

Ballerino

By

Alex Forbes

(+44)7719 250008

1 INT. DANNY AND VICKY'S ROOM - DAY 1

A battered football shin pad, caked in a layer of old dirt, is slipped through a foot and placed on the shin followed by the other.

We hear the muffled sounds of cheering coming from downstairs.

2 INT. DOWNSTAIRS - DAY 2

PAUL, a large bloke stands while spooning cereal into his mouth while watching an off-screen TV. This is the source of the cheering, coming from one corner of the pokey house.

COMMENTATOR (O.S)  
That's right Steve, he looks like  
he's in a bit of trouble here. That  
ankle injury from last.. There! See  
the misstep?

PAUL  
Ahh you twat!

3 INT. DANNY AND VICKY'S ROOM - DAY 3

DANNY, a skinny thirteen-year-old with an old fashioned haircut pulls a stripey football sock up his leg, all the way to his thigh - matching the one on his other leg. He stands up in the messy room which has two single beds and is painted in a different colour scheme for each side. In the long, floor length mirror, he mimes doing keepie-ups with an imaginary football. The sound of the front door banging from downstairs - he looks around.

4 INT. DOWNSTAIRS - DAY 4

COMMENTATOR (O.S)  
...and Robson is moving beautifully  
here. Easily keeping the lythe  
german, Schneider, at bay as we  
move into the final phase...

VICKY, a tall 14 year old with a pony tail clumps into the house wearing football kit.

PAUL  
(Mouth full)  
I thought you left.

Vicky huffs.

(CONTINUED)

VICKY  
I forgot me good pads didn't I?

She moves towards the stairs and thumps up them.

5 INT. DANNY AND VICKY'S ROOM - DAY

5

Vicky bursts in to find Danny, with bare legs sitting on one of the beds.

DANNY  
(Slightly out of breath)  
What you doing back?

Vicky ignores him, searching around the room.

VICKY  
I forgot me...  
(To herself)  
Oh for fucks sake, where did I  
leave 'em?

She approaches Danny and semi-jokingly, pushes him on to a bed, out of her way.

DANNY  
Hey!

Finally she spots the pads and scoops them up.

VICKY  
Lush. What were you doing on my bed  
anyway?

DANNY  
Got to fart somewhere I guess.

Vicky cuffs him round the head.

6 INT. DOWNSTAIRS - DAY

6

Paul has rid himself of the bowl of cereal and is getting his coat on.

PAUL  
DANNY! YOU BETTER BE GOOD TO GO!

Vicky runs down the stairs and straight out the front door as Danny comes down.

(CONTINUED)

PAUL  
Got yer kit?

DANNY  
Yea.

They make their way to the front door.

PAUL  
Good, we're gonna be late.

We linger for a moment as the TV commentary still blares. We slowly pan to reveal the television. On it, several men in leotards and black tights dance ballet together as the crowd roars.

7 EXT. STREET - DAY

7

Paul and Danny walk through their industrial Northern town. Cobbled streets and rough brick buildings.

They arrive at their destination. A tall building, as run down as everything else.

8 INT. COMMUNITY CENTRE - DAY

8

Inside, they make their way through rows and rows of seats towards a stage. On it, boys around Danny's age in leotards and tights prance around - pirouetting. COACH, a fat man with a mustache, wearing leg warmers over his tights appears from off stage.

COACH  
Come on now, let's get going.  
Danny, get your kit off and get up  
'ere.

Reluctantly, Danny takes off his tracksuit to reveal the same leotard underneath as Paul walks off, waving at GARY, one of the other fathers.

PAUL  
Alight Gary?

COACH  
Hurry up! We've got the regionals next week; you'll be up against some of the best 'balley' dancers in the north. These boys are from Doncaster, Rotheram, Scunthorpe - they don't fuck about.

(CONTINUED)

Up on the stage, Danny and the other boys execute a synchronised performance as Coach claps in time.

COACH

1... 2... 1... 2... Jonny, watch  
that bloody bourrée!

Danny is clumsy and uncoordinated compared to the others.

COACH

Danny what the fuck is that? You've  
got a piqué like an old wank sock -  
it's rigid, it should flow.

He demonstrates, performing an elegant turn. Danny's lips tighten as he tries to execute the move properly. He looks out to Paul who gives him a small, stern nod.

