

1. The right dance

Like day and night they form two halves of one whole, one cannot be without the other.

M. Patel

Rotterdam, end of November 1982. There she is. As if she alone is in colour, against black and white surroundings. I can hardly keep my eyes off her. Extreme attraction. I am embarrassed by my own shamelessness. Shyly and half nonchalant I look the other way when her gaze crosses mine. Is she also looking at me now? It is as if I feel her eyes piercing me. It can't be true, can it? Again we meet in a glimpse, but now her blue sinks into my brown-green. An eternity. Heart pounding, breathless, a tingling.

Apparently she is our dance-teacher tonight. An expressive face with a sweet smile. An athlete with the elegance of a ballerina.

'Good evening, Ladies and Gentlemen, I will be teaching you tonight. Bert's got the flue. For those of you who do not know me yet, my name is José. May I invite you all to the floor?'

I watch in amazement when she shows us a new variety of the slow fox. She glides smoothly over the parquet floor. Oh, how I envy her assistant. With great enthusiasm she explains and takes us through the routine step by step.

'So, now it's your turn.'

We practice the steps in a big circle.

'How is it going? It's slow-quickquick-slow.' All of a sudden she is there. Not even half a metre away. She is talking to me! I can feel a blush coming on. Hot lava rises up from the soles of my feet and sets my ears on fire.

‘It ..., it ..., it’s not going that well..., I believe.’ I stutter clumsily.

‘Come on’, she grabs hold of me resolutely. My dance partner is taken on by her assistant.

My god that feels good. Strength and softness in symbiosis. Her lower body against mine. Thighs and bellies touching. Seductive warmth. The arm position creating a distance. A comforting combination of sensuality and utmost purity. She leads me through the steps and my feet find her rhythm. I feel like a tamed wild animal. Unaware of what I am doing, our bodies move as one. A sensation, I am dancing with her!

‘You’ve got talent.’ She says softly while I follow her rise and fall of the slow fox. Her breath tickles the little hairs in my ears. She smells lovely.

‘Do you think?’

‘Yes, your hips understand music.’

I laugh, ‘Thanks.’ Her dress feels silky soft. It is as if she is not wearing any clothes. With my right hand I feel how strong her body is and at the same time how her skin softens where my hand rests. I forget I am dancing. I am present, in her rhythm, her intimacy.

‘Your girlfriend dances well too.’ I return to reality. It is as if she looks at me searchingly.

‘No, not my girlfriend, she’s the sister of a friend of my brother. She needed a dance partner.’ I respond almost apologetically.

She is silent for a minute. Her hand tenses up, just for a split second, very subtly and perhaps subconsciously. ‘Oh, so you sacrificed yourself?’

‘“No glory without suffering”, as they say at the marines.’ I say jokingly.

‘You’re a marine?’ she asks with an enthusiastic curiosity.

‘I just left’ I reply with a fake casualness. I won’t tell her now that I am studying dentistry. You never know, she could have a phobia for dentist.

‘Wow, that’s tough. Adventurous. I like that. So you wore one of those nice uniforms with a red border?’

‘Yes, I’ve still got it. You got a thing for uniforms?’ I tease her provocatively.

‘Hmmm,... maybe.’ She responds with a naughty look and then continues in a business-like manner: ‘there, you have got the rhythm good now. I’ll continue with the lesson. Good luck.’

She lets go of me and walks off. Tic tac, tic tac, without looking back. I stay behind, confused. Still half in dancing position. Alone. It’s now or never! I gather all my courage and call after her as discretely as possible: ‘My name is André and I have got a thing for dancing teachers ...’

José stops and turns. She stands up straight, her legs slightly spread out, making her dress stretched tight, she puts a blonde lock behind her right ear and pushes out her breasts. Like a dancer: sensual and stylish at the same time.

‘Every Saturday there is free-style dancing. I’m often around then...’ She half squints her eyes and turns, smiling.

Electricity shoots up to the top of my head. I cannot let go of those eyes and I fantasize about how it would be to sink in to the depth of them. This to me is love at first sight. So this is what it is supposed to be like. It really exists! Overwhelming, magical.

A few days later. I am going crazy! José, José, José, what have you done to me? I cannot think about anything else. Her rhythm tingles in every fibre of my body. I have to do something, I cannot go on like this. I can hardly sleep, study, eat, or concentrate in the traffic. It is as if I have been taken over by powers outside of myself.

Finally I pluck up the courage and write her a letter. Straight from the heart tender words find their way. My most beautiful sentences ever, flow smoothly together. The letter, in which in my eyes everything is stated perfectly and in which I have made myself more vulnerable than I could have ever imagined.

