



# *The Abyss*

*A ballet dancer's crisis (2014)*

*A dancer is hospitalized after the tragic death of his wife and recalled to the stage  
in a second chance by a second wife.*

*The characters:*

Ivan  
Sophia  
A colleague  
Magda  
A comrade  
A policeman

*"Man is a soul imprisoned in his body,  
which it is his most natural urge to be released from."*

*This is not like any other play by the author but more like a poem.  
The reader has to think and be concentrated in reading it, to be able to follow the different  
characters and their arguments. Still, it is quite possible to present on stage or on film.  
When the drama begins the ballet dancer Ivan is a patient in a ward.*

1.

The wounded soldier is a wreck.  
He lies wasted and worn out  
and tired unto death  
with only one wish left in life: to die,  
for he has lived too much and loved too much,  
and wishes most of all that he had loved himself to death,  
but ladies can be trusted only for deceit, it seems,  
for insufficiency and infidelity,  
incalculable egoism and volatile capriciousness  
with ruthless mental cruelty  
in blind infallibility of self-love.  
Bitterness is not for me, but I am infinitely sad  
and angry in my grief that broke me down  
and put me out of order as an individual  
reduced to miserable invalidity  
bereft of all my joy of living, all my appetite

and even all my love.

Am I reduced then to a case of hopelessness?  
It looks no better, since I cannot be induced  
to rise by any motivation from my grave,  
where I lay down quite voluntarily  
and almost found myself at home in,  
which I never want to leave;  
for all the peace and comfort  
that I thought I had achieved in life  
turned out to be the contrary  
and such outrageous disappointments, failures and disasters  
that in comparison my grave turned out to be a paradise,  
but not even a suicide, no matter how well justified,  
I could not bring myself to carry through,  
for I am far too weak for even that poor effort  
it would take to liberate me from my ruined life.

2.

Who is looking me up here in hell?  
How does anyone dare show that audacity  
to take on such an extremely dangerous challenge?  
My mental illness could be infectious  
here in this mortal environment of callous hospital sterility  
where no life could thrive except to die –  
for everyone is well aware that you only go to hospital  
to die, and if it isn't voluntary  
you will catch the hospital disease and die for sure!  
But I shall not be poisonous with my sardonic venom  
towards you, angelic maid, who comes to visit me,  
who talks to me with friendliness and wakes with me  
as if I was worth it, and are calm and peaceful  
in my turbulent uneasy nightmare company,  
which normally forbids, deters and must exclude  
all normal people from my presence,  
since they cannot bear with abnormality -  
but you are different. Are you really then a colleague,  
one who knows what I have done  
and maybe could have any understanding of my case  
how I could end up here down in the bottom of an abyss?  
Is it possible? Yes, for you are human,  
and you are so unique and have some patience

coming here and sitting with me every day,  
but please don't mock my vanity with flattery,  
don't tell me you admired me and can remember me  
as that divinity I was before I fell,  
just like all godlike angels have to fall,  
if they outgrow their godliness -  
I turned into the worst of hubris cases  
and fell down to the temptation of presumption,  
called by mortals in my case insanity.  
Yes, my heart, good angel, I am mad,  
you should beware of me, for I am dangerous  
if I will not remain here, shackled in a prison cell  
and belted to my bed when necessary,  
but it has not been so far, since doctors and their nurses  
are quite human after all. They made me an exception  
and absolved me from all medication by coercion,  
since I managed to behave and stick to harmless apathy.  
Sweet angel, could you really then have faith in me?  
Do you think I could really be a human man again?  
I don't know you, and you cannot know me,  
but if you dare such daring risk of an attempt,  
I promise to brace up to it and never harm you.  
Never did I wish to harm a living being,  
and may God forgive me if I did,  
for that was the last thing I ever wished to do,  
and if I did, I did not know what I was doing.  
The doctors seem to understand as much  
and are prepared to let me out in freedom,  
so one day if I remain in my good senses  
learning discipline and to control myself,  
I even might perhaps go back to work?  
In that case, if you wish, I would fain work with you.  
Might you be willing? What a wondrous miracle!  
I can't understand that destiny has granted me this bliss,  
this second chance of life, creation and activity,  
that I once more would get the possibility of working hard  
and as a free man, not as a patient or a prisoner!

3.

"No, my friend, I know you  
maybe even better than yourself,  
for I have seen you working,

I have seen you when you were yourself,  
I saw you as a god in art  
and has not just worshipped you  
but even loved you more since then  
for what you are and always will remain,  
a god of art, a messenger of freedom and of beauty  
on a mission like of an apostle to redeem  
civilization and the world, a mission more important  
as a quest than anything for the mere testimony  
of the truth and beauty and its universal value  
as the most important thing of all,  
which you embed more thoroughly than anyone.  
You are not lost, not even fallen,  
only struck by a momentous crisis which requires care  
and can be handled, and I have no higher wish  
than to help you out with this and to restore you,  
so that you can stand again and be your own  
and work again continuing your life's work  
to carry through your mission and to save the world  
by the exquisite wonder of the truth and beauty of your art.  
I wish to be your colleague, servant, sister, mother  
and protector against all the perils of the world and life,  
and the one I fear the least is the one you fear the most,  
the abyss of your soul which is just genius,  
but the world with all its baseness and materialism  
as enemy of the idealism of creative urge and effort.  
I will visit you and be with you each day  
until you are released from here and dare to be yourself again,  
the god you always were as active on the stage  
as more divine a soul of dancing even than the great Nijinsky."

4.

You don't know what you are doing and what you are up to.  
I am hopelessly a schizophrenic and as such a mortal danger  
to you if you are brave enough to dare to come too close to me  
in a most subtle, sensitive, precarious, liable and dangerous relationship.  
You are too good to me, and I have not deserved you.  
Why do you think I am here? I ended up here  
for my loss of contact with reality,  
I was deranged by the fatality of a relationship  
with one good lady and the former love of mine,  
who had to seek protection by a wholly waterproof police security –

I don't know where she is today, and she has changed her name.  
I never came to harm her, but if the relationship had been continued  
I would almost unavoidably have done her harm,  
as other psychopaths before me had caused her some injuries,  
and she became afraid of me as I appeared to her as threatening,  
so she had better take her measures for complete protection.  
Everything was fine between us from the start, she wished me only well,  
and she was only good for me, until she started to impede me,  
making limits and demanding more of me for her  
than for my art and dance, which I had to prioritize.  
Yes, she finally was in my way, and then I turned more difficult.  
She did not understand me, she was insufficient  
and when I then tried to free myself of her,  
she tried to ignorantly force me to subjection,  
and when I then reacted violently she considered it a threat  
and got in touch with the police,  
and thus it was arranged that I was taken into custody  
for my own good and for the safety of my neighbours.  
Yes, she tricked me and deceived me and betrayed me,  
and the doctors sided with her and had me declared  
as mentally deranged, which she found as the only explanation  
that I could not just love her.  
Alas, it was a long bewildering strange episode,  
I will forever brood on it and wonder about her,  
why she was not enough and could not understand me,  
why she tricked me into her and then betrayed me  
without telling me about the many men she had before me,  
with two marriages and almost three, and ten engagements.  
She was too intensive and too eager, driving me out of my mind  
to lose my self control, run off the rails and make a fool of me,  
while finally she went too far and went to bed,  
betrayed me with an even younger man.  
She was too old for me, she said, but when I could no longer  
stand her arts and her manipulations of insidious stealth,  
she got herself another man immediately,  
a sort of younger compensation and replacement.  
Love went to extremes in passions of exaggeration,  
and I will not risk a trauma of that sort again.  
I therefore beg of you to spare me and abstain,  
let us not risk the excellence of our relationship,  
you have no obligation, and the last thing I desire  
is to take the risk of harming you in any way.