9

EXT. DANNY'S HOUSE - DAY

9

Danny walks with sports bag past his pokey town house, through a gate and into the back garden. VICKY is in the scrubby garden doing kick-ups.

He stares at her, controlling the ball with precise movements, her face hard with concentration. She turns to see him before kicking the ball towards the gate. Danny ducks to avoid.

DANNY

Watch it!

VICKY

Thought you could do with the  
practice. Heard you dance like  
Andre the fuckin' Giant.

Danny walks towards the back door.

DANNY

You try it some time.

VICKY

Do I look like a dyke?

She kicks the ball at him again, it misses and hits a window. Paul bursts the back door open.

PAUL

Watch my bloody windows!

(CONTINUED)

VICKY  
It were Danny.

Paul rounds on him. Danny widens his eyes in fear.

DANNY  
Fuck off! I didn't even touch the  
ball.

PAUL  
Aye, you're a proper lad. I know.  
(to Vicky)  
You break my windows, I break ya  
legs!

Danny goes inside as a sullen Vicky kicks her ball against  
the wall.

10 INT. DOWNSTAIRS - DAY

10

In their cluttered, cramped living room, Vicky sits watching  
the TV - a match is on and she sits forward intently.

Behind her, in the kitchen, Paul fries steaks on the grill  
while Danny scrapes oven chips off a pan. He keeps sneaking  
looks over at the TV without Paul noticing.

PAUL  
You've just got to keep focus,  
y'know. That's the key! I know  
there'll be other kids there,  
they're gonna try and get in ya  
head - psych you out. If they try  
anything, just stare right back at  
them. Don't let them put you off,  
you're there to dance the best you  
can - no scrawny legged kid from  
Pudsey is gonna show you up.

Paul finishes plating up and takes two generously  
proportioned plates and gives a third one to Danny. It has  
half the steak and a small portion of veg.

PAUL  
Need to get light on your feet. You  
can't dance Prince Siegfried with  
yer belly hangin' out.

He leaves Danny looking down at his measly plate. Paul  
shoves a plate over to Vicky who doesn't look at him until  
he clicks the remote, changing the channel to the ballet.

(CONTINUED)

VICKY

Oi! I were watchin' that.

PAUL

Next time you cook, we'll watch yer  
girls fannyin' about. Come have a  
look at this Danny.

Danny approaches as the COMMENTATOR speaks over a ballet.  
Sighing, he shoves a bit of steak in his mouth and sits  
down.

11 INT. DANNY AND VICKY'S ROOM - DAY

11

Danny, lying in bed, cracks an eye open. Vicky is dressed in  
her kit and heads out the door. He sits up, no longer  
pretending to sleep.

He opens a top drawer in the dresser to reveal a bundle of  
loose socks. Carefully, he extracts two long, blue football  
socks from the pile. In the full length mirror, he pulls  
them up his shin-padded legs like stockings, turning,  
stretching his feet in them. Next, an old pair of mud-caked  
football boots. Checking the door every now and then, he  
feels the cracked leather before sliding them on and tying  
the laces.

Suddenly, the sound of feet on the stairs coming up quickly.  
Danny tries desperately to pull them off but they're laced  
too tight. He hops from foot to foot as the footsteps get  
louder. Danny dives under the covers as Paul opens the door,  
finding him supposedly asleep.

PAUL

Wake up - we got the show in a  
half hour!

DANNY

(mumbling)

I can't go - I'm ill. I got the flu  
or summin'.

PAUL

Ah you're fine, we're leaving in  
10.

DANNY

I can't Dad, I'll shit me leotard.

PAUL

Hey! I'll have none of that. You're  
not letting everyone down because

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

PAUL (cont'd)  
you can't get out of bed. Now man  
up and get your tights on.

He exits. Danny sighs in relief and slams back against the bed.

12 INT. COMMUNITY CENTRE - DAY

12

Classical music plays as Danny and his team perform careful choreography on the brightly lit stage. From the darkness of the cheering crowd, some shouts can be heard.

CROWD  
Come on Tommo... Sort your bloody  
pliés out!

Paul watches as Danny keeps in time with the rest. He turns to GARY.

PAUL  
Your kid's good.

GARY  
Aye, he's a top lad. Got an  
arabesque like a fuckin' arrow.

On the stage, Danny keeps up, only stumbling slightly. He looks out at the crowd as he goes - men cheer and scream.

Distracted and out of time, he crosses paths with a teammate.

