

Red Dress

How far will you go to live your dream?

Desperate to dance and escape the realities of home, Ellie changes her age to sixteen, dons a pair of fishnets and heads off on tour. Careful what you wish for! In the world of showbiz, no one is who they appear to be.

It's 1980. *Fame* has just been released and girls across the world are donning legwarmers and dreaming of the stage. For 12-year-old Ellie Fitzpatrick, dancing is life itself. *Fame* and *The Red Shoes* aren't just movies, they're a creed.

But Ellie's life is not the movies. She lives with her newly single mother behind a factory, struggling to survive.

Then Max Buddle, an aging impresario, offers Ellie a spot in his travelling vaudeville show as a dancer. All she'll have to do is pretend she's 16, don a set of falsies, and she'll debut at the Coffs Harbour RSL Club. It's a dream come true.

Miles from home, Ellie is introduced to show business, and wannabee nymphet Tammy, Max's 15-year-old daughter. The pair set about becoming the stars they know they are.

On opening night, Ellie is deliriously living the dream. But the notes session afterward brings her crashing to earth. "Study Veronica," Max tells Tammy and Ellie. "See where you're going wrong." Crushed, Ellie stares at the statuesque blonde with triple D bust. "What's she got that I haven't?"

It's sexy young singer Stuart who gently takes Ellie aside and teaches her to deliver what Max is looking for. Not ballet but bump and grind.

Ellie takes to the stage pouting and flirting and is an instant sensation. But with her newfound sexuality comes problems. Overnight, Vernon the magician starts making sexual advances. And her only true ally, Tammy, is furious at being upstaged. By New Year's Eve, Ellie and Tammy have lost themselves in pills, booze, seduction and humiliation. Ellie wakes to find Tammy overdosed on the floor.

After Tammy's resurrection, Ellie becomes the scapegoat for all the failures of the troupe. Her childlike illusions are shattered and she realises home is where she longs to be. But Ellie won't quit. She is a professional.

Through her resilience and power, this young girl speaks her truth and in doing so reminds the troupe of who they really are. With magic in their hearts, the performers of the Buddle's Starlight Touring Company come together to put on a triumphant last show.

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