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Save the Last Dance

By Duane Adler

Ticket, please.
Have a good trip.
Excuse me, is this seat taken?
No.
I love ballet.
I never had the body for it.
You dance?
I used to.
I've got something for you.
It's for love, not luck...
...because you don't need luck.
You dance like an angel.
Mom...
You're the best luck
I'll ever have.
- Are you okay?
- I keep messing up the pirouettes.
It's frustrating, but it'll be okay.
My mom's gonna be there.
You have nothing to worry about.
You're the best dancer in Lamont.
This is not Lamont,
it's Julliard, New York City.
- Do you want to pray?
- What?
You're leaving for St. Louis.
I'm not gonna see you. We should pray.
Awesome Father, S.J. Auditions today,
let her do okay...
We've got the Carson wedding,
the Dankowski party, two funerals,
and Jill calls in sick
today of all days.
Sara, I'm sorry, I have to
handle this. There isn't anybody else.
- Mom, what about...
- Glynn, do they want roses in this?
Judy took that order, ask her.
Mom, this is the most important day
of my life. You have to be there.
You promised.
I know.
Excuse me, are you Sara Johnson?
You're next.

I'll be there. I promise.
Before you audition.
Is there anything you'd like to say
about your contemporary piece?
No, it's pretty self-explanatory.
Did you have a good ride?
I slept through most of it.
I guess you've got stuff. Baggage?
Three suitcases. One big one.
Sorry I had to split
so soon after the funeral.
If I could have gotten out of that gig,
I would have hung around longer.
Guess it was pretty tough
leaving all your friends.
Here we are.
Put them anywhere.
I'll give you the grand tour.
Not like what you're used to,
but the water's hot
and the mice are friendly.
Bathroom.
Kitchen... big kitchen.
This is where I sleep.
I didn't get a chance
to make the bed today.
Where do I sleep?
Nixon was probably in office
when this was made, but...
...there's a brand-new mattress
in there.
Most of your clothes should fit here.
Put the rest in the hall closet.
I know it's a little bit
out in the open, but...
I didn't get a chance
to finish your room here.
Yeah, I'll fix that.
It's a work in progress.
I'll have it up and running
in no time.
A few minor adjustments.
Well, I guess
I'll let you get unpacked.

You don't have to come in with me.
I'm your father. I'm supposed to.
You don't know where to go.
It's okay. I mean, I have done
this before - gone to school.
All right, well,
this is the name they gave me.
Mrs Gwynn, main office.
I'll be back to pick you up at 3:30.
Okay, sure, whatever.
My door is always open and, contrary
to hall rumour, you can talk to me.
So, do you have
any questions or concerns?
No questions, no answers.
All right. This is Mr Campbell's class
and he's expecting you.
Truman Capote's "In Cold Blood"
represents
a complete turning point
in American history and literature.
Do you want to take that cap off
and tell us why, Mr Ricard?
Gay rights?
- The Com-pote dude who wrote it...
- Capote.
- Capote?
- Capote.
Sweet tooth. Straight-up fag, Mr C.
- Flaming!
- Thank you, Mr Ricard.
We can now promote you
up to kindergarten. Anybody else?
Once, twice...
Miss Johnson, I apologise
if any of this is over your head.
If you see me after class,
I'll give you some chapters. Anybody?
It's a non-fiction novel.
Capote mixed true events with things
he couldn't know, so he made them up.
He created a new genre.
White folks back then felt safe.
Capote scared them. He took

hardcore crime out of the ghetto
and placed it in America's backyard.
That's what makes the book special.
Yes, that's part of it.
That's all of it.
We got a debate going on now.
Capote wasn't first. Richard Wright
and James Baldwin did the same.
Wasn't nobody trying
to read them, though.
A lot of people read them.
A lot of people like who? You?
Didn't think so.
Hey, yo! Mr C, Mr C.
Your girl needs to bone up. You need
to give her a pass to the library.
We need to get a parent-teacher's
conference, something's going on.
Why don't you lend her yours?
'Cause obviously you don't ever use it.
Yo, Latrice! Mr Jackson's civics class,
you will have a pop quiz.
Do not front on it.
It's mad hard, all right?
That's how easy it is
to give to charity around here.
Thanks.
Don't put your shit on the floor.
So here I am trying to study,
and he's crying and crying...
Yo, where were you in maths class?
It was so hard. I didn't know
anything, I left it blank.
Had you been there,
I'd have had my notes.
I know you're new
to the table, but look...
We are the 2K generation,
and no one takes us seriously.
We don't even take ourselves
seriously. And look around.
Half the student body is D.O.A.
From the neck up, Clara.
Sara. It's Sara.