5.

"No, my beloved, you must not doubt yourself.  
The worst is passed, and now it's time  
to concentrate on your important work  
and to come back to the reality you lost  
and which has missed you as its gilder  
with the dreams of beauty and the highest art ideal  
which the world needs more than anything.  
It is a joy that you have dared to reappear  
and cross the boards again in liberation  
and to feel enough inspired to break out in dancing  
and to exercise with energy, delight and confidence,  
which you for so long have been missing.  
I will be your comfort and support in everything  
and stay alert about your darker sides  
to keep away all risks of a relapse,  
to serve you and to soothe you as a faithful partner  
who will never let you down.  
You cannot frighten me with your dark sides,  
for I know you too well and know that they are buried  
with your trauma, which we cured,  
and that false lady who betrayed you  
is no more than a blank shadow of a memory  
to leave forever far behind.  
I stand now and forever by your side  
as your protective guardian angel and motherly sister  
to take care of you and never leave you for a moment  
even as your infinitely grateful partner  
nearest to your heart, with you and always closest to you  
even in the highest bliss of paradise  
when we together may get down to work  
to cross the stage and fly out on the boards."

6.

You have succeeded with the most impossible of all,  
my saving guardian angel, my beloved,  
little girl, whom I never earlier observed in the academy,  
but who now has turned into my life's first lady  
and the most important lady in my life,  
a sister to take care of, a sweet lovable and gentle partner  
to be infinitely grateful for, a better being than myself,

an angel from above too good for me to have deserved her  
and too good to be true, but you are true and real,  
that is a fact and undeniable as such,  
and you have actually accomplished miracles –  
I feel it natural to dance again,  
I find a joy in it, I am alive again  
in triumphant expansion without limits,  
you have given me my freedom to dare being who I am,  
exulting in ecstatic dancing breaking all restrictions,  
and transcending all impossibilities to make them possible,  
making me delirious in ecstasy and pure ecstatic creativity  
in total equilibrium and absolute control of every muscle in my body!  
And you will do well indeed as my own partner,  
no one else will do, since you are everything to me,  
and only you have brought me back to dancing  
and the enthusiasm of raging wildly on the stage  
in whirling twirls and flying up to hit the moon,  
and therefore I would like to dance with you forever  
and with you alone, so that I even could consider  
to appear again in public on the stage,  
resuming my career where it was broken off  
by breakdowns and depressions, disappointment and disaster.  
With you by my side I know now nothing more can threaten me,  
there is no evil that could possibly befall us any more,  
we have been through the worst, so there could only be rewards  
from now on for us, as the pair of us with our love  
is greater, stronger and more powerful than the entire world,  
as I will constantly protect you and take care of you  
with double tenderness than yours for me.





Thus we are a complimentary consummate tender couple  
brought together by our destiny in a crusade  
of an aesthetic character to save the world by beauty and redeem it,  
open up its eyes in an awakening to the awareness  
of true beauty, truth and spiritual elevation,  
education of the soul and insight into true idealism  
by art and music on the stage in combination  
as the most accomplished perfect poetry of all.

7.

My dove, I am afraid it must be me  
who will be insufficient.  
All my life I only lived for art  
and burst my brain with intellectual and spiritual exercises  
and have completely missed the sexual part of life  
in gross neglect, so I don't know how it is done.  
I practiced me to death on the demand of muscles for aestheticism,  
I am a virgin still, my means for sex were never trained,  
and I am now afraid it is too late to start such lessons.  
I can give you all my love unlimited forever,  
but I will not be good for anything in bed,  
where I am practically totally illiterate.  
Can you put up with it and stand it?  
Could you possibly excuse my awkward disability?  
Concerning spiritual love I am the best one in the world and universal,  
but when it comes to the repellent task  
of forcing what you urinate into another's bottom,  
all my being and aesthetics must revolt against it.  
Could you have forbearance with, forgive and understand  
this awkwardness of my incompetence?  
As nature made me thus, I cannot change the way I work,  
as if it had ordained me just for art exclusively  
and for expressive spiritual service only in the art of dance,  
excluding any baseness, carnal and erotic elements?  
My dearest patient dove and angel flower of uniqueness,  
could you live with such a fact that I in certain aspects am an invalid?



8.

"My friend, I am afraid that I am more mundane  
with weaknesses and urges more predominating  
as the woman of some frailty that I am,  
so far from being such a god as you,  
but I will still be able to curtail my passions  
and be able to endure that you now obviously  
never will be able to love me as a real man,

although it will be difficult, since every woman  
must demand and have that medicine, this elixir of life  
which body language is with all that it purports,  
the liberated quite relaxed intimacy and confidence,  
the warmth of someone else whom you are part of  
and belongs to you, the absolute security in not just being loved  
but always being able to perceive it in the body of another.  
We will compensate it by our touring,  
in the splendour of our fame and in the poetry of dancing  
on the boards in public in the bliss of art and your aestheticism,  
since you will always be my own and close to me in public  
ever on the stage, in some kind of transcendental ecstasy  
of spiritual delirium and inebriation of divinity and exultation.  
I will simply have to do with that and be content therewith  
and pleased with such a privilege that no one else will have it.  
If I never will possess and share your body with my own,  
then I at least will have your soul to keep it for myself."

9.

Our wedding celebration was not of this world  
but simple and the more enjoyable and festive,  
only with our closest friends and the strangest lot  
of our acquaintances, odd freaks, bizarre and merry colleagues,  
lusty artists and musicians, ballerinas and your friends,  
some superstitious prophets and some other croaker,  
but what does it matter, when we all were drunk and happy,  
cheerfully forgetting any seriousness of life,  
while someone warned me, telling me that I was not mature enough,  
considering my earlier affair that ended in disaster  
and myself declared, hospitalized and dressed up in a strait-jacket  
for considerable time, for me some regular eternity,  
which fortunately proved most temporary,  
since I was released by someone whom I now am married to,  
forever stuck with for at least the rest of all my mortal life  
for better and for worse, but hopefully for good and for the good of all.  
At least I know that she will never harm me in the least,  
while no one knows what weird ideas and fancies I could get,  
incalculable, liable and unpredictable as I have proved to be  
in my disastrous shipwrecked ruins of relationships  
that all were lost by my capricious carelessness and recklessness  
like some terrific demon let out of his bottle on the dancing floor.  
But we can't think of any nightmares now

as we get drunk and party with champagne and wedding cake  
to splendid festive music with no worries left  
but only happiness and exultation to uplifting music  
with a future to look forward to without an end  
at least for the time being and a day or two  
until our work can be resumed for making preparations  
for our glorious extensive tour, since all the world is mad  
of expectations of our joy of dancing and transmitting beauty  
by immortal poetry together in exhilarating ballets,  
more efficient for an audience wallowing and hungering  
for spiritual art and beauty, than any eroticism,  
as no love is more real, sincere and true  
than the one that never get released  
but by the beauty of sincerity in unforgettable true art.

