

PRINCESA - BEATRIZ SIDE

PRINCESA

Ei, meninas. Look over there.

GIRL 1

She hasn't got a prayer.

PRINCESA

(to Esperança)

No way she can play... Ei! Você.

Esperança goes to the group of girls, full of energy and excitement.

ESPERANÇA

Prazer! I'm Esperança.

PRINCESA

Legal. You can call me Princesa. You're gonna try out?

ESPERANÇA

Yeah, been working for this, have no doubt.

BEATRIZ

(approaching)

Oi, and you are...?

ESPERANÇA

Your next recruit. Where do you want me?

BEATRIZ

(looking her up and down)

You're real cute. Ever try swimming? Might be more your speed. I'm busy -

The girls laugh.

ESPERANÇA

Just try me out, agreed? Please, coach-

PRINCESA

Maybe you could be our "water boy" instead.

BEATRIZ

I don't have time for this. Próximo grupo! You, you, you, play against the others there. Remember, it's the national team so I'm gonna be tough, beware.

Esperança steps to the side, not ready for defeat just yet. In a choreography, the girls play at the net.

At the right moment, Esperança
inserts herself into the game.

BEATRIZ

Damn. You can do somethin', can't you?

After a moment, Beatriz just can't
bring herself to say yes.

BEATRIZ

Não, pequena. Just can't say yes - Good luck to
you and God bless.
You're done here. Just too small.

Defeated, Esperança begins to walk
away. Princesa has recovered from
her fall.

PRINCESA

Ei, menina. Cross over to my side.

Esperança crosses under the net,
which she has no trouble doing.
All of the girls laugh and
Esperança realizes that Princesa
is making fun of her.

PRINCESA

You're right, coach. Too small.
(to Esperança)
Now please, cadela, fetch me that ball.

ESPERANÇA SIDE

ESPERANÇA

So, you play and write music.

GUILLERMO

I sing, too.

ESPERANÇA

What about?

GUILLERMO

Anything. You know... adventures, love.

Esperança looks away, a bit
embarrassed.

GUILLERMO

Don't tell me you've never been in love.

ESPERANÇA

(lying)

Yeah, I have.

GUILLERMO

Nah, I get it. These places where we call home
can be tough on those who are different -

ESPERANÇA

Diff - what?

GUILLERMO

You can tell me, tudo bon.

ESPERANÇA

I don't hide the fact I love jiu-jitsu.

GUILLERMO

Yeah, you're open to showing who you are.

ESPERANÇA

Exactamente. I ain't gonna wear dresses or pink
or curls -

GUILLERMO

(matter of fact)

And you like girls.

ESPERANÇA

Que?

GUILLERMO

It's ok. I had a crush on you instantly when we
met, but I can accept -

Esperança is getting up to leave,
but Guillermo stops her.

ESPERANÇA

A girl who likes boys can't fight? I don't have
the height, but I can kick your a-

GUILLERMO

OK! OK! Minha culpa.

GUILLERMO

Let's start again. Me llamo Guillermo. Você?

ESPERANÇA

Esperança.

GUILLERMO

And you're a fighter who is small but mighty
and loves like Aphrodite.

ESPERANÇA

Why did you invite me here?

GUILLERMO

Somethin' about you, that day on the street.

The club music changes to
something more upbeat. Guillermo
gets up.

GUILLERMO

Dançar?

ESPERANÇA

Não.

GUILLERMO

Vamos, vamos. At least I know that word's the
same in português. Vamos. We need a re-do.

Suddenly a MAN approaches
Esperança and flirts.

MAN

You wanna dance with me, pequena? Tão doce!

GUILLERMO

Ei! She's with me. Beat it.

The Man gets closer to Guillermo
in a threatening way.

GUILLERMO

Man, I'm just tellin' you to stop.

The man throws a punch at Guillermo, but Esperança's right there and puts him in a neck lock. The club guests react to the situation and step away.

ESPERANÇA

You got me now.

(squeezing harder)

Just say when you've had enough.

The Man can't speak, only signals with his hands. Esperança lets go. The Man scurries away and the club guests settle back to their conversations and drinking.

Esperança fixes herself while Guillermo can only stare at her in awe.

ESPERANÇA

Wanna dance?

Fearful, Guillermo awkwardly gets close to her to dance, then relaxes into it.

GUILLERMO

Hey, you got rhythm.

ESPERANÇA

I guess so.