Yeah, it's Sara.

- You finished?

- Yes.

- Thank you so much.

- No problem.

Watch where you sit. Don't ever
let me catch you at that table.

And it's Chenille.

Put your tray here and I'll
introduce you to the ladies I roll with.

It's just a little hip hop. Come on.

Hold up, hold up, hold up.

Girls, this is Sara.

Sara, this is Portia and Tanisha.

And this is Diggy.

She thinks she's down.

- Excuse me, I am down, okay?

- Yes, whatever.

I thought you knew how to play?

Did it hurt?

Stick a pin through your eyebrow,
see if it hurts.

Asshole!

Who? 'Cause in this crowd you're gonna
have to be a bit more specific.

The guy by the window
with the blue sweater.

He's in my English class.

He thinks he's so smart and so cute.

- Derek Reynolds?

- Oh, so you know him?

Hell, yes, I know him.

He's my brother.

He's not an asshole per se...

Forget about it, girl.

It's all right. Don't even sweat it.

- Yo, Derek? Hey, yo.

- Hey, man.

Medicine man. Yes.

What's up, Cap?

I was just asking about you.

I got emotional about you being back.

Sit your punk ass down.

Matter of fact, step your lame ass off.

Man, why we... What is
that piece of... You look good, man.
Where did you steal that from?
Nice jacket.
What's up, man?
How did it go with Mrs Gwynn?
Regular bullshit. "You're smart. "
"Learn from your mistakes. "
"I'm here for you. "
She's here for me, all right.
But are you hanging in?
You feeling strong?
About my first week back
at home sweet high school?
You enlisted, I'm drafted.
"Finish school or finish your sentence. "
Like they both ain't
12 months of long-ass time.
But a year here is better
than another served up in Juvie.
- At least we got chicks in here.
- Yeah, man.
Check you later, man.
Gotta see this honey.
Hey, Sara, come in here
a minute, will you?
You've been working a while in there,
you must be getting hungry.
Swanson Hungry Man Dinners.
They're the best.
Got every style. What do you want,
animal, vegetable or mineral?
I had a big lunch.
All right, well... They're in here
if you change your mind.
Unless your plan
is to starve yourself to death.
I just don't eat when I'm not hungry.
And Mom never let me eat that stuff.
Listen...
I got a gig downtown tonight.
What do you say that...
You haven't heard me play
for a while, what do you say...

Do you want to come with me
and hang out, and maybe eat afterwards?
It's a school night, Roy.
Oh, yes. It's a school night, yes.
I forgot. Well then, I'll just go.
And you can eat or not eat.
And I'll be back when I'm back.
Steps is gonna be
off the hinges Friday night.
I'm-a bust a new move, break in the
new Jordans and bring a little honey.
Why, your hand busy?
If it wasn't for that kind of undue
attitude, you could be the lucky one.
- I could see us right now.
- Yeah, in your dreams.
- Help me, dog! Defend me!
- I got my own problems, Snook.
What problems?
Man, you've got no damn problems.
You're going to college,
then Doctor college. You're the man.
He's tripping off his acceptance
letter from Georgetown.
No, I'm waiting for my letter.
I've been waiting.
Could've been a doctor, too, if it
wasn't for that time I got left back.
"That time?"
What, 5th and 6th grade don't count?
Why do you always try to make me
feel bad? I liked the 5th grade.
Miss Barnett had this ass,
it was so big...
This is my brother Derek.
- My bad, you've already met.
- Yes, we're acquainted.
- Hi.
- Hi.
You're not gonna introduce me? Did you
forget my name and your manners?
- You don't need to know him.
- You do need to know me.
Everybody needs to know me.