10.

"I am afraid of him."

"Has he threatened you?"

"No, not yet."

"Wait until he does."

"And if he murders me?"

"Why would he?"

"Why did his former wife have to get police protection?"

"What actually happened between them?"

"She was older than he and much more experienced. He is still a virgin."

"You don't say???"

"That's what he says himself, and I believe him. He is a god in his art but a child in his soul, and I feel like a mother for him."

"Why then did you marry, if there can never be made any love?"

"It just happened. And now we are married."

"And what does he know about us?"

"He has accepted you as a friend of ours."

"And if I desire you and could give you more?"

"Don't tempt me."

"Back to that case. What happened between them?"

"I think she pushed him too hard and tried to force him to a coitus. Then he went mad and thought himself that he would kill her if they went on. She was also terrified and thought he could murder her, but he left her instantly, and she confirmed her police protection, which she enjoyed already, but she needed more, since he knew everything about her."

"Has he told you everything about her?"

"No, he kept some of it to himself, but there are some revealing letters. It derailed so to say into a raving passion, and therefore he left her and has never looked her up again, while she is inaccessible to all the world and lives under a different name."

"He must have threatened her."

"At least he scared her."

"He must never scare you."

"He already has, but we are married. I don't think he could do me any harm. He is as incapable of that as of sex."

"It's an unnatural relationship."

"It is natural for him. He is extreme in his own way."

"But you are not."

"I am afraid that I am not enough for him."

"You must leave him before anything happens."

"No, I never will, until something happens and there would be a reason."

"Then it could be too late."

"I'll take that risk."

11.

I could not believe my eyes.

At that very moment I happened to come back home,

I had forgotten something,

but if she was asleep I did not wish to disturb her,

when I had left her late at night to work

to practice a bit more, she had been sleeping,

but now she lay there in her bed and with another man,

a friend and member of our troupe whom I well knew,

whom she must have called by telephone to make him come

as soon as I had left her probably,

and I overheard in silence something of their conversation.

In just one blow, and everything was ruined,

we had had a still triumphant season,

everything went perfectly with sovereignty and full houses all the way,

there was never any rift within the lute,

exactly nothing had gone wrong, and suddenly I stood

alone in facing a supreme disaster.

She was in flagrancia unfaithful!

Everything went down for me,

my entire world went under in consummate total ruins,

but I quietly went out again as if I had seen nothing.

They had not noticed me or heard me,

so I had been able to observe, take part in their affair and conversation,

and perhaps the rupture could be mended and the shock repaired.



Perhaps there was an explanation that could be acceptable.  
The fact was all too clear though in its evident and painful spotlight,  
that she had allowed another into a much closer intimacy than myself.



12.

"Forgive me, my beloved, I did not know what I was doing!  
It was never my intention to deceive you, but I was worried about you,  
and I needed a good friend to share my deep concerns with,  
yes, I know, I did not have to go to bed with him,  
but nothing really happened. We just talked and chatted,  
and there never was any intention to go any further,

not even on his part. I promise you, there is no ground for any fear, he is as sorry and repentant as myself and probably will come with an apology, all I beg of you is your most gracious forgiveness! Nothing happened, and we have a wonderful career in common to continue working out, I beg you, don't let this go too deep down into your mind! We still have everything to live for, nothing at all has changed! Do you believe me? You must wonder how I could surrender to another, to a stranger, by all means a colleague, and how it could be possible for me to give him my confidence and fail you, but I never failed you! It was only my concern for you, your dark sides and your liability, your shifting moods, no, don't get solemn, don't get angry, just forget it as the negligible affair it was, which never will occur again! I was afraid of the unfathomable darkness in your unpredictable and worried soul, which you yourself are unable to control, as you have told me many times. It was a parenthesis only. Never shall I fear for you again."



13.

There is nothing to forgive.  
The frailty and the weakness of a woman is but natural.  
I have seen worse.  
Let's dance away the worry,  
whirl away on all the stages of the world,



leave it all behind us with its threats,  
for I don't love you less  
for having lost you,  
which I can't deny that I have done.



I would fain just dance it to oblivion  
and forget that I am still alive,

if it were possible I would prefer to dance myself to death,  
for only dancing am I free enough to live at all,  
but now there's no one more for me to trust,  
to share my soul with, share my feelings  
and my complete confidence with someone else.  
I deceived myself in thinking it was possible  
with someone who I still was married to  
and who did everything for me and who believed in me  
and until now had only shown me infinite fidelity.  
I cannot understand it that a woman's flesh  
could prove so weak that she so utterly forgets  
and so abandons everything she lived for  
in a passing moment's impulse and caprice  
for just another temporary man  
who didn't even mean more than the flutter  
of a fleeting moment's butterfly.  
Your intentions may have been completely innocent,  
but the fact is that you went to bed with him  
and slept with him and gave to him a confidence  
which you did only owe to me,  
if we were in a valid matrimony  
with determined rules to be consistent.  
Now you are free from me, and I am free from you,  
we can move in separate directions if we please,  
formalities only still unite us  
since we have a contract binding us together  
to live up to and fulfill the present season.  
Then I will be free to dance myself to death  
if that would be my pleasure.

14.

"How is he?"

"He'll manage."

"Is that all?"

"He was lucky. How on earth did it really happen?"

"I don't know. I was asleep."

"Didn't you wake up by his dancing? Didn't you sleep in the same room?"

"Only he knows how it happened. I didn't wake up until he crashed."

"But what had happened before?"

"That's a long story."

"I would think so, but if I would know something about it, I might perhaps understand the case better to make a surer diagnosis."

"He had been out of joint for quite some time, and it had constantly grown worse, as if a depression quietly and slowly sneaked upon him, so that I more and more lost contact with him. He began to call me by my predecessor's name, that fatal dame who ruined him, and then I started to have ill forebodings, as if the worst of all was going to happen to us, that he would have a relapse into his former mental illness. But we still carried on, and you noticed nothing of it in his performances - all our common performances were perfect, and the audience just went crazier all the time, while we were the greatest commercial success in the world of ballet, and there were more and more irresistible offers from abroad, even from Rio de Janeiro. But he was not well, and the evening came when he could perform no longer. He just wanted to get away from it all, and all I could do was to follow him. He wanted to disappear completely from public life, which troubled him, and his highest wish was to dance himself to death. "Then you can't cancel your performances," I said, but he claimed It didn't have to be made public. So we rented that obscure hotel room, where no one knew who we were and no one recognized us. I was tired to death and just wanted to sleep to get away from my problems with him, while he was all beside himself like in a sort of ecstasy, as if he was possessed. I remember that he started to dance around the big room, but I could not bear with his caprices any more. He tried to scare me by taking out a carving knife from the kitchen to threaten me with it, like in a ballet, and even pulled it across my throat, without even touching it of course, but he just bored me stiff."

"Weren't you afraid then and realized that he needed help? Shouldn't you have got in touch with someone?"

"I was too tired. I fell asleep."

"And meanwhile he continued dancing, obviously more wildly, until finally he must have taken a real bet to be able to dance out through the closed window, by which crash you woke up. How long had you been asleep then?"

"Ten minutes at most. You say that he will manage. Has he no other damages then than a broken leg?"