On my way to the letterbox I am in deep internal conflict.

Time stands still. This moment will stay with me forever. I am so nervous. The letterbox pulls, my fingers hesitate. A feeling of duality. When I let go of the letter, there will be no way back.

I give in to inexplicable powers and let go. Consequences are out of reach from now on. I feel like something big is about to happen, the beginning of a new phase of life.

But also, there is the fear of rejection. What do I really know about her? Will I embarrass her with my declaration of love? Am I making a complete fool of myself?

I am doing this intuitively, subconsciously driven, swallowed up by the mists of a deep love. Logic has no hold on me. Is the feeling even mutual?

5th of December 1982. It is mutual for 100 percent! Thank god!

She has been feeling the same way all this time. Lost in space and time we dance as if there was no tomorrow, are just as in love with each other as with life and never happier. Lips full of passion meet. Heavenly bliss has come... Immense seduction of our senses. It is the right dance, in the right atmosphere, to the right melody.

This feeling must never cease. We have got so much to tell each other. Are we ever finished talking? Will we ever stop dancing?



When you love someone, that person is not just another person anymore. That person becomes special and unique to you. Together you go on an adventure. A surprising journey of discovery: sometimes into your deepest self, but more often into the depth of the interesting other. Loving each other, helping and comforting each other, without conditions. Being tender, soft and good. Believing that everything will be alright, even in hard times. Laughing, crying, being strong and vulnerable together, but especially going in the same direction together. Saying: 'I think you're wonderful the way you are' and showing: 'darling, I love you'. The truth like two-way traffic.

The deeper we penetrate each other's spirit, the more we believe in an amazing miracle. The miracle of eternal love. A force with which we believe we can conquer anything and everything.

2. Nineteen-eighty-four

*All my hopes and all that smiles within me, I see it shrink
back in that black night.*

J. van Looy

Rotterdam, AZR Dijkzigt Hospital, 1984. ‘André, your kidneys will not improve anymore. You will have to start dialysis.’ The young female doctor tells me with a sad and strangely serious look on her face. We are in a separate room. She seems to be completely aware of the bad news she is giving me and the shock that comes with it.

This feels really serious. What am I going to do with this? Am I dreaming? I do not want to believe it. It is not true ... She is teasing me! That is what you go into hospital for, isn't it, to get better? Christ! I do not know what to say. There is this immense noise in my head, a strange mix of ear deafening ringing and chaotic thoughts. A load of questions are battling to come out. I cannot pick one. They are all screaming out and fighting for an answer.

I am completely bewildered and have no way of overseeing the consequences.

‘Will I not be able to go skydiving anymore then?’ I ask the doctor all of a sudden. The first question that, to my own astonishment, finds its way out. José and I had recently been offered a course. In all the confusion a person will ask the strangest of questions when his future is taken away from him.

‘No, that will not be possible anymore’ the doctor replies surprised.

‘Never?’ I ask dramatically.

‘No, uhm, I do not think so’ she hesitates, clumsily. She closes her lips tight and softly shakes her head. Experience had not hardened her yet, I see a glimpse of moist in

her eyes. She visibly struggles with my desperation and her responsibility as messenger of the bad news.

And all of a sudden, there is the realisation. From a seemingly idiotic question and the reluctant answer that speaks volumes, everything becomes clear to me. I think of José and burst out in anger and tears. How are we going to go on? Never dancing again? We are so good together. And what about our big plans? How am I going to tell her that? Living with a machine! Horror of the highest class. Around my heart it is getting cold, as if it is broken and my blood does not pump around my body anymore. I feel a tight pain in my chest.

The roof of the world comes crashing down. Darkness, panic, the blackest of black washes over me. I find myself in hell and want to go to nothingness or heaven, I do not care. Anything other than this. Merciful death. The realisation overwhelms me. I grab a chair and throw it through the room. Aggression as expression of my powerless rage.

‘Nooooo ... then I would rather die! I will not be on a machine!’ I am screaming, beside myself.

‘Than you will really die,’ the doctor almost whispers, clearly affected. She pats me softly on my back and guides me back to my bed on the ward.

All of a sudden the world looks completely different. It is as if daylight is not coming through anymore. I stare at the ceiling, able only to think of José. I really do want to die, to be released from this pain. It would be better. I do not want to be a burden to her, no cause of a dark future. What could I be to her now, without ‘sunshine in my heart’? I am angry, with everything and everybody. It feels so unjust! Everybody who dares to get close to my bed I swear at. Nobody can give me the answers that I am looking for now.

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