They call me Snook-G from the C.G.
And don't you forget it.
He's called Snookie
because Fool was taken.
They call me Snook
the coochie crook.
God, I don't feel like
going to school today.
Let's see that upper body.
Both legs, that's nice.
The upper body!
I can't, I know!
I don't have an upper body.
You need to work your upper body.
Go do some chin-ups.
Statia, you're next. Cathy, spot her.
Good, Chenille, point your toes.
All right, Sara. You're up.
I hate this class.
Look at my hands. I hate her.
She made me climb to the very...
- Well, not the very top.
- Obviously.
Damn!
Excuse me!
Wait, hold on, hold on.
Sara?
How do you get your leg
to twist like that?
Yeah, what's up with all that
double-jointed cheerleader shit?
Nothing's up with it.
I just used to dance. Ballet, mostly.
So you should hit Steps with us
tomorrow night.
It's a club, you know,
mostly hip hop.
It's sort of members only,
you know what I'm saying?
Oh... I don't know.
- You should go.
- Yeah, Snook spins sometimes.
- He might be able to get you in.
- Who?

Snook, she needs to get hooked up
with Steps. Give him a 20.

- For what?

- I.D.

She thought she was getting in
off your looks! No, no!

No. Your girl's weak.

I got my rep to watch. I can't be
getting any ass-shaking Bandstand in.

You talk a lot of shit for someone
who never says anything.

You gonna pay the man or what?

- I don't even know where it is.

- I'll give you my address.

We'll go together.

And I will have your I.D.

- Steps ain't no square dance.

- I'll dance in circles - around you.

- All right.

- Good show, man.

Don't you have something to do?

Money to spend?

Let's roll, girl.

Hey, girl. Come in.

- So you found the place okay?

- It was fine.

I'm just gonna get my coat
and then we'll be out.

Cool outfit.

Slammin'. Slammin' outfit.

Momma Dean? I'm leaving.

I look okay, right?

Yeah... Yeah, you look all right.

Momma Dean, Sara.

- Sara, Mom, aka Momma Dean.

- Hi, sweetheart.

And handsome here is Christopher.

Now don't get him

all riled up, Chenille.

I'm gonna get me some sleep tonight.

- Glad to have met you.

- Bye.

I'll be home at 1:00 at the latest.

Is that... Is he yours?

He sure ain't Momma Dean's.

- Here is your I.D.

- Thank you.

Chenille! She's ugly! She's fat!

She's 21. Come on, let's roll,

I ain't got all night.

Wait, I have to ask you a question.

Do I really look okay?

Lakisha! Let me use your car.

I just want to sit in it

for a minute, all right?

- Come on.

- What? I thought...

Let's go, let's go.

You need to take off

that 5th-grade-dance-looking top.

It's from Gap.

It's country

and you look country in it.

You're gonna put these on, too.

What the hell

am I gonna do with this?

Oh, come here. Come here.

- Thanks, girl.

- No problem.

Let's bounce.

- You got a pocket for this cash?

- Yes.

Let's get to our table before it gets
crashed and I have to hurt somebody.

- What are you, some kind of VIP?

- Snook hooks me up when he spins.

- Hey, you got it, you got it!

- Got what?

The right to walk past your greasy
self without your paws on my ass?

Yeah, you got it.

That's how I got it?

That's how I thought I had it.

Come on, girl.

- Hey, what's up?

- We're here. Shawna!

- Hello.

- Sara, Shawna. Shawna, Sara.

- This place is tight, right?

- It's so cool.

What is up with this place?

Seems like they're letting anybody in.

And they started with you.

I'm Nikki. Alyssa, Jasmin.

You know Diggy, right... Marsha?

Sara. It's Sara, actually. I know you, though. You're in my gym class.

- That don't mean you know me.

- Quit it, Nikki.

Quit what?

I ain't walking on eggshells

because you brought

the Brady Bunch to the Negro Club.

Maybe you came to the wrong spot.

I'm sure there are no Negroes here.

I'm sure you came with one.

Oh, no, wench, you did not

just call me a Negro.

- You all just chill.

- Why don't you tell her to chill?

She the one that's always

got something to say?

I could say a lot more.

You keep talking,

I will lay all your shit bare.

Hey! Why you got to burn her

like that, Chenille?

I can't stand her ass and the way

she plays my brother.

- What's up, dude?

- Hey, man.

Let's dance.

Let's not.

- Is it gonna be like that?

