob

...
...
...

Um, I guess I should...

...
...

She gives Maeve a little wave.

AMINA

Bye Maeve

MAEVE

Bye

AMINA

Bye Zu...

Nobody's mad, okay?

ZUZU

...

MAEVE

...

AMINA

...

Amina exits.

ZUZU

...
...
...
...
...
...

Is she gone?

MAEVE

Yeah

Zuzu gets up. She looks like death. Her eyes are bloodshot. She wipes her eyes, the snot off her face. She splashes water on her face.

MAEVE (*suddenly self-conscious*)

Hey Zu. Don't tell anyone I told you that.

ZUZU

Huh?

MAEVE

About the flying

ZUZU
Oh. I won't

MAEVE
I don't want people asking me questions

ZUZU
I won't tell, I promise

...
...
...

Zuzu looks in the mirror. She plays with her lips, her fangs.

MAEVE
And one day I'll forget that I ever used to fly. Because the truth is—I did. I did actually have the power to fly. Or to float, or whatever. But somehow, along the way I forgot about it. I forgot all about it. It was the coolest thing I ever did. And I forgot it. I forgot it ever happened. On multiple occasions. It happened. And I forgot.

ZUZU (*looking in the mirror*)
..... Ugh. I wish I could throw up but I don't think I can do it

.....
...
...
...
...
...

...
...
Maeve?

MAEVE
Yeah?

ZUZU
You wanna know something?

MAEVE
Yes

ZUZU
I knew I was gonna fall before I fell
I don't know why
My leg just didn't work
And I knew it
Before it even stopped working
It's like I dreamed it
I don't know
...from past lives...
.....or future lives.....
or something

MAEVE (*smiling apologetically*)
I'm sorry

ZUZU
It's fine

MAEVE
...
...
Hey Zuzu?

ZUZU
Yeah

MAEVE
I think I have to go find my mom now

ZUZU
That's fine

MAEVE
It's getting pretty late
...
...
Are you okay?

ZUZU
Yeah I'm fine.

MAEVE
Do you want me to find your mom?

ZUZU
No it's fine

She smiles at her.

ZUZU
I'm just gonna stay here for a minute and—

MAEVE
Okay

Maeve runs out of the room and goes to find her mom.
We see her run into her mother's arms.

MAEVE
Mom! We won!

Zuzu stands there—still smeared with face paint and blood from her arm. She closes her eyes. She holds her breath. She concentrates.

She throws herself into the wall. She throws herself into the wall again.

ZUZU
...
...
...
...
...
...
...
...
Ow

13

Night. Ashlee and Connie are waiting outside to be picked up. They have coats on over their tights and leotards. Their faces are still painted bright, freakish colors.

Headlights. Ashlee notices something...

ASHLEE
Connie

CONNIE
What?

ASHLEE
That man is looking at us

Connie looks. Then waves...

ASHLEE
Oh my god, he's waving back

CONNIE (*calling out*)
We're just waiting for her mom—

ASHLEE
Shh!

CONNIE (*laughing*)
He's probably wondering why we're not wearing any pants

ASHLEE
...

CONNIE
...

ASHLEE
Should I show him my leotard?

Ashlee starts to unzip her jacket.

ASHLEE
Show him your horse.

Connie pulls out her lucky horse. They show the man their horse and leotard.

Then...

ASHLEE
Oh my god, he's coming over! Connie, Run! Connie,
RUNNNNN!

They run away, shrieking.

...

...

...

...

The moon comes out...

...

...

..

.

A knock at the door

SOFIA
Just a minute

Sofia alone in the bathroom,
scrubbing the blood out of her
tights.

Another tentative knock.

SOFIA
I said, JUST A
MINUTE. CAN I NOT
HAVE TWO MINUTES
PEACE WITHOUT
SOMEONE

INVADING
ME???!!!!!!
JESUS
CHRIST!

She feels deeply ashamed for yelling.

SOFIA'S MOM
Sofia, hunny, do you need help in there?

