

# *Dancing with Danger*

*by Andi Snelling*



It was reading a Shania Twain interview that served me my reality.  
She talked about a time on tour where she nearly the stage every night  
fell off  
so distorted was her sense of gravity & space and heaviness of fatigue.  
The *dizzying heights* of her performance had played out in a way so *cunningly*  
literal that it could only be **the sick body speaking.**

The power it has to scream you into quiet she knew by the vocal paralysis  
that left her hamstrung-sung for countless years until she re-trained  
her singing brain even though now she says it's **never the same.**

Such is our shared disease that re-writes the anatomical score in a three-part  
disharmony – it me we. Wherever it decides to reside within our *Body of Work*  
it arrives with operatic clang country twang twixt us twain heart & brain.

Shania saw her tick as I did mine: imperceptible insect engorged in my armpit  
enjoying a bloody meal mini vampire that it was sucking the life out of me  
in exchange for *an injection of infection* a syringe from nature's gutter.

If you measured *Capacity For Damage* by size then all you would have seen  
would have been a bite-sized sigh not the onset of  
**goodbye.**

You see I hadn't realised that my *almostcrowdsurf* in 2016 - as I blender-stood  
at the edge of the stage in Adelaide - was when it had already begun :  
**the danger.**

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I am pulsating, anticipating, my nerves confiscating, as the fly-zapper inside me stings in an offbeat rhyme that co-ordinated I scrambles to regulate.

I wonder who is surviving and who is dying from the poison inside my beautifully ascending colon: they need me to live and I need them to die to live, but for now, we are as one and I must believe my microbe hitch hikers will be willing to share the lymelight with me.

My deadened calf moos at me as my burning belly of concrete jelly fakes fright on opening night. The unexplained of my wired brain fogs me up with a clout of doubt. It's been 3 years of slop and I'm as ready as I am not.

I call the protest of pain into line because it is time. It's strange to feel the death within as my engine revs for the drama of the stage.

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The confusion of my body wears such a confidence that even I am tricked by my own performance. The way the light strikes my hammered flesh; the grand finale of my show; my attempt to strip everything away so that others may see what is underneath me; the naked truth of my sick body which despite my dismay cannot be relayed by an x-ray on any given day. But I cannot strip my skin; I would if I could especially for the sake of art.

It's in the *micro moments*  
when I feel my art travelling beyond life,  
beyond the death that marks my presence more than ever before;  
that which cannot exist without the mirrored eyes and shared oxygen  
of the totality of humans in the black box with me;  
that's when I feel the red flags turn white;  
that's when I know that this fight is just right.  
That it's here,  
on the chipped boards,  
where I transcend my body,  
through my body, *because of my body*.  
I am naked on roller skates and the audience is on their feet.  
I feel as young as I am ancient.



A reviewer once wrote, "Snelling is a dancer with an actor's face."  
I had thought I was an actor with a *dancer's body*.  
I am both and neither.

I had a 6-pack when I was a teenager from all the training.  
Now I have a bowling ball belly,  
swollen with inflammation information; my senses sensitivity consumed.  
It consumes me. Often.

"Snelling has such incredible control over her body," wrote another reviewer.  
3 days later, that *same body* was in hospital  
and that show never saw its tour.

i owe my *imperfect* artistic process to the steadiness i find in my dis-ease.  
as experimental as my art now is on my body it is **necessity** that is my  
greatest innovator.

if i am to risk my heartbeat or an entire week of sleep then i shall make  
the choreography count.

always in improvisation there is live realisation  
no matter the loss of direction or memory recollection.

even when i'm seizure still pounding primal dead awake impossibly alive  
i find my movement medicine or else it finds me.

when i surrender to the call is when i rise in my fall.  
this **is the art of sickness**.



*I walked past a gate held shut by a belt wrapped around its partner post. It was so aesthetically unexpected, it was stunning. No-one would ever have thought to use a belt to make a gate functional if the gate had never broken. In an instant, I understood the magic of my own broken parts in the making of my art.*



On my quicksand days  
of crawled choreography  
and monologues of moan...  
I rehearse in the bath  
the tap drip my metronome...

Such awards I could have won  
with tiles under my bum...

The alchemy of the steam  
keeps creative visions clean.

Many times I have stood mid-show and felt it.

*I'm driving with the handbrake on again.*

*I have to find the override button to keep going.*

Only my under mind knows where that is and frankly  
I couldn't even begin to tell you what realm it exists in.



My symptomology feels like a dodgy Dad experimenting  
with illegal fireworks in the backyard of my body.

To play with that is dangerous.

But isn't it cracking good fun?

*To my dead leg:* I love you with so much unfeeling. You're asleep alive with me. Trapped deep within my thigh, your tasty tingles are sherbets to my muscles. The bizarre tick tock, always at inconvenient o'clock, after all the spasms have stopped. The tremors gone, vibrations lapsed, but you, dead leg, are always back.



I google defibrillator  
scared for my life  
late at night.

On the stage  
I don't die  
I don't know why.

How I do this show  
I'll never know.

It's a dramaturgy of elongated emergency that loops with alarming normalcy.  
The more my disease progresses the more urgent my creation  
expresses. I should probably prevent myself from dying before worrying  
about throwing body shapes on stage, but the soul-pull  
strengthens my weakness. The second my body enters the space my  
art is already risk-taking. But the danger is divisible because it's invisible.

I AM ALLOWED TO DO THE WRONG THING BY MY BODY.

Even if it causes a cascade of costs.



***+ A weak heart is not for the faint of heart +***

I am a snow globe. Shake me and the glittered guts of my insides stir themselves crazy. It looks pretty - the way the particles dance and swing - but it takes quite some time to settle me back down again.

// There's a grief that comes with the realisation that I may not have autonomy over the vast lumbering of my body when I am paddling in wet concrete, longing for the longitudes and latitudes of the dancer I once was. I feel stuck between lives with my lurching cries, my stomping self-pity of unjust disgust as I fail to adjust. The tears dissolve me into a singular focus - making it to the next breath... And the next... It is alarming how calming danger can be. For it is death that teaches us how to live. //