"He was incredibly lucky. He could have jumped to his death, and anyone else would have done so in such a fall. But on the other hand, that damaged leg will be difficult to heal."

"Will he ever be able to dance again?"

"At least not for some time."



15.

Why was I not allowed to die?

I had the chance.

Why couldn't our room be on a higher level?

I should have beaten myself to death,  
since that was my intention and my sincerest wish,  
and then I am left bedridden with just a broken leg.

They say I was lucky.

No, my friends, it was a damned bad luck.

I have nothing more to live for  
and nothing more to dance for,  
the intention was to carry through the last dance of my life  
and to crown it by jumping out the window  
to immediately be massacred on the pavement below,  
but there was some obstacle that caught me and only broke my leg,  
while the rest of me managed splendidly with only a few scratches.  
Now I am all plastered up for maybe several months,  
and the fracture appears to be complicated,  
so there might be some operation. Well, we shall see.  
It will all be the same to me. I have danced my last,  
for I have no love left to motivate my dancing,  
no friend or human being left to trust,  
my heart is wasted and more broken than my leg,  
and I no longer have a wife.

We will stay married until further but just formally,  
there's nothing left of our romance and matrimony,  
and I could never dance with her again.

She is dead to me, and I cannot even admit it to her,  
since I must refuse all further contact with her,  
since she broke the most important bond we had.

But never tell it to her, for God's sake,  
for that would break her heart.

16.

"What do you say, doctor? Do you still think that I was lucky?"

"You definitely were, since you survived."

"But it was not my intention. It was my bad luck."

"So you danced out of the window in an intentional effort to kill yourself?"

"I have no life any longer. I have lost it."

"On the contrary. You had all your life in all the world. It was at your feet. You were heading for a more established world fame than Nijinsky. You lacked nothing

and least of all the best possible wife in the world, who did everything for you and gave you everything with complete dedication and self-sacrifice."

"Don't speak of her."

"Was that the rupture? What happened? A crisis in your marriage?"

"Don't speak about it."

"She has spoken about it the more herself. She has explained how your contact constantly deteriorated, and how finally she could not reach you at all. We wish so much to help you, but how could we do it without your cooperation?"

"I have nothing to say about my wife, except that I can't see her any more."

"Have you forsaken her?"

"I will not file for a divorce, and neither will she, but, as you say, we no longer are in touch with each other."

"Is it that bad? Did something in your sex life not work out?"

"We had no sex life. Our relationship was pure. Both of us only lived for art, and at least I did. That was all our love."

"But what happened?"

"I danced out of the window in an effort to kill myself."

"We know that. What we don't know is the reason."

"Let's not go into that now. I will not say anything more. How is it with my leg? Was the operation successful?"

"Partly, but I am afraid it was not entirely successful."

"Which means?"

"I am awfully sorry, Ivan, but you will never be able to dance again in public. Your left leg is not like the other."

"I guessed as much. It doesn't come as any shocking surprise. On the contrary it is more like a confirmation of my destiny as I already tried to understand it. So I must think of something else?"

"Don't worry about the charges. You were insured. Your health was already known to be liable mentally. The insurance covers it. You will be well provided for the rest of your life."

"So I have survived myself and am doomed to continue doing so in absurdum, like a scorn of my career, of everything I lived for and of all the megalomaniac vanity of my life. I will take it as a lesson and try to learn something from it."

"You could always continue as a choreographer."

"Yes, that is a possibility, and it comes closest at hand. Thank you, doctor. I don't need to know anything more right now. But don't go further into my case concerning my wife. That chapter is finished. I can never see her again, for it was only dancing that brought us together, and that's the life I have lost."

"I promise to respect your wish, Ivan. But never let go of life. Whatever you lose, life is still full of new offers and possibilities."

"Thanks for daring to be honest, doctor. That's why I will not get another doctor."

17.

"You shouldn't have come here."

"I am your wife."

"Yes, alas, to my everlasting misfortune."

"Everything is my fault."

"No, it is not at all. I chose myself to take my life."

"But it was my fault that you grew so utterly desperate!"

"Rather intoxicated. I was drunk with my life and our success. The whole world was at our feet. I was already something of a god to all the world, no one danced like me, but then there were sudden unexpected complications."

"It was all my fault. You can't imagine how much I have regretted it! But still everything could be amended. The most important thing remains: I still love you madly beyond everything! I cannot live without you."



"How does it help? We cannot dance any more. Here I am as a lifetime invalid. No matter how well cured the leg is, I can no longer make the same high jumps or enjoy the freedom and perfectionism which once were mine in consummate precision! I have a limp and may have to use a cane for the rest of my life."

"You can work to overcome it."

"Tell that to a cripple. Alas, my beloved, of course I love you still as much as ever, but the most sacred thing we had together has been lost. We have both seen our innocence demolished, and it can not ever be recovered or reconstructed. It wasn't your fault. Your nature subjected you to something of a prank, took advantage of your weakness and forced its right. We cannot go back. It feels like a humiliation that you come here and see me lying in bed with my divine ability out of order, reduced in disgrace to an invalid and struck down in dishonour to a humility which I will never be able to rise from. Leave me forever, as I have left you. We must find new sort of lives. You can go back to him, to whom you lent my bed, and I will also have to find my way to less honourable and lighter ladies from now on. No harm is done. Our train just went off the rails, and we have to find another."

"I will mainly just go on crying for the rest of my life."

"If you cry for me it will be a waste of tears. You need not pity me the least, and it would be vain to do so, for you have kept both your legs, can continue working on your career and carry on dancing with whoever as if nothing had happened. All that you have lost is your weak, mentally ill, crippled and incompetent husband, who could not love you and therefore was not worthy of you. Go now. Nothing can be made better, and by coming here you only make it worse."

Now she broke down into reckless tears and had to be led out by the nurse. She could not control herself, and that was her only foible. If only she could have abstained from going to bed with him! Well, I really hope she never will come back.

18.

The major villain is my sensitivity,  
who is to blame for all my tragedy,  
who is to blame for all of my misfortunes.  
I wear my soul upon my sleeve,  
wide open, naked and vulnerable to all the world  
for them to strike down, wound and kill,  
and when I am in love and love somebody  
I am at her mercy hopelessly completely  
with my heart, no longer covered by my chest  
but publicly exposed to everything that could attack and harm it,  
as if my love and confidence was like a weapon  
like a razor, which I voluntarily just turned over  
to the one I pledged my life to love,  
and if she then abuses the fragility of confidence,



like my poor darling did as she went sleeping with another  
and betrayed my trust in gross flagrantia,  
there is nothing that can save me any more.  
I am lost, alone and shipwrecked in a dark and stormy sea  
of only horrors, terror and black sceneries of hell  
in the most insecure, inhuman and unsafe of worlds,  
and the convalescence must be unendurably long,  
as if I had to learn again from the beginning  
how to stand on my own legs and walk.  
It works to some degree, my limp is getting less,  
and if I use a cane I might inspire some respect  
as an authenticated invalid, which even that is something of a comfort,  
although it is just a crutch of miserable and pathetic falsity.  
But I am still alive and forced to go on living,  
my life is finished as a dancer, but I can go on as a choreographer,  
I regularly sit in dingy cafés of disreputable kind  
where almost no one knows me since of old,  
where I to some degree may work in melancholy peace  
to cultivate my dreams, who never can materialize,  
for who will ever study choreographies?  
And I have no more contacts with the theatre or anyone from there,  
as I am dead to them as to myself,  
like someone forced unnaturally to survive  
and outlive artificially himself,  
and there are many others of that kind here in the slums  
retreating from some lost and failed forgotten life  
left long since far behind, buried and disposed of,  
like the memories and shadows of the ghosts of yesterday,  
most ineradicable vermin in the world,  
as it like dreams is only spiritual and abstract  
and the more alive in their insistence for their pain.

