## Quillbot, Creative:

Li Cunxin comes from a low-income family in a remote town in Shandong Province, where he is destined for a life of manual labour. Li, who was passed over at first but was picked when a teacher made a proposal during a school visit, seemed confused by the rough preliminary inspection screening in Qingdao, the province capital. The ballet school at Madame Mao's Dance Academy in Beijing accepts him after he passes a battery of physical examinations.

The next seven years will be spent in intensive training. As he attempts to overcome his homesickness, he has trouble performing well at the academy. His calendar is so packed with dancing and academic sessions that he has little room for flexibility. Additionally, he devotes a sizeable chunk of his time to meetings after successfully campaigning for membership in the Communist youth party and enduring the gruelling interviews required to get admission. But Cunxin doesn't care; he has found his true purpose in life: the service of beautiful Communism. His negative view about dancing was lifted when a new teacher arrived who was less prone to yell. He places greater value on enjoyment and self-awareness. Observant Teacher Xiao notices something about Cunxin that the other educators have missed. Because classical ballet is too Western to be taught at the institution, the teacher is also (dangerously) different from the other teachers there (as opposed to the politically motivated, strident form favoured by Madame Mao). With Teacher Xiao's guidance and encouragement, he rises to the top of his class and is offered more and more leading roles for his efforts and bravery. As a result, the Academy reluctantly agrees to let him spend six weeks since a visiting student with Ben Stevenson's Houston Ballet company, as the government has relaxed its control of Western culture as a result of political unrest.

While living in the United States, he begins to have doubts about the Communist Party ideology he was indoctrinated with in China. China, not America, is the poor country, as evidenced by its population's small size in relation to its riches and the size of its structures. Even though he liked everything about America, he mutes his enthusiasm and recites some Communist propaganda when he returns to China in order to complete his report and return in two months. Nonetheless, the authorities still won't let him back into the country, despite his lying. After waiting three months, he finally obtains his visa and travels to the Houston Ballet for a whole year of dance. To avoid being sent back by his country, he has an illicit affair with ambitious American dancer Elizabeth Mackey. Soon after, he was elevated to soloist and given an additional five months to finish out his contract. Cunxin has become increasingly hesitant to leave in the last month; as a result, he and Elizabeth have decided to hastily get married so that Cunxin can remain in the United States permanently and prevent a defection that could have dire ramifications for his family. The resident Chinese diplomat attempts to coerce Li's return to China by detaining him after he visits the Chinese Consulate to announce his decision and avoid the inevitable backlash against Stevenson. When Li continues to refuse to go voluntarily, the Party agrees to release and allow him to stay, but revokes his citizenship and declares he can never return to the land of his birth. With a heart full of worry for his loved ones, Cunxin keeps dancing, but his marriage to Elizabeth eventually crumbles; he blames their differences in age and culture for the breakup.

Cunxin immediately becomes a major dancer, performing in a number of world premieres and earning several prizes; however, a back injury sidelines him for nearly two months. He keeps on dancing, and not long after, the Chinese government finally granted his parents permission to go to the United States to see him after six years apart. They see him in the Nutcracker, and the audience gives him a standing ovation as they sob at their emotional reunion. Mary McKendry, an Australian dancer, and Li fall in love, and the couple eventually go back to Li's hometown. After seeing his old teacher, Xiao, and performing for him and his parents, Cunxin is overcome with guilt over the disparity between his privileged lifestyle and that of the villagers. However, he tries to reassure himself by reminding himself that he has accomplished everything his mother dreamed of for him. They go back to the United States and keep on dancing there.

Sophie, the first child of Cunxin and Mary, is born profoundly deaf, devastating the family. Mary sacrifices her profession to raise Sophie, and she has since lived a rather normal life, even taking dancing courses to honour her parents' legacy. They raise two more healthy children and ultimately decide to go to Mary's native Australia. Romeo and Juliet, their final performance, is seen by 500 million Chinese people live on television. While in Australia, he not only continued his dance career but also became the manager of a major stock trading business. He hasn't forgotten his roots, therefore he keeps returning to see his mum and old stomping grounds.