SOFIA

...

...

...

...

...

...

Sorry, Mom. I'll be out in a minute

SOFIA'S MOM
Because I can come in and help you, if you want?

SOFIA

...

SOFIA'S MOM
There are tampons under the sink, and—

SOFIA
Mom!

SOFIA'S MOM
Pads. If you want them
It might be easier to use a pad...
Just to start

...

...

Or you can use a tampon, if you want to...

Do you know how to do it?

SOFIA
Mom, no. Stop

SOFIA'S MOM
Okay, I'm not trying to—

...

...

Just sometimes it helps if you get up on the counter and look in the mirror

SOFIA
Mom, no

SOFIA'S MOM
Just so you can see where it goes

SOFIA
I'm not going to look at it

Sofia is quietly weeping over her tights.

SOFIA
*I don't want to look at it
I'm never going to look at it*

SOFIA'S MOM (*still through the door*)
Okay, then don't look
Don't look then, hunny
Just put it in
It's just like you're giving yourself a
shot

Sofia still weeping over her
tights...

Connie appears in front of the moon, safe and
sound...

CONNIE
Mom, I'm home!

She goes into her bedroom and gets a box down
off a shelf. She slowly starts to unpack it. It's
full of horses...

Amina on her stomach. A pillow between her legs. She
prepares herself—almost like she's talking herself
through a number...

AMINA
And I'm walking down a beach
...
...
And they've got their thumb tucked inside the back of my
jeans
And I can feel the weight of their arm kind of pulling my jeans
down
...
...
And then they lay me down
Onto the sand

And they take off my jeans...

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

And then they start to kiss my ankle

...

And then my calf.....

...

And then my knee.....

...

And then they start to pull my swimsuit *down*....

.....

.....

...

..

.

Amina masturbates.

Connie with her horses under the moon.

Sofia in the bathroom, still weeping and scrubbing her
bloody tights.

(A triptych of girlhood.)

Afternoon. The girls climbing up the stairs to the dance studio...

Sofia and Ashlee sit in the dressing room drinking afternoon coffee. They're avoiding putting on their dance clothes. They pass one cup between them—taking dainty sips, taking turns...

The trophy from Philadelphia is there in a corner. It's 4-feet tall.

Amina enters. The girls look at each other—a little wary and tentative but ultimately everyone wanting to be supportive and kind...

AMINA
Hey

SOFIA/ASHLEE
Hey

AMINA
...*We're going to Akron!*...

SOFIA
...*We're going to Akron!*...

AMINA
Yayyyy!

ASHLEE
We totally did it!

Amina strokes the trophy.

AMINA
It's so big

SOFIA
They only get bigger...

AMINA
How are you guys doing?

SOFIA
Fine

ASHLEE
Fine

SOFIA
That's so cool about your thing, p.s.

AMINA
Oh thanks

ASHLEE
Yeah, Tampa! That's so cool

AMINA
Thanks, Ashlee

ASHLEE
I didn't even know that could happen!

AMINA
Me either

SOFIA
You're like *a star*, Amina

AMINA
Haha not really

SOFIA

No that's what everyone was saying. They were like: Wow.
She's such a *star*

AMINA

I don't know, I feel like I didn't even do that good, to be
honest...
I was so rattled...

ASHLEE

No you were *really* good, Amina. It was amazing.

...

...

Are you going to do the special Gandhi part in Akron?

AMINA

I don't know

AMINA

...

SOFIA

...

ASHLEE

...

AMINA

...

SOFIA

It's not *bad*. It's not a *bad thing* to be the star

AMINA

I know

ASHLEE

She's not "the star." Dance Teacher Pat
just likes her the best

SOFIA

And the judges! And all of western / Pennsylvania

AMINA

No, he doesn't!

ASHLEE

Yes, he does, Amina

SOFIA

Um, yeah, Amina, he totally does

AMINA

...