19.

I woke up in a shabby hotel room which didn't appear to have been cleaned up after a number of guests. Everything in the room seemed to be of lower status, and in the same bed of mine beside me a woman lay. She was dark but not coloured but seemed darker than she was, as if there was something dangerous about her, but she was very beautiful, if though her features were both sharp and marked by obvious hard experience, which only made her the more beautiful.

"Who are you?" I asked her, for I knew not who she was.

"Don't you remember?"

"What?"

"Yesterday."

"What happened yesterday?"

"Have you forgotten everything?"

"That's how it seems."

"I found you in the gutter. You had fallen. You had come out of the joint and was obviously somewhat influenced. The cane told me you were an invalid. I happened to be there, so I helped you to get up, but you were miserable enough to almost start crying. As you were all washed up, you needed something strong. That's what you said yourself. So I helped you back into the joint, and there we stayed. We sat talking for a long while, until you almost fell asleep. Then I helped you here. You were out of order, so I thought I had better stay with you. I hope you didn't mind?"

"Why would I have minded? A beautiful woman who voluntarily shares my bed! What could possibly be better?"

"So you are not sad any more?"

"Yes, I am constantly sad. Nothing can comfort me."

"But what is the matter with you then? What has happened? Have you lost your mum? That's usually the case in situations like this."

"Don't you know who I am?"

"I have never seen you before."

"You should be grateful. I don't want to know who I am either."

"Now you make me curious. Should I know? Who are you?"

"Have you never heard of the great Ivan Stranitzky?"

"My goodness! Are you that poor man?"

"Yes, I am that poor man, but I am the poorer now, for my head hurts like hell. You shouldn't have wakened me up."

"You awoke yourself."

"Did I? I don't remember."

"It will pass. Drink some water. That's the only cure for headaches."

"But who are you?"

"You don't want to know."

"Should I know?"

"No."

"Then I must know it."

And she presented herself. She was no one in particular, just an ordinary school-teacher on her way home after having worked overtime for too long by correcting compositions. She looked a lot more experienced than that, but I particularly noticed that she had no makeup at all and still was quite attractive in her features. She was that kind of unique woman who didn't need any war paint.

Eventually we got down to some kind of a breakfast. She wanted to know more about me, and I had nothing to hide – I was after all a public person, and most of it was known already.

Naturally I was more interested in learning more about her, but she avoided speaking of herself, and it was not just shyness. It was as if there was something she

was ashamed of and therefore hid herself behind a certain secrecy. I didn't really believe that she had just corrected compositions, so I enquired for more information of what she really was doing. She had no employment as a teacher. She was a private teacher and had just come home to give some private lessons. That was all. She lived very simply, just like me, but we became friends, and I did not want to lose touch with her. I wanted to see her again and insisted on it, and for an excuse and reason I gave her rescue of me in the gutter. "To save someone's life is to remain responsible for that life forever."

"But I didn't save your life, stupid. You were just plain drunk."

"Still it feels as if you saved my life."

"In that case I have many lives like yours on my conscience."

"Are you used to saving lives?"

"Let's say, that I have an inclination to collect souls."

"How many?"

"I haven't counted them."

"But you can count me in."

"You are then the first ballet dancer in my collection."

"I am no ballet dancer any more. I am just an ordinary human being."

"But you have been and that gives you a higher status than if you still were."

"How come?"

"It is a greater thing to break off a career than to make it."

I was stunned by her wisdom. Who was this woman? What was her story? But she liked me, and that saved me. I would not lose her. But she warned me and said, that if I insisted on her friendship, I did not know what I was getting into. With the greater enthusiasm and interest, I did get into it.

20.

"What did I make myself guilty of that night when you found me in the gutter?"

"Nothing. Only I was to blame for everything."

"Only for picking me up."

"Yes, that was my great crime. Should I have left you lying in that puddle?"

"But I must have said something. What impression did I make?"

"You made a rather sympathetic impression, but you were completely balmy."

"I should think so. And yet you could speak with me."

"Our conversation was not very intelligent."

"What did I actually say?"

"You talked a lot of nonsense, but I understood the hitch."

"What was the hitch?"

"You were unhappily in love."

"That was a long time ago."

"Yes. You had lost your love but you still loved her."

"She should have been dead to me. I tried to kill my love by trying to kill myself."

"And that only made matters worse."

"The love is gone, but the misery remains."

"Your own misfortune. You failed in everything. You tried to dance yourself to death and only succeeded in reducing yourself to an invalid. What a bloomer!"

"You seem to have grasped my entire situation. What more did I say?"

"Honestly, Ivan, you actually told your whole life's story from the beginning. I think you succeeded in not leaving anything untold."

"Was I that drunk?"

"Yes, you were drunk over the top, but you needed it. You needed some redemption. All that you were loaded with and had been carrying along needed to be let out, and your intoxication fixed it. It was good for you."

"And it brought me to you."

"I don't know how good that was."

"Or else it would not have come out. At best I would just have rambled to myself for no good, and not even the hangover afterwards I would have been able to manage, least of all remembered anything of my visit to that joint and perhaps only repeated it for worse."

"You can go back there some other time and do it all over again, but bring me along in that case."

"That would be a pleasure. And then we could publicly talk bullshit all over the place."

"If it would do you some good."

"What is left? What do you still not know about me?"

"I don't know if you actually were as mentally ill as you think. I think your mental illness was just a dramatic exaggeration. Of course you were depressed, and of course you had some complex after your disappointment with your first lady, but I don't think she made you ill."

"I was chronically down the drain. I was apathetic. I couldn't do anything."

"I know. That's how depressions work."

"Could you help me?"

"If you want."

"I do want."

"All right then."

"The case is clear. You shall be my new lady."

"I am unfortunately just a school teacher. I can't even dance."

"You don't need to, for I have finished dancing."

"But that was your art. I think you could work out your handicap and restore your balance and dance."

"Ask anything of me, Magda, but not that. I am dead as a dancer and can never resurrect. Let me remain dead and buried."

"I just mentioned that the possibility exists."

"I don't want to know about it. I bid it farewell forever. I have destroyed the love of two ladies by my dance and art. I wish to keep the third one."

"You don't know what you are asking for."

"No, I don't know what I am letting myself in to, you always keep telling me that, but still and for that very reason I want to give in to it. You don't have to marry me. I wouldn't wish to formally divorce my latest wife. All you need to do is to be at hand."

"Well, that's the least thing I can do."

"Thank you. That's all I ask for." And I embraced her with my sincerest gratitude and felt all my passions being born again.

21.

"I feel like a fallen angel."

"You shouldn't."

"My wings are black and scorched and will not do for flying any more, but on the other hand I feel lighter than ever before and truly free for the first time in my life!"

"That is as it should be."

"What have you done with me?"

"Nothing. You did it all yourself."