- How did you think it was gonna be?

That you were just gonna drop me

and pick me up whenever you wanted?

I miss you.

Does this have anything to do

with that fool dismissing you?

Ain't nobody dissed or dismissed me,

Derek. I laid him off.

You fired me. You laid him off.
Now you've just got to find someone
to dance with, and all will be good.
- What's up? What'd he say?
- He's tripping, come on.
Yo! Excuse me!
Yo, want to dance
with me for a minute?
- Catch you later.
- Bye.
What you drinking?
I don't know... maybe I'll have...
That's him coming over.
- Who?
- Christopher's father.
Don't look, don't look.
How you doing?
Why don't you ask
how your son is doing?
That's a line
you ain't tried in a while.
- Why you gotta jump off like that?
- Why you gotta be like you are?
I thought you was coming
to get Christopher on Sunday.
What happened, you got amnesia?
Look, I'll take him next week.
I had to work on Sunday.
I ain't seen
the fruits of that labour.
Come on, Chenille...
Chenille...
You know you want to dance with me.
That's why you came here.
To yell at me and to dance with me.
Kenny, Sara. Sara, Kenny.
- Hi.
- Hi, what's up?
Rum and Coke, no ice!
Yo, man!
A rum and Coke straight up
and a beer. Anything.
That's a bad choice, anything.
- It's just a beer.

- It should be the best beer.
But you'd know that if you even drank.
Whatever.
What does that mean, whatever?
Whatever you want it to mean.
You're the genius, you know everything.
Not everything. I don't know
why we're still standing here.
I'm supposed to be dizzy
by now, remember?
From all the circles
you danced around me.
I don't feel like dancing right now.
- But you know how?
- Would I be here if I didn't?
Let's do it, then, come on.
Come on.
Cross front, cross front.
That's it. That's it, you've got it.
Cross front, cross front.
- Shit!
- I'm sorry.
Sorry, I'm sorry.
Damn, Nikki,
she all up and you're not.
Up in your nut and cracking it.
What she doing, 2-step?
I don't care what she's doing,
that bitch ain't got shit on me.
- Who?
- He's right there.
I'll take care of him.
Don't be dealing in here.
What the hell's wrong with you?
Now I tell you! Do you hear me?
Do you think this is a game, man?
Kai!
Get off. Get off. Let's go.
Chill.
Get off. I'm all right.
Move, move, move. Keep going.
I've gotta find my brother.
Derek! Derek!
It's about to get real out there.

Cops and shit, I'm gone.
All right, girl. Derek!
Derek! What the...
Go!
Go. Let's go.
Are you crazy?
What's wrong with you, Derek?
You need to leave Malakai alone.
Let that scrub handle his own mess.
Scramble the CD,
I ain't trying to hear that shit.
I live five blocks that way.
I'm gonna go home. I'll see you later.
Not alone in this neighbourhood.
Too many boys thinking they're thugs.
- I'll walk you.
- No, don't worry about me.
- I said I'll walk you.
- What about you?
We live right around the corner.
- I'll be home in a minute.
- All right.
So, you was working it tonight, girl.
Yeah, right. Slammin'.
Later!
Come on, Braveheart.
Maybe you want to hook up sometime?
After school, work on your moves?
- If you want.
- Yeah, sure. If you want.
So how did you like Steps
once you got used to the music?
It wasn't the music
I had to get used to.
It's not the first time
I've heard hip hop.
I bet you listen to it all the time.
Are we closer to your crib or do we
have to stop for food and water?
- We passed it.
- You passed it.
- Thank you for walking me home.
- Thanks like "I had a great time"?
Or "I'll bust a cap in your ass

if you ever darken my doorstep again"?

No. I would never...

bust a cap in your ass.

Just checking.

So are you here? You're home?

I'll see you.

See you at school.

See you.

Thank you for the dance.

Morning.

You scared me. I didn't know

you were home, I didn't see your car.

Yeah, the night's full of surprises.

I had a big one myself

when I came home on my break.

Where were you, Sara?

- I was just out with some friends.

- I just missed half a night's work.

- Hope you had fun.

- I did. I had a great time.

Look... You're seventeen years old.

If you want to go out, go out.

But don't sneak around,

and don't make me worry about you.

