

MELANIE ERASMUS

**LIGHTS, CAMERA,
PASSION**

Embracing the defining moments that
prepare you for your Centre Stage

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INTRODUCTION

The smell of lacquer and resin fills the air. I'm ready to perform. I think I know my dance, yet my breathing gets heavier. Two long thick black braids lay heavy on the top of my head, filled with white baby's breath sweet-smelling flowers that now make me feel nauseated. I look down at my skinny legs and flat chest in my turquoise unitard that I love and pearl white jazz shoes that I know my parents broke their backs to buy. That's the first-ever competition I took part in and guess what... I won. I don't remember even stressing about winning beforehand, but now, looking at all these girls performing with their designer dance wear suddenly made the skin stand up on my entire body, a shiver goes through my entire existence. My dance teacher explained beforehand that I would dance in a competition, but I didn't know that about 30 dancers were doing the same dance as me in my section.

I focused on my moves and tried to remain calm in a stormy situation. My ear was attentive to the little bell that summoned me to come on stage. The other girls and one boy looked intimidating, but all I did was focus on my dance. When it was my turn, I ran on with the most petite runs like I was taught and

looked at the audience. It was a bit disorientating. I could not see people's faces, just three little lights shining on the judges' faces. I was hoping to see some familiar faces in the audience to make me feel comfortable, but all I saw was silhouettes. When I was done with my dance, I ran off the stage into my teacher's arms with my breath heavy and my body tired. The dance was about three minutes long, but I felt as if I left all my energy on the stage. I walked back to the dressing room, which I had to share with other dancers and the look they gave me wasn't a friendly one, and I had no idea why. I had only danced against the dancers in my class in a studio competition but never against other schools. This was the first time that I realised what outside competition was.

Life should be like that, don't be intimidated by others around you, just remember why you are there and do it with pride. All I had to do was show people what I had practised, my preparation. There will always be people that judge you and as much as their opinions can affect you, it should not deter you and your belief that you can achieve. Like the dark audience I saw, you will not always see the clear picture, but that doesn't mean that you must lose your footing. Embarking on dance was a journey of discovery of myself and others. I got to develop my physical body and my mental state of being.