SOFIA

You don't have to lie about it

AMINA

I'm not lying

SOFIA

At least don't lie about it
At least *be honest*

AMINA

I still lose sometimes

SOFIA

Sometimes

AMINA

And it really sucks when I lose because there's a lot of
pressure on me
And it's really embarrassing

...

Like you guys lose all the time. Whatever
But if I lose, I'm like a perfectionist / and

ASHLEE
That's really mean

AMINA
What?

ASHLEE
You're being really mean

AMINA
I'm just being honest

SOFIA
No, actually, now you're being mean

AMINA
I'm just saying...
That the stakes *are higher* / for me

ASHLEE
Okay

AMINA
What? You said to be honest. I'm not allowed to be honest???

ASHLEE
Have fun with all your crowns

AMINA
What?

ASHLEE
I said: HAVE FUN WITH ALL YOUR CROWNS

...

...

...

INSTEAD OF FRIENDS

...

...

...

ALL YOU HAVE IS CROWNS

...

...

SO HAVE FUN WITH THEM

Amina exits towards the dance studio. Zuzu is climbing
up the stairs. She walks straight into the studio and
approaches Dance Teacher Pat.

ZUZU
I think I'm quitting dance

DANCE TEACHER PAT

...

...

...

You know, if you quit, you can never come back

ZUZU
I know

DANCE TEACHER PAT
I'm not just talking about logistics, Zuzu
I'm talking about *your body*
You are training your body right now
And if you quit
Your body will go through puberty and change
And it will be *impossible* for you
To get it back
You won't be able to change your mind

ZUZU

...

DANCE TEACHER PAT

Look at your mom

She was a really special dancer once

She could've done whatever she wanted

And now...

He shrugs.

DANCE TEACHER PAT

Is that what you want?

Amina pokes her head into the studio.

AMINA

Oh, sorry!

She makes a beeline for the corner.

AMINA

I'm just warming up

Dance Teacher Pat leans down so he's eye level with Zuzu.

DANCE TEACHER PAT

Just don't make a decision you'll regret for the rest of your life

The girls sipping coffee in the dressing room...

SOFIA

Drinking black coffee makes me feel like a Mom

ASHLEE

Drinking black coffee makes me feel like a Cowboy

Sofia looks at Ashlee and grins.

SOFIA

Wanna make it magic?

She pulls out of fistful of sugar packets form her tracksuit and very carefully, almost ritualistically, empties them one-by-one into the coffee and stirs.

Luke enters

LUKE

Hey

SOFIA/ASHLEE

Hey

Connie enters.

CONNIE

Hey

SOFIA/ASHLEE

Hey

CONNIE

Have you guys seen Zuzu?

SOFIA

No

ASHLEE

No

CONNIE

Is she doing okay?

Zuzu comes in from the studio.

ZUZU

See you later

CONNIE

Where are you going?

SOFIA

Hi Zuzu

ASHLEE

Hi Zuzu

ZUZU

I'm taking the day off

LUKE

Wait. I'm coming with you

Luke grabs his dance bag and scrambles after her.

ASHLEE

Bye Zu!

Connie watches Sofia stirring the coffee.

CONNIE

What are you doing?

Sofia grins at her.

SOFIA

I'm making it magic

Amina dancing in the studio. Dance Teacher Pat watches her.

DANCE TEACHER PAT

Amina

AMINA

What?

DANCE TEACHER PAT

You're holding back

AMINA

No I'm not

DANCE TEACHER PAT

Don't worry about what's going on in the dressing room

Just dance

Unleash

AMINA

I *am* unleashing

DANCE TEACHER PAT

No you're not.

...

Where are your shoes?!

AMINA

I forgot my dance bag

DANCE TEACHER PAT

Amina

AMINA

What???

DANCE TEACHER PAT
What's going on with you?

AMINA
Nothing

She dances.

DANCE TEACHER PAT
Stop

She does.

DANCE TEACHER PAT
Look at me

She does.

DANCE TEACHER PAT
Where's the girl I saw this weekend, huh?

AMINA
...