Now you're worried about me, now I'm

old enough to take care of myself?

The rules about going out

are very simple, Sara.

I want to know where and when,

and I want you home at a decent hour.

- End of discussion!

- Fine, end of discussion. Relax.

All right, lesson one.

Hip-hop is more than a dance.

It's more like an attitude.

You gotta loosen up so you can

feel all the flow through you.

So just stay right here.

What is this? Bring your feet

out like this. Spread.

- All right?

- Yes.

Just hang loose.

Be strong like a tree.

Left, right, left, right...
Break this down with me, come on.
You sitting down
for tea or something?
Get up.
Sit like you're chilling.
You do it. Sit down.
Now we're just gonna walk.
Something simple. Just like this.
Now you try.
Just relax. Let it be natural.
Five, six, seven, eight...
Dig into the move with the balls
of your feet instead of your toes.
Bend your knees.
Slouch a little bit.
Just like you're a nasty bitch.
Now watch. Check it.
Got that? It's the same beat,
but then you split it up.
Freeze, freeze, freeze, freeze...
- Bounce, bounce, bounce, bounce...
- I am such a dork!
- Now I'm cool?
- You're almost there.
Yeah, you got that.
- Sure it's okay that we came here?
- It is now.
If we're gonna keep doing it, we have
to find someplace else to practise.
Did you always want to be a doctor?
- Who said I want to be a doctor?
- Chenille... everybody.
Well, you know... I want to be a doctor,
but I've got to get into college first.
What kind of doctor?
A paediatrician. I like kids.
Do you have any?
No. Do you?
I wasn't trying to be smart, Derek.
- Wouldn't be the first time.
- Screw you, I'm brilliant. And cool.
- Oh, yeah?
- Yeah.

Wow.

That was cute.

Can you show me again?

What was that shit you just did?

Rond de jambe attitude. Ballet.

- I used to dance.

- You used to dance?

As in don't any more and no,

I don't want to talk about it.

You did that rond de jambe shit

'cause you don't want to talk about it?

It's really not a big deal.

I think it is.

This club was so slammin', Lindsay -

the dancing. I'm gonna go again.

You are? Have you seen

anybody get shot yet?

No, I didn't see anyone get shot yet.

God, I didn't move to Bosnia.

I'm still gonna pray for you.

Jesus, you're in the ghetto.

Forget about the drive-bys. How

are you supposed to meet anybody?

I did actually meet somebody, I think.

I met this guy and he's really cool.

They got white guys at your school?

No, actually, they don't.

Shut up! Look at me. I want my money.

Shut up! Quit crying, man.

- I'll pay you next week.

- You've already smoked it.

- I don't have any.

- You better find it from somewhere.

Hey, hey, stop it!

Come here!

Where do you think you're going?

Bitch!

You ain't seen nothing,

so don't say nothing to nobody.

- I stole a bike here once.

- Why did you do that?

- Because I didn't have one.

- Okay, good reason.

It's not a reason. I just

used to do wild shit like that.

- With Malakai?

- Yeah.

I don't get you two.

You seem so different.

- We're not.

- I think you are.

I mean, come on.

Malakai is scary. Very scary.

What do you mean by scary?

The guy's tough. He has to be.

- He's got a good heart. I know him.

- Maybe you only think you know him.

Malakai may not be the boy next door,
but he's still my boy.

He does some shit

that I'm not down with, but...

I ain't never gonna completely
cross him off like everybody else.

You're not down with the stuff
he does, but with him? I understand...

He's my friend, Sara.

You don't have to understand.

Listen, me and him

got into some bad shit a while back.

Broke into a liquor store
and cracked open a cash register.

Somebody peeped us and called 5-0,
and we barely made it out.

The cops were on our asses,
so we ran different ways.

I must've been going the wrong way,
because the cops were closing in.

So Malakai smashed some car windows,
set off the alarms

and turned the heat from me to him.

I kept running and he got caught.

The DA offered him everything

but a Rolls Royce to turn me in.

But he didn't and he never will.

I stole a hat once when I was 12.

But my mom found it

and made me give it back.

Gangster Sara stole a hat. Call the FBI.