**SMACK!** Danny hits the deck, bringing the other boy down in the process. The boy stands up quickly to stare daggers at Danny as the music stops and the crowd grows silent. Some titter but Paul doesn't.

Danny gets to his feet, red faced and furious with eyes welling - he bolts off stage.

13 EXT. FIRE ESCAPE - DAY

13

Danny bursts out of a fire door, crying, and sits on a step with his head in his hands. Paul appears, approaching Danny slowly.

PAUL  
Hey now. That were bad luck that.

He approaches a little awkwardly but kneels down to face Danny.

(CONTINUED)



PAUL (CONT'D)  
You're a 'balley' dancer. When you  
fall down, you don't cry like a  
poof. You get up and show 'em a  
pirouette like they wouldn't  
believe.

He puts his hand on Danny's shoulder.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
Come on now, wipe them tears up  
n'that.

Danny meets his gaze. Paul gives him one of his trademark  
small nods.

14 EXT. ALLEY - DAY

14

Danny approaches the garden gate as Vicky exits, a football  
at her feet.

VICKY  
How did the show go?

DANNY  
Alright.

VICKY  
Funny, Tracey's brother said you  
fucked it right up.

He ignores her and tries to get past - she blocks him.

DANNY  
Let me by.

VICKY  
Fell arse over tit and ran off  
cryin'?

DANNY  
Let me BY!

Danny is looking at his feet. Vicky moves again to block  
him, rolling the ball and controlling it with her feet. Her  
friends snigger.

VICKY  
Maybe you should have a kickabout  
with us?

(CONTINUED)

DANNY  
I'm not a fuckin' poof!

VICKY  
Yea?  
(she leans in close)  
Then what happened to my socks?

Danny snaps - lunging at Vicky with arms flailing. She overcomes surprise and manages to slam him on his front. Smirking as she pins his arm behind his back.

DANNY  
Get **OFF!!**

Paul is there - grabbing Vicky by the scruff and throwing her off Danny.

PAUL  
Do you know what you could'a **done!?**

He slaps Vicky across the cheek whose shocked face reddens.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
You want to break his arm you daft cow?

Vicky's eyes stream. Paul comes over to Danny and drags him on to his feet and towards the house. He looks back at Vicky's red, wet face before she runs off.

15 INT. DANNY AND VICKY'S ROOM - DAY

15

Danny lies on his bed with red eyes, looking at the posters on his half of the room. Male ballet dancers in strict poses. His eyes can't help but wander over to Vicky's side. The female footballers on her posters are full of life, one celebrating after a goal with arms in the air. He gets up.

Looking out the window, Danny sees Paul come out on to the street, still putting his coat on as he looks about for Vicky. Danny's eyes are drawn to the football kit on the floor, heaped around a washing basket.

He picks up a team jersey, feeling the material and then holding up against his torso. He looks at himself in the mirror, the corners of his mouth turning up.

Danny puts on the clothes. The jersey first and then he pulls the shorts up. He pulls the socks up his legs.

He looks at himself in the full length mirror - he looks right. He feels right.

(CONTINUED)

He takes a beaten up old football from the corner of the room and starts kicking it up and down. He gives it a kick and the ball bounces off a wall and lands in a washing basket. Imitating the poster, Danny throws up his arms in celebration, turning to the imaginary crowd.

Paul is there - in the doorway, his face taught. Danny's eyes are wide... mortified. Paul isn't angry, he is scared.

DANNY

I... I was just...

Paul is still for a moment. He makes to turn away before pausing. He mouth tight, he moves into the room.

16

INT. COMMUNITY CENTRE - DAY

16

The room full of rowdy boys changing out of their trackies. Several boys look at Danny as he walks in but he avoids their gaze.

As he takes his tracksuit jacket off, an old yellow bruise can be seen on his shoulder only partially covered by his leotard. Coach is yelling and clapping but is muffled and distant to Danny's ears.

COACH

Alright. We all know Danny fucked up last week. He lost his focus and made us all look like twats. He's gonna get up there and show us all that he knows the fucking moves.

He makes his way up on stage alone. He dances, moving through his steps smoothly with the other boys. He doesn't make any mistakes, no false steps.

Paul comes in through the door and watches. All of a sudden, the dance is over. Danny strikes his final pose and holds it, looking out and seeing his dad.

They lock eyes and Paul gives him a small nod.

CUT TO BLACK