"Yes, that's the strangest thing, it just came out of me. It wasn't painful at all, nothing made any resistance, and it happened so fast, but suddenly I am liberated. And although I am so befouled I feel purer than ever before."

"That's how it should be."

"Was it that simple?"

"Yes, that's how simple it was."

"But how did you do it? How did you manage to bring about my fall, which no one ever managed before?"

"It was nothing."

"Since you are so experienced, Magda, please tell me now how it is."

"Let's say, that I have some experience in taking care of fallen angels."

"But you do it well."

"Not at all. You served."

"I did not. Would you like some breakfast?"

I got out of bed, as I already was accustomed to wake up by her side, but now it was different. I was like risen from the dead.

"But It almost seems like magic, Magda. My first lady failed completely, although she must have held something of a world record of the circumstances, and I never came close to my wife except on the boards."

"You made love on stage instead."

"Yes, and the more so, but it was only spiritual. Of course we enjoyed the vicinity of our bodies and how we touched each other, but that was only under the rules of the art. There never was a kiss, and we never got under each other's outfits. The tulle was in the way, or the tights..."

"You make me laugh."



"The credit is yours. I never thought I would lose my virginity, and then you just whisk it away by magic in the simplest operation without causing any pain, almost without my sensing it, as the most natural thing in the world."

"But that's what it is."

"Yes, I can see that now. You have given me a new life, made me a new man, given me a new platform to start from in a new beginning for new adventures in an entirely new perspective of life..."

"I am glad you find it positive."

"But there is so much for me to catch up with. My best years were lost on a career that went down the drain. I am still not old, but I have lost all my youth, I have wasted all my possibilities and the best part of my life..."

"The best part of your life is always ahead of you."

"Are you sure? It remains to be seen. But now I have got a new chance by a totally unknown woman, whom I haven't even got to know yet. Could you continue guiding me?"

"If you wish."

"I want nothing else."

"Then I am at your service. But I must warn you. There is much in me which I will be very careful about revealing to you."

"That's fine. Bring me on to the new life with cautious hands, like I must lead my ballerinas with complete security so that no one loses her balance or makes a false step, for that is what dancing is all about, both partners leading each other for both feeling completely safe. That's what we must do, Magda."

"That's fine with me. But I am afraid I will be no good as a dancing partner."

"Forget all about dancing! We still have all the art! You can write! And I can work as a choreographer... I haven't let go of all the theatre life and am always welcome back with my weird ballets, but they can be creative..."

"I think we will be able to manage."

"I think so too, Magda. Come, let me give you a hug!"

And I pulled her out bed naked and covered her with all my embrace and heart, and it felt so magnificently good! It felt as if I was quite alive for the first time in my life, and not only that, but also for the first time really in love and that more than too well.

22.

Who is she, this dark and tricky angel of mine,  
of whom I know so little, and as the more I learn,  
she just grows the more mysterious and difficult to understand?  
My love, who has so generously taken care of me,  
so tenderly and lovingly although you know nothing of me,  
although I am possibly a latent and incalculable murderer,  
who might you be, you quiet and unfathomable personality

of such rare beauty and sincerity in your exceeding warmth,  
that anyone should fall in love with you at once,  
and it would not surprise me if that actually would be the case.  
You must have some story though, but you conceal it well,  
if from modesty or shyness, shame or pious self-denial,  
I don't know, but for every veil that you dare show a glimpse behind,  
you just grow more attractive and mysterious and irresistible.  
Of course I can but love you and more so than anyone I ever knew.  
If I loved poor Sophia at least twice as much  
as I loved my first fatal lady,  
then you are three times more loved,  
more worshipped and respected. And you are teaching me so much  
with your so enigmatically gentle and sweet being  
of just soft sincerity, that you are like the sweetest dream  
of healing spiritual power to my poor tormented soul,  
that I just must enjoy each moment of our association and relationship.  
If just it could go on like this forever! Yes, I know,  
I ask too much and risk a touch of hubris,  
but I am just expressing my sincerest feelings.  
You are more to me than all the world could offer,  
I have already forgotten my career  
and with it all the vanity I lived for once,  
for now at last I seem to actually have found some meaning about life,  
a human being worth all efforts of my love  
to live for, tender, cherish and adore  
in all eternity – and even longer, if it would be possible.





23.

"What do you actually know about her?"

"Nothing."

"That's what I thought."

"Do you know anything about her?"

"Everyone who knows something about her knows more than they should."

"You talk in riddles."

"No, I am just telling you the truth."

"Does that mean she harbours some terrible dark secret?"

"Not just one."

"Do you wish to warn me against her?"

"Certainly not. That is unnecessary, since you are already fallen."

"You say it as if I was lost beyond all hope of salvation."

"So you are – like everyone else."

"She is not like my first one, with ten engagements and two marriages left behind, all shipwrecked. She was abnormal. Magda is but love."

"That's what I mean."

"Yes, what *do* you mean?"

"Everybody loves her. No one can do anything else."

"Do you mean to say that she is a consumer of men?"

"That sounds so vampish. Just be certain, that you will never be able to keep her just for yourself."

"She has no other men."

"No, but she had."

"I have nothing to do with them."

"Yet."

"Stop it, Thomas. What are you trying to tell me?"

"You really then know nothing about her."

"One more time, what is it that I don't know?"

"Don't you even know that she is a satanist?"

Now I had to laugh. Was he pulling my legs, or could he actually be serious?

"What does that mean? Don't look so serious. That makes you even more laughable. Even if she were a satanist, surely no one could take satanism seriously?"

"Many do."

"How could that be possible?"

"Religion as a religion. All religions believe in abstract beings, and the devil if anyone is an abstraction, and many believe in him and worship him as a god."

"Cut it out."

"It is true."

"That would be the most ridiculous of all superstitions. A being consisting of only evil. A fallen angel with horns. No, come on, that is childish nonsense and absurd fairy tales."

"That's what you say now."

"Do you actually mean that she is an active satanist, dressing up in black capes with hoodies, celebrating black masses and making weird scenes at cemeteries?"

"She has many followers."

"In all my life I never heard of any living satanist. I thought they only existed in literature and not later than the 19th century."



"They were only gothic originals and bizarre eccentrics then. The 20th century with the fall of civilization and two world wars that dragged down all christianity in a flattening fall of all morale, resulted in a considerable development of occultism and satanism with representatives like Aleister Crowley and Dennis Wheatley. It was also much supported by films by such as Polanski with films like "The Fearless Vampire Killers", "Rosemary's Baby" and "The Ninth Circle". Don't tell me you have missed films like "The Exorcist", "Omen" and "Poltergeist" and their developed occult insights."

"Don't tell me you are also a satanist."

"Never in my life. But I made some research. It's part of my field of interest as a student of literature."

"So what should I beware of? Her or her friends or of possibly become involved in something?"

"All three. But my first warning must concern yourself. Consider that you will never be able to have her for yourself. She belongs to many. So whatever you do, never become possessive or jealous."

"I will try not to."

"I hope you may succeed. How is the rest of your life?"

And we went on chatting there at the bar with our beer, as the old schoolmates we were, and we didn't talk any more of her. But I realized there was much that I didn't know about her.

24.

"You are the only one for me. You must believe me."

"I believe you. But why did you never tell me anything about your secret life?"

"There was no reason."

"You say it as if it was some illness."