DANCE TEACHER PAT
You forget her at home, too?

The girls still in the dressing room, drinking coffee, not getting dressed.

Ashlee puts her feet on top of the trophy.

ASHLEE
Life is weird. And hard

CONNIE
Yeah

ASHLEE
I know I should be excited that we won and stuff but I'm in such a bad mood

CONNIE
Yeah I don't even really wanna go to Akron

ASHLEE
Is it always going to be like this?

SOFIA
Like what?

ASHLEE
I don't know. Just...

...
I feel all this pain
Inside my chest
Like all these things are hurting me
And I'm like turning into this giant *scar*, you know what I'm saying?
But also I feel bad about everything I ever say and everything I ever do...

SOFIA
Don't feel bad!

ASHLEE
I don't know why! I just do...

CONNIE
That's because you're a sensitive person, Ash
You're a thoughtful, sensitive person

ASHLEE

..

..

..

..

no

SOFIA

I love Amina

ASHLEE

I love Amina, too

In the studio.

AMINA (*to Dance Teacher Pat*)

Sometimes I think I want to lose

Like I actually think I want to lose

Like I close my eyes and I say:

God. It's okay, if I lose

I don't mind this time

Like I feel like I hurt people

Just by existing

Like just by me, just I—*living*

It hurts everyone else

And I think: Okay, *pleasssse*, just let me lose.....

But then I get up on that stage

And they take the trophies out

And when they take the trophies out

It's like I get the taste of metal in my mouth

And all of a sudden, all I want is to win

I want to win so bad

I just like, *pray for it*

DANCE TEACHER PAT

I don't think you have to feel bad about that

AMINA

...

...

...

Dance Teacher Pat?

DANCE TEACHER PAT

Yes, Amina?

AMINA

I don't want to do the special Gandhi part in Akron. I want

Zuzu to do it

DANCE TEACHER PAT

...

...

...

Okay

AMINA

Are you mad at me?

DANCE TEACHER PAT

I'm not *mad*...

AMINA

...

DANCE TEACHER PAT

But if Zuzu has the solo in Akron, she's going to take it all the way to Nationals

AMINA

That's fine

DANCE TEACHER PAT

And that's where all the casting directors are going to be, and where we're gonna wanna put our best foot forward as a team

She nods.

DANCE TEACHER PAT

This is bigger than one dance, Amina. You girls are building your legacy. Who do you trust with that legacy? Anyone? Or the strongest dancer on the team

AMINA

The strongest dancer on the team

DANCE TEACHER PAT

And who is that?

AMINA

...

DANCE TEACHER PAT

Who is the strongest dancer on the team?

AMINA

I don't know

DANCE TEACHER PAT

You don't know?

AMINA

I think I probably am, I just—the other girls are really...

DANCE TEACHER PAT

If you were an impartial judge who didn't know anything about anyone, who came in here and watched you all dance. Who would you say deserved it?

AMINA

I don't know. I think Zuzu can / do it

DANCE TEACHER PAT

Why do you pretend not to know things you know?

AMINA

I don't know!!!

...

...

I think it's me

...

..

.

DANCE TEACHER PAT

Good. You'll do the solo, then

Amina stands there bereft.

DANCE TEACHER

There's a thousand other girls out there just as talented as you, Amina, and they're owning it.

Zuzu and Luke climbing up a hill, afternoon sunshine.

LUKE

Zuzu?

ZUZU

Yeah?

LUKE

Can I ask you a question?

ZUZU
Is it about dance?

LUKE
No

ZUZU
Then, shoot.

LUKE
How do you want to lose your virginity?

ZUZU
Uh—

LUKE
Like how do you want it to happen

ZUZU
Oh

LUKE
Do you know?

ZUZU
Oh. Yeah

LUKE
You do?

ZUZU
Oh yeah

LUKE
Will you tell me?

She looks at him.

ZUZU
Well there's two versions of the story.

LUKE
...