GUILLERMO

You got family?

ESPERANÇA

My brother, BB, he's sick.

GUILLERMO

With what?

ESPERANÇA

His coração is weak and my tio and tia... they ain't very sunny so I gotta sneak around training. Gotta get money.

He laughs. Awkward silence.

ESPERANÇA

I'm not sure what you were doin' up there. It was nice.

GUILLERMO

Nena, they let me sit in twice! Rio de J is where it's at. You know bossa nova?

ESPERANÇA

What's that?

GUILLERMO

We're listening to it right now. A little BOP, a little TSS, a little WAH-

ESPERANÇA

I know sports.

GUILLERMO

Yeah, I got that. There's a rhythm to sports though, right?

ESPERANÇA

Dunno. Never thought about it.

GUILLERMO

Yeah, like the beat of a "pow" and length of a "zing."

She's not really following.

GUILLERMO

OK. You can go back to your wrestling after just one drink, one song.

ESPERANÇA

(sighs, not correcting him)

So, you play and write music.

GUILLERMO

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but Guillermo stops her.

GUILLERMO

Ei, I'm sorry, did I - ?

ESPERANÇA

A girl who likes boys can't fight? I don't have
the height, but I can kick your a-

GUILLERMO

OK! OK! Minha culpa.

The drinks come and he urges her
to sit back down.

GUILLERMO

I got family problems. Got some cousins in Miami 'cause in my country things just aren't-- my ma died then papi wasn't smart and he's in jail. Politics. My abuelita, she raised me to be strong, find my path. I found song. Send money whenever I can. Gotta make somethin' big of myself as a man so I can go back and get them both outta there.

A PROMOTER, JOE SLINK, approaches Esperança. He sports a too-cool-for-school look: fur coat, fedora, sunglasses. Guillermo gives him space.

JOE SLINK

Hey-a, Esperança?

ESPERANÇA

Yeah.

JOE SLINK

You thinking about coming to the US?

ESPERANÇA

I'm not sure -

JOE SLINK

Training, tournaments. We're looking for women to do some exhibition fights.

ESPERANÇA

What's that?

JOE SLINK

They put BJJ to the test, a little intrigue, new fans get behind you. It's a nice purse just for being a part of it. If you win, they win. Money for everybody. They call it "anything goes."

ESPERANÇA

"Vale tudo."

JOE SLINK

As the champ, you get double or nothing. No real rules, they're just to show what women can do.

ESPERANÇA

How much?

JOE SLINK

Depends. It's intense, but you don't get hurt anymore than you do in training. Double your money if you win. Brings you some fame...

Joe pulls out a card and gives it to Esperança and starts to walk away.

JOE SLINK

Joe Slink. Call me if you're game.

OSWALDO

Ok, rapazes. Avoid going into side posture when your opponent has neck control. Best to try to escape and roll, roll, roll.

ESPERANÇA

Oi, uh... Sensei?

Oswaldo sees Esperança and sighs.

OSWALDO

Professor. I told you, this ain't -

BOTH

- karate, kid.

ESPERANÇA

And you don't train meninas.

OSWALDO

Correto. Try another gym. Just a menina from the beach.

ESPERANÇA

I just wanna watch you teach-

OSWALDO

You need breath control. I guess they don't teach you that at the vôlei.

ESPERANÇA

I'll learn. Show me the way.

There is complete silence as Oswaldo considers his options.

OSWALDO

It's a lot of sweat.

ESPERANÇA

Sim.

OSWALDO

Probably tears.

ESPERANÇA

I have no fear.

OSWALDO

We're all men here, got it?

ESPERANÇA

I got the stuff to roll. Please, Professor. Just one chance.

OSWALDO

But ONLY when I have time...under the condition that you're gonna clean the gis, clean the windows, clean the grime. Entendido?

[looks at the men]

Meninos, this is Esperança. The cleaner of the mats, killer of the rats. She's gonna keep your gis spotless, clean up your mess, and when she's got time she'll train. Beat up with the bruises and the blood and then she'll clean again. Entendido?

Oi! Didn't think you'd come back here tonight.
Parabéns!

He slams down his duffel onto the
floor. Esperança is startled.

THIAGO

What are you saying congrats for?

ESPERANÇA

For your silver-

THIAGO

Nah, I shoulda got more. That bundo was ugly,
sloppy, no pedigree. Between the mounts, the
guards, armbars, and chokes, he made me look
like a fool, a real joke.