"Perhaps it is."

"In that case you should really confide in me. I have been mentally ill myself, you know."

"I wish I could regard it as a mental illness, but unfortunately it is worse than that."

"Satanists are usually possessed."

"Do you consider me possessed?"

"No. I am the one who is possessed. With love of you."

"There is no harm in that."

"That's what I mean. But why are you so secretive? You never told me anything about your earlier men."

"How do you know there were any?"

"Or else it would be strange, since you are experienced, more so than anyone I have known. And others have told me about it."

"Who?"

"It doesn't matter. You are a lady – hem – of some reputation."

"I am just an ordinary teacher. I was nothing until I discovered satanism. I was crushed by society, suppressed and humiliated as the woman I am, abused and had nothing more to expect of life but worse evils, but then there was satanism. I was never religious, and I don't believe in the devil as any divinity or any substitute for anything such, as most satanists do. They become satanists mainly from an urge of rebellion against society resulting from their disappointments in life, they feel frustrated and illtreated and would rather take revenge on the entire world. In satanism they found a revolutionary ideology which suited them with elements of

attractive occultism and black magic. Myself I found satanism as a possibility to do something good about it. I viewed the satanists as a new school for me to take care of, almost like headmistress, to develop and educate them to constructive people, to turn the darkness and negativism of satanism into positive channels and enlightenment."

"So you almost regard yourself as a missionary within satanism?"

"Something like that."

"Is it true that you celebrate black masses with obligatory orgies including coitions on the altar?"

"You have got that idea from Dennis Wheatley. No, satanism is more about mysticism and meditation. There is no better and more efficient divine service than private meditation, and most satanists practice that, almost as if they were buddhists."

"You haven't answered my question."

"Which one?"

"Have you had many satanists for lovers?"

She did not want to answer that question, as she felt it insulting. She was after all a woman, and I did not insist.

25.

I see her abyss, but she doesn't see it herself.

"Magda, what sort of people are you really encouraging? Don't you see your own self-deception?"

"What do you mean?"

"You are playing with fire and destiny. Your friends are not exactly any angels. You are dealing with criminals and drug addicts and neo-Nazis and all the worst sort of scum and delinquents you can find in society. How can you throw away your life to undemocratic elements, who only want destruction?"

"You exaggerate."

"No, I am not exaggerating. You say you want to educate them and lead them right out of their wicked ways, as if you could teach pigs to read, but what you are doing is throwing pearls to swine, and they just trample them down and ruin them, so that they never can be pearls any more."

"Your concern is touching, but I know what I am doing."

"How can you say that when the inspiration you instigate is taken up by nazis and racists?"

"They are also human beings. They are worth giving a chance. Give them the chance to be human."

"But you humiliate yourself!"

"On the contrary, that is what ennobles me and liberates me and makes me feel useful. Society could never do that."

And the more I tried to persuade her not to devote herself to the murkiest company in the city touching on criminality and subversive activities, the more she devoted herself to it, not to hurt me or detach herself from me, but just because she was like that.

26.

You have seduced me.  
I am stuck,  
my soul is now your property,  
I am your slave and belong to you forever,  
I can never leave you any more nor get rid of you,  
be separated from you in any way,  
for you have put my soul in chains  
in an indissoluble bondage  
of love, affection and gratitude.  
I know, you did it only for love,  
poisoned me in an infernal trick,  
but I forgive you and ask you to do it again  
whenever you feel like it,  
for you knew what you were doing,  
when you gave my soul a perfect flight  
in a far more efficient and ecstatic trip  
than ever when I was well and dancing.  
You have maybe given me my life's elixir,  
for if it was so miraculous and overwhelmingly efficient  
the first time, it should work every time.  
I only wish to do it with you though.  
Let us always make our trips together,  
with your expertise you must stand for the dosage,  
for this journey was so devastatingly impressive  
that I would probably not ever try  
applying acid on my own.

27.

"I want to see you flying again, like a bird on the stage, and raise awe and admiration universally in all the world, to become what you once tried, so that you this time at last would succeed in coming forth!"

She is good, and she is ambitious on my account,  
but she mainly thinks about herself –  
who could at length bear with an unemployed beggar,  
a retired invalid, a limping broken dancer,

good for nothing but for parasitism on society?  
Well, I will see if I will do and make a daring effort,  
mainly to please her, but she inspires me  
and it is not impossible. My dove, my beloved angel,  
my darkest genius of so much unfathomability,  
for you I will see if it could be possible  
to make a giant effort to get back to training  
and get started with the only thing I really cared for and was good for,  
which wasn't even that to any slightest use  
but could nevertheless charm like the sweetest poetry  
and bewitch the greatest audience with a transfer  
to another totally different world of only beauty,  
for which they could wage anything,  
since that is actually the only thing worth living for at all.  
I will give ourselves a good chance and take the risk  
to start dancing publicly again, too well aware of  
what disasters and calamities it resulted in before.  
Perhaps it is another chance for me  
to now at last once and for all in glory dance myself to death.

28.

You taught me how to stand again on my two legs and take my steps.  
I never thought that would be possible.  
My worries about my knee is no longer any bother,  
and gradually I will learn how to fly again  
as you desire, strengthened by your superdrugs and your encouragement,  
endowing me with superhuman energy and power,  
but also an unreasonable dangerous and fearful rage and ire.  
I don't understand what you are doing to me but I trust your knowledge,  
as you know all about black magic and alternative occult means  
which I know nothing about. So lead me on.  
Make me invulnerable, so that I may reach the skies  
with all my hopes, intoxicate me with boundless hubris  
and let me dance heavenly for you alone.  
That's all I want from life, which you returned to me  
as you by finding me took care of me  
and pulled me right out of the gutter.



29.

I know. I am pathetic.  
I can never dance in public any more.  
I can dance and jump in freedom,  
make my capers and let off my steam  
here in my gymnasium at home  
where no one must observe me  
and where walls and windows fence me in,  
but to a first night audience I can never show myself again,  
make no performance, risking slips and falls,  
revealing wants in the necessity of obligatory perfectionism.  
I am through, and I regret it.  
You have done your utmost, helping me back on my feet,  
and I can dance again, but my dancing is invalidated  
and grotesque, a monster mask defacing beauty,  
a deplorable and awkward Caliban  
completely at a loss in comedy.  
So I reduce myself to the imprisonment of self-confinement  
and regard now as my only possibility of liberation  
to at last get any opportunity to dance myself to death.

30.

"I only wished to help you  
and do everything I could to boost your creativity.  
I wished to have you back alive again  
and make you human with some self-respect,  
I wished to love you and thereby encourage you to lust  
to wish to live again and feel more like a man  
with dignity and your own value.  
Above all I wished to further you as your own artist  
and bring forth your soul's endowment  
with its universal validation  
as something of a god within your field.  
My will was absolutely good and altruistic,  
as all I wanted was to do you justice,  
bringing out yourself and making you come right.  
I wanted nothing for myself,  
as everything I wanted was for you."



31.

What gives the soul the sense of liberation and escape  
is the one important thing in life that matters.

Man is a soul stuck in the prison of his body,  
which it is his most elemental and natural concern  
to find his liberation from.

I found it in my dancing in learning how to fly  
through love and truth and beauty  
which three ladies helped me to attain,  
which I can never in my life regret,  
no matter what they did to me,  
however they manipulated me, deceived me and seduced me;  
for the trials and defeats endowed me with an insight  
which I never would have won without them.