ZUZU
In one version I'm an enchantress. Like an enchantress, enchantress. Like I'm actually an enchantress. (Don't tell anyone this.) Like Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe style. Like somebody comes and gets me through the cupboard and is like: Dude! You're an enchantress. And I go off into this magical world. And I get to live whole lifetimes there as a queen and an enchantress but then I can come back to earth and no time has passed.

LUKE
...

ZUZU
So that's one version.

LUKE
Uh-huh

ZUZU
And the other is that I'm an enchantress in a movie

LUKE
Oh

ZUZU
And he's my

LUKE
Co-star

ZUZU
Leading man

LUKE
Cool

ZUZU
He's Canadian
I don't know why he's Canadian, he's just always been
Canadian

...
Theodore

LUKE
That's his name?

ZUZU
Yup. Theodore. I don't know why. I don't even like that name.
It just came to me

LUKE
In a dream?

ZUZU
I don't know. It just came.
And we fall in love

LUKE
How do you fall in love?

ZUZU
What?

LUKE
How does that happen? How do you fall in love?

ZUZU
We just are

LUKE
Automatically

ZUZU
Well not automatically...

LUKE
Both of you?

ZUZU
I think so?

LUKE
At the same time?

ZUZU
Yes

LUKE
But how do you *know*?

ZUZU
Um

LUKE
That you're in love. Like how does it actually happen?

Zuzu thinks.

ZUZU

I think it's just like we meet each other. And we feel like we've known each other before. Like in past lives. Like we're old souls when we're together and he's known me forever so falling in love is really just like remembering, or like catching up to what we already were, you know?

...

Does that make sense?

Luke shrugs.

LUKE

So what happens next in your story?

ZUZU

So anyway we fall in love and we get engaged and we buy an apartment. In New York City! And after we've bought our apartment—

LUKE

How old are you?

ZUZU

I don't know. Twenty-three?

So we go there one day—during the day, before we've moved in—just to you know plan out how we're going to lay out all the furniture in the house. And it's just a big empty apartment. And we get to decide where all the chairs go. And all the tables. And all the cups. And it's just like *bliss*. And he leads me through the apartment by my hands. And sunlight is streaming through the windows. And he lays me down on the floor—and it's a hardwood floor. And it's kinda warm because of all the sunlight. And my back is on the warm, hardwood floor. And we lose our virginities to each other. And as he, um, enters me. I open my eyes. And *he* opens *his* eyes. And this sounds *crazy* but our souls kind of touch through our eyes and

like. Just for a moment. We become one being.

They sit on the grass.

LUKE

Are you guys married?

She shakes her head.

ZUZU

No, we're engaged

...

...

...

But then you know what's funny

Sometimes—

And not all the time

But sometimes—

I keep thinking for a little bit

And do you know what happens? In my mind?

LUKE

No

ZUZU

It's like five years later

(This is crazy)

But it's like five years later

And I have these two beautiful children

Two beautiful daughters

And he dies

LUKE

He dies?

ZUZU

Yeah. I don't know exactly how. Maybe a car crash. But he dies

And we're like living in the country. The country outside of New York City. With a trellis. And he dies. And I'm like this dancer slash astrophysicist *widow* with these two beautiful babies. And then one day someone comes to visit me. He drives all the way to visit me. And when his car pulls up into my driveway, I go outside to welcome him. And I've got like one baby on my hip. And one baby by the hand. And I'm standing under the trellis. Just saying: hello. And then I take him inside. And I make him just the most beautiful lunch. Just the most beautiful lunch you've ever seen. With like cheese. And olives. And beautiful salads and things like that. And we sit on the floor. And the babies fall asleep. And afterwards we drink coffee.

LUKE

That sounds nice

ZUZU

And do you know who that someone is????

LUKE

No?

ZUZU

It's Dance Teacher Pat.

She laughs and laughs.

ZUZU

Isn't that weird!

...

...

I don't know why it's him. But it is. It is.

Zuzu lies back in the grass. The sky, the breeze, the trees...