ESPERANÇA

I wish you wouldn't say that, T. You looked
great out there. Trust me.

THIAGO

Easy for you to say. You fight chicks, I fight
men... Desculpa, Esperança, I just got upset.
They play with my pride and when I lose I
become an animal. Desculpa... How about rollin'
with me? I watched you win, but you could use
some advice.

Thiago picks her up and pins her
against the wall in a choke.

THIAGO

Don't resist, pequena, you know you want a
piece. We've wanted this for so long. Let the
animal inside you release.

ESPERANÇA

You feelin' OK?

BERNARDO

You got tryouts today?

TIA ANA

Pra vôlei, you better-

Bernardo takes a deep breath and slumps in a chair.

TIA ANA

We went to the doctor.

BERNARDO

Somethin's wrong with my heart. Gotta have surgery someday.

TIA ANA

Bernardo, no more to say.

Bernardo exits. Tia Ana glares at Esperança.

TIA ANA

(to Esperança)

Escuta ben, garota. When you go to the vôlei, you gotta be perfect. Make the national team-

ESPERANÇA

I told you it's my dream-

ESPERANÇA

I promise I'll do my best-

TIA ANA

Your best needs to be better, we need that money. Don't disappoint us, honey. Get down to Ipanema now!

TIA ANA

So you just walk away at the first não?

ESPERANÇA

What was I supposed to do?

TIA ANA

Figure out a way somehow!

TIO JOÃO

(under his breath)

She's never gonna learn.

ESPERANÇA

But I found a job -

TIO JOÃO

Cleaning for pennies!

ESPERANÇA

And I'm gonna train -

TIO JOÃO

In what? Karate? Use your brain, estúpida.

There's tension: one has to be
careful to go against Tio.

ESPERANÇA

I promise I got the stuff to do jiu-jitsu.

TIA ANA

Suficiente! I gotta go to work. You better get
clear on what you're doing here.

Tia Ana leaves.

ESPERANÇA

Oh BB, wait 'til you see what I'll be able to
do. They do chokes and holds and if you can
manage -

Tio João suddenly attacks
Esperança and puts her in a choke
pinned against the wall. Bernardo
scurries to the corner.

TIO JOÃO

You wanna get choked? Here.

He chokes tighter.

TIO JOÃO

Listen good. Find a job, I don't care what,
just as long as it gets you outta here. That
triângulo on your thigh was a warning. Clear?

VINICIO SIDE

VINICIO

Ei, that's enough for hoje. I'm closin' up -

ESPERANÇA

Just one more spot -

VINICIO

(with some attitude)

I thought it looked fine earlier.

Esperança doesn't answer. Vinicio acquiesces.

VINICIO

A'right. Five minutes and then kick it.

ESPERANÇA

Five minutes then time to quit it. Yessir.

Vinicio exits - but not really.
Esperança drops the mop and does a few more moves. Vinicio makes himself known.

ESPERANÇA

(grabbing the mop quickly)

OK, I'm done.

VINICIO

What's that triângulo on your thigh?

ESPERANÇA

A reminder not to fly too high.

She gathers the cleaning supplies.

VINICIO

Ei, look at me, garota.

(she does)

All day you've been sneakin' around slidin', glidin', whenever you can. I don't know why your hidin'. Out with it.

Esperança finally lets out a breath.

ESPERANÇA

I won gold at the last tournament in Rio. Youngest and lightest in my class. A dude at my gym gave me some trouble -

VINICIO

What kind of trouble?

ESPERANÇA

And you bet I kicked his ass! Or at least I could've 'til Professor walked in -

VINICIO

And he made you leave the gym...

ESPERANÇA

(understands that he gets it)

He told me that's why -

VINICIO

He don't train girls - you're that garota I met at Ipanema!

ESPERANÇA

Yeah, I remember now.

VINICIO

So you did train with Oswaldo after all.

ESPERANÇA

Look, I'm afraid of losin' a chance, gettin' hurled out just 'cause I'm a girl -

VINICIO

(smiles)

No doubt. Esperança, you got somethin' special, don't throw it away. I know you're scared but, moça, you're in the USA. Forget about Oswaldo and the old school BJJ. In this gym, we'll respect you. You'll train with the best. But first - a test.

ESPERANÇA

Test?

VINICIO

Yeah, just an itty bitty test.