Thereby I find it worth while to terminate my dancing lesson,  
my imprisonment in this inadequate decrepit body,  
which condition can no longer show me any way ahead,  
my education can no longer be expanded but has reached its end,  
and so I may at last reward my soul with her supreme and ultimate requital,  
that so anxiously desired freedom without limitations  
which she always had the right to earn,  
the only thing she ever lived for.



32.

"Please excuse us for troubling you, Miss Sophia, but in the capacity of his wife you are perhaps the only one who can help us. Let me assure you at once, that you in no way are under any suspicion of having had any part in his death, although you are the only to profit by it, since you alone inherit him and he had collected a considerable fortune."

"He had another lady after me who was with him till the end. She is the one you should question."

"We know, but she is like dissolved in thin air, as if she never existed. We have no trace of her except vague rumours."

"She gave him LSD."

"We know that also, and according to the autopsy he took a trip just before the accident, if it was an accident, which we are inclined to presume. We had hoped that you could lead us to this mysterious lady Magda."

"We only met once since we had one common interest, to help Ivan get back on his feet and if possible to make him start dancing again."

"And you both appear to have succeeded. You got him out of hospital, and she apparently succeeded in making him get over his handicap."

"She only made it half way. He could never dance in public any more."

"But in spite of his seriously broken leg he could still by her inspiration and encouragement start dancing again at all."

"Have you no clue as to how he met with his death?"

"We were hoping you could help us with that matter. He appears to have tried to dance himself to death at an earlier stage."

"That was my fault."

"But you were not to blame in his suicidal attempt."



"Yes, I was. I betrayed him with another, and that broke his heart. He became so desperate that he tried to kill himself. It was my fault that he was completely

disoriented and felt that he had lost all the ground under his feet. Only for that reason he tried to kill himself by dancing out through the window, and he considered it a major misfortune that he survived."

"By surviving with only one broken leg he managed to get up on his feet again, though. What impression did this Magda give you?"

"A secretive woman, I think she led many secret lives, I know several others who she helped to get up again by personal initiatives and self-sacrifice, she is something of a curator of the underworld, many drug addicts and hippies know her well, she is like a dark angel using her dark powers to do some good."

"So you don't suspect her of having had any part in his death?"

"As I said, she gave him LSD, which he obviously received with gratitude and used regularly, since it gave him new insights and possibilities of escapism."

"For which purpose did she give him drugs? Could it have been to tie him closer to herself?"

"I also thought so at first, but she only wished him well. I knew that for sure after our meeting."

"Why could he not dance in public again, if once he could dance at all?"

"He felt too uncertain. He was afraid of losing his balance. He did not want to make a fool of himself. He knew that he was finished as a dancer."

"Do you think that was the cause of his death?"

"Yes."

We had no more questions, but she was thoughtful and put a question to us:

"Could you tell what you know of how it happened?"

I sighed. "They rented the highest room in the hotel, which had a balcony. Other guests at the hotel have told us that they played music loud all evening."

"What kind of music?"

"Weird music. Mostly Russian ballet music. Prokofiev, Tchaikovsky, Chachaturian and things like that, especially Prokofiev. We found the music on the recorder afterwards. Wild hysterical music, according to the guests. They thought of complaining, but hoped it would soon end. It suddenly came to an end after midnight when he danced out of the balcony."

She cried. We did not enter any details. Instead we tried to remind her of his best qualities.

"How was he as a dancer?"

She immediately glittered forth between the tears. "He was divine. He had the same strong bird's feet like Nijinsky. He actually could fly, and it was his life's greatest pleasure to be able to do so. He sort of bounced on the clouds when he danced. That's why the audience went mad when they saw him. At his peak everything was always sold out with queue lines weeks in advance. To me he was a god, and he was that too for the audience who could see him dancing, an unforgettable, imperishable god."

We gave her our sincerest thanks, and I made sure she was escorted back to her apartment.



Such a god in life, and in death almost just a wet stain after a voluntary fall down into the abyss from the 22nd floor. I never had the privilege of seeing him dance myself, but everyone I know who enjoyed will never forget it.

And somehow it feels, that what actually happened was just a natural process, like a butterfly abandoning his cocoon.

Gothenburg 19 juli 2014,  
translated in December 2023.



## *Appendix*

### *Specter of the Rose (1946)*

A dancer is hospitalized after the tragic death of his wife and recalled to the stage in a second chance by a second wife.

This was one of the most unforgettable films I saw as a child, I never had the opportunity to see it again until 50 years later, and it remains a lasting impact. Its weaknesses are admitted, it's more like a play than a film, (although some cinematic tricks occur as positive surprises,) the acting is not very brilliant but rather stiff, the camera moves as little as possible; but against all these foibles you have the overwhelmingly beautiful and brilliant story and play, the virtuoso dialogue all the way, and above all, the music, the dances and the poetry. Ben Hecht clearly conceived the idea inspired by the fate of Nijinsky, who was disabled as a schizophrenic from the first world war till after the second, and the real theme of the film is the freedom of artistic madness at its most exuberant and creative. Michael Chekhov sometimes tediously dominates long scenes of the film as the sore tried impresario of infinite tribulations who nevertheless is wholeheartedly sympathetic but outflanked by the indomitable realist of long and hard experience, Judith Anderson, who is magnificent in every scene; while the focus of the drama is the dancer's genius and the difficulty of handling it, or rather, subjecting it to discipline, because it's so totally beyond control that it really can't be disciplined, only at best directed in a creative vein. Powell-Pressburger's classic "The Red Shoes" a few years later would have been unthinkable without this for a road mark, and it must remain for always one of the most important and innovative ballet films ever made, especially for its delicate treatment of the difficult subject of genius. The film gains by seeing it a number of times, at first sight its depth and ingenuity is not obvious, but as you sink into it you never reach the bottom. This is an ingenious film about the trickiness of genius.

The most amazing thing of it is its very ambitious effort at pioneering in the field of staging ballets on screen. Its title is the ballet by Michael Fokine about a lovely lady dreaming about a rose that becomes alive, to the music of Carl Maria von Weber, but that is not the ballet staged here. Instead it is a completely new ballet of the same story but with George Antheil's almost expressionistic music, and his music is perhaps the most important part of the film. It is equally expressionistic all the way, and it is the music that drives the dancer mad, so that he can't hear it even inside his head without feeling compelled to dance, and the music if anything dominates the entire film. It is worth rewatching any number of times just for the sake of that music. To my mind George Antheil did not appear much as a film music composer, but in this film, he is allowed to dominate completely, and the result is unforgettable. Ben Hecht's consistently eloquent dialog, the amazing performances of the ballets and Ivan Kirov, Judith Anderson's wonderful character of a worn out veteran overloaded with experience, the ideal love story, the adoration and treatment of art as a sacred devotional plight embedded in Michael Chekhov's ridiculous but tenderly honest character, the overwhelming richness and details of insights into backstage problems of making ballets work, the intensity of the drama although diluted by long talks and discussions making the film seem much longer than it is, all this and much else besides contribute to make this film a work of genius and a milestone in film history.

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0038973/?ref =nv sr 5>

*The play can be seen as a tribute to Ben Hecht and a development of his idea.*