ZUZU

OH MY GOD

LUKE

What?

ZUZU

I just decided something

LUKE

What

ZUZU

THIS IS MY LAST DAY OF DANCE ON EARTH!!!!!!!

The girls in the dressing room. Sofia has (finally) finished making the magic coffee.

SOFIA

Alright, it's ready. Who wants a sip?

CONNIE

I do

SOFIA

If you take a sip, you pledge your eternal allegiance to CZALMSA [z-alm-sah]

CONNIE

Zalm-wahhhh?

SOFIA

Our group! Connie, Zuzu, Ashlee, Luke, Maeve, Sofia and Amina. Z-alm-sah

CONNIE

But there's no "c" in Zalmsah!

SOFIA

The "c" is silent. Like in czar

CONNIE

Oh.

ASHLEE

We could be Zalm-sakkkkkkk

SOFIA

Czalmsa's cooler

CONNIE

...

SOFIA

Trust me, Connie. It's cool to be the silent "c"

CONNIE

Yeah...

SOFIA

You're like our secret weapon

CONNIE

I think I'm just tired of being a secret...

SOFIA

How are you a secret?

ASHLEE

No!

CONNIE

I don't know. I just feel like I am

ASHLEE

You're not a / secret

SOFIA

We can be Zalmsakkk, then. We can totally be Zalmsac

Sofia gives them a devilish look, then takes a sip of the magic coffee.

SOFIA

I solemnly swear my eternal allegiance..... to Zalmsac

She hands the coffee to Connie. Connie takes a sip. It's really sweet.

CONNIE

Oof

...

...

To Zalmsac

Ashlee takes a sip.

ASHLEE

Zalmsac

...

...

...

It kind of sounds like an anti-depressant

SOFIA

Huh?

ASHLEE

Like those commercials? Feeling worthless? Take Zalmsac

SOFIA

That's Zoloft

ASHLEE

No but in general. It sounds like that

CONNIE

My mom takes anti-depressants and she says I'm probably going to have to, too

ASHLEE

Well, now you won't have to because you can just take Zalm-sak

CONNIE

Thanks

ASHLEE

Here I'm going to give you a little bit of Zalm-sak right now

She sticks her fingers under her armpit to collect sweat.

ASHLEE

Sofia?

Ashlee sticks her fingers under Sofia's armpit, too.

ASHLEE

Okay. Then you just apply the Zalmsac to the upper lip...

Ashlee dabs the sweat on Connie's upper lip.

CONNIE

Thank you.

Ashlee blows on Connie's upper lip.

She kisses her on the mouth.

ASHLEE

And then you'll feel better, soon.

Connie takes Ashlee's hand.

Connie

And in twenty years, you will sit in my apartment while you're on a business trip in New York City, and I will tell you that I've spent the fall trying not to kill myself, and you will tell me that you spent all of high school trying not to kill yourself. You will tell me how you got on a bus, and found a doctor, and rode the bus to the doctor, and begged the doctor not to call your parents, and went on anti-depressants at the age of 14, and all this time, I was walking by you, all this time our bodies were sharing spaces, and I had no idea. And we will sit on the floor and drink wine and cry the same way we cry in banks and on airplanes and in all sorts of public places—quietly and full of shame but grateful to be quiet and shameful together—and we will talk about our jobs and the people we are dating, and suddenly, for the first time in years, I will believe in fate. That somehow all of this was pre-determined. You and me sitting here now. You and me sitting there then. I always knew there was something about us that was the same.

SOFIA

I want some, too.

Ashlee dabs a little sweat on Sofia's upper lip.

Maeve enters.

MAEVE

Hey guys!

ASHLEE/CONNIE

Hey! Maeve!

SOFIA

Get over here

MAEVE

I'm late!

SOFIA

It doesn't matter. Sit down.

She does.

SOFIA

Drink this

Sofia hands Maeve the coffee.

MAEVE

What is it?

