## Quillbot, Shorten:

Li Cunxin is born into a poor family commune in a remote Shandong hamlet, where he will work in the fields. Li is startled by the brusque preliminary inspection screening in Qingdao, the provincial capital city. After completing physical exams in Beijing, he gets accepted into Madame Mao's Dance Academy's ballet school.

Training lasts seven years. He fails in the academy due of homesickness. He must juggle rigors academic sessions with extensive dancing classes, which limits his independence. After passing tough interviews, he joins the Communist youth party and attends more meetings. Cunxin doesn't care—serving he's beautiful Communism. His attitude on dancing improves with a new, less yelling teacher. He emphasises pleasure and identifying strengths and shortcomings. Teacher Xiao notices what previous instructors missed about Cunxin. The teacher also (dangerously) loves classical ballet, which is too Western for the academy (as opposed to the politically motivated, strident form favoured by Madame Mao). He excels in class thanks to Teacher Xiao's guidance and encouragement. Due to political changes, the government has relaxed its restriction of Western culture, thus the Academy reluctantly allows him to visit Ben Stevenson's Houston Ballet company for six weeks.

He questions his Chinese Communist Party upbringing in the US. The sheer wealth and scale of the structures and people show that China, not America, is poor. Even though he loves America, he tones it down and recites Communist propaganda for the report so he may return in two months. Despite his falsehoods, the U.S. government won't allow him back. Three months later, he gets his visa and goes to Houston Ballet for a year. He secretly dates aspiring American dancer Elizabeth Mackey to avoid being sent back by his authorities. He becomes soloist in five months. In the last month, Cunxin is reluctant to go, so he and Elizabeth hasten their marriage to stay in the US forever and prevent a defection that may hurt his family. After Li refuses to return to China, the Party releases him and lets him stay, but revokes his citizenship and proclaims he can never return to his birthplace. Cunxin dances for his family but divorces Elizabeth, citing his youth and cultural differences.

Cunxin immediately becomes a major dancer, making several premieres and earning accolades, but a back injury sidelines him for nearly two months. After six years, the Chinese authorities permitted his parents to visit him in America after he kept dancing. As they reconnect at the Nutcracker, the audience applauds. Li marries Australian dancer Mary McKendry and returns to his hometown. Cunxin meets with his old Teacher Xiao and performs for him and his parents, but he feels unexplained remorse for the great disparity in how he lives and how the rest of the community lives. He calms himself by believing that he has done all his mother ever wanted for him. Dancing resumes in America.

Their first child, Sophie, is profoundly deaf. Mary quits her job to care for daughter, while Sophie enjoys a regular life and takes dancing classes like her parents. After two more healthy children, they travel to Mary's native Australia. Romeo and Juliet, their final performance, airs live in China to 500 million spectators. He dances in Australia and manages a major stock trading business. He visits his mother and village, remembering his roots.