SOFIA

It's a potion

CONNIE

It's a spell

ASHLEE

It's just coffee

MAEVE

It hurts my teeth

CONNIE

Guys, it's 4:07. Should we go in?

They all look towards the door.

ASHLEE

Let him come and get us

They huddle in a circle—the magic coffee in the middle like a cauldron.

SOFIA

Girls? I have to tell you something that happened to me yesterday but you have to swear yourselves to secrecy.

ASHLEE

Zalmsac

CONNIE

Zalmsac

MAEVE (*whispering*)

I can feel it working on me

ASHLEE (*whispering*)

What?

MAEVE (*whispering*)

The potion

SOFIA

Late last night, in my bathroom...

After my mom went to sleep

I climbed up on the counter
And I pulled up my nightgown
And I *looked*

CONNIE
At what?

SOFIA
Everything

The earth starts to shake.

SOFIA
And even though
It was the first pussy
That I ever, ever saw

SOFIA & ASHLEE
I knew *in my bones*
That no one could have
A pussy as perfect as mine

SOFIA & ASHLEE & MAEVE & CONNIE
And surely a person
With such perfect genitals
Is destined for greatness
It's written in the stars

Zuzu joins the chant from her spot on the hill.

SOFIA & ASHLEE & MAEVE & CONNIE & ZUZU
And here's the thing about pussies
That they never, ever tell you
They're ageless! They're ageless!
Don't listen to their lies

Luke joins the chant from *his* spot on the hill.

SOFIA & ASHLEE & MAEVE & CONNIE & ZUZU &
LUKE

My pussy is perfect
And it'll stay that way FOREVER

The Moms appears and chants with them.

SOFIA & ASHLEE & MAEVE & CONNIE & ZUZU &
LUKE & THE MOMS (*ecstatic!*)

I'll never forget
The day I first saw it
My perfect, perfect pussy

And Dance Teacher Pat!

SOFIA & ASHLEE & MAEVE & CONNIE & ZUZU &
LUKE & THE MOMS & DANCE TEACHER PAT
(*utter ecstasy!*)

I knew in my bones
That no one could have
A pussy as perfect as mine
And surely a person
With such perfect genitals

Is destined for greatness
It's written in the stars
I wish that my *body*
Were as perfect as my
pussy
I wish that my *face*
Were as perfect as my
pussy
I wish that my *soul*
Were as perfect as my
pussy
I wish that my *soul!*
Were as perfect as my
pussy!

I wish that my *soul!*
Were as perfect as
my pussy!
I wish that my *soul!*
Were as perfect as
my pussy!
I wish that my
soul were as
perfect!

perfect!

perfect!

Prrrrrr

rrrrr

rrrrrrrr

rrrr

rrrrrrrr

rrrr

rrrrrrru

hhh!

!!!

!!!

Amina dances, she dances, she dances. She is a tiny whirling dot.

AMINA

I'm gonna win

I'm gonna win

I'm gonna win

Not because of *you*

I am going to do it myself

Over the years

I will watch

As others fall away

Give up

Lose courage

I will keep going

Something will tell me to keep going

I will fail at first

But I will keep going

People won't like me

And other people will be better than me

But I will keep going

And then one day

The tide will start to turn

Inevitable

Unstoppable

Like the leaves falling off the trees

Winter is coming

And I am The Winter

You cannot deny me

My entire life will be a victory

And when they ask me how I did it I will say:

That I didn't listen to anyone

I had no teachers

No mentors

No parents

I am thankful for *nothing*

But myself
I rode the wave—
For 11 years
...12 years
...13 years
I rode the wave—
For 20 years
...21 years
...25 years
I rode the wave—
For 30 years
...forty years
...fifty...
I rode the wave
Like I always knew how to ride the wave
And others kept falling along the way
But I kept riding
Til I was alone

...

I was alone

...

I was alone

...

...

..

.

Amina dancing. She is athletic, vicious, stunning. She absolutely dominates. She turns out to us. She hisses. She gnashes her fangs.

End of play.