Are you gonna turn me in?
I think I'll wait for you to surrender.
So, did you get along with your mom?
- Were you all tight and shit?
- Yeah.
We got along. All tight and shit.
- Why do you never talk about her?
- There's nothing to say.
That's because you don't talk about her.
- What do you want me to do?
- Say something about her.
I mean, you don't say
anything about her...
She's dead! What should I do,
run through the streets screaming?
- If it helps.
- It won't, so drop it.
I didn't mean
to press you about your mom.
Get along with your dad?
You all tight and shit?
Yeah, we're both tight and shit.
Our DNA matches.
What is this place?
In a few months it will be
Club Med for the homeless, but now...
...it's an old furniture spot
I worked at last summer.
You hop, step, back.
Real simple. Do it, all right?
Hop, step, back. Got that?
We'll try it one more time
and add on the next part.
Six, seven, eight...
Step back, break, spin, out...
Step. Chilly on that? One more time.
On this part we're like battling.
It's like a challenge.
If I step forward like this, you have
to challenge me back into my space.
So it's back, front, back, front,
like that. That kind of feel.
Wait, wait, wait.
You're making me dizzy.

Sit on it. Stick your ass out.

Do it.

Okay, how am I doing? How's my butt?

It's nice. I mean...

- It looks good.

- Thank you.

You made that? It's really nice.

It's Tanisha's. That girl's gonna pay my way through design school.

What about your mom? Where is she?

She was in jail for drugs.

The things women do for drugs.

She got out and took off.

Maybe she'll come back.

That is what Derek used to say when we were little.

When Momma Dean used to piss us off.

But he grew up. He grew out of it.

You like Derek, don't you?

No. No.

Yeah, I got it!

What's going on in there?

What? What is going on?

- Dr Reynolds is in the house.

- All right. What?

You're going to Georgetown!

It's Georgetown!

Congratulations.

It's really exciting.

Give me some love. Give it up.

- Will you tell me where we're going?

- No.

Why a surprise for me?

You're the one who should celebrate.

We can celebrate together.

We have an audience.

Work with me.

Oh, my God.

That lady was freaking out.

She was really losing it.

I'm so excited for you.

Are you nervous about Georgetown?

No.

Yes.

I'm sorry, I can't go in there.
This is where I'm taking you, to ballet.
- I know, but...
- But what?
Nothing. Nothing, never mind.
I thought you would like it.
- I did.
- You ain't acting like it.
I'm sorry. I don't want you to think
I didn't have a good time. I did.
It's just... Ballet is not
a part of my life any more.
I don't understand.
Did you wake up one morning
and decide to waste your talent?
How do you know I have talent?
You saw me do some stupid leg trick.
I saw the look on your face when
you did it. Same as I saw tonight.
Goofy happy. If you're gonna tell me
something about not dancing,
at least tell me something real.
What if I don't want it to be real?
What I want is to wake up
and see my mom again.
For things to go back
to the way they were.
But that's not gonna happen,
and it's all my fault.
- What's your fault?
- My mom. The fact that she's dead.
She got scraped off some highway
because of me and my stupid audition.
Because she was rushing
because I made her promise to come.
When they called my name,
I was mad at her because...
...because I needed her
to be there and she wasn't.
She was dying while I was dancing
and I was mad at her, and I'm sorry.
I'm sorry... I'm so sorry!
It is not your fault that she died.
Or that she was rushing. She cared

and wanted to be there for you.
That's what makes it so bad! She always
wanted what was right for me.
I wanted to be the prima ballerina.
And I didn't care if it took
all of her money and her spare time.
It was my stupid audition
and my stupid dream, and it killed her.
All she wanted was for it to come true.
I bet she would still
want it to come true.
- She didn't want you to give it up.
- I know, I just...
I don't think I can do it without her.
What do you want?
Do you want to do it, Sara?
I mean you.
Do you want Julliard?
Yes.
Then it's on you.
You're the one
that's gonna have to make it happen.
You're the one that's gonna have
to make your dream come true.
So I'll see you tomorrow?
Yes.
I promise not to have
a nervous breakdown.
Good night.
Good night.
I called Julliard. They're holding
auditions in Chicago next month.
- Next month? Cool.
- I'm out of shape and it hurts.
If you call that out of shape,
what does it take to get you in shape?
Practice.
Okay, jog around the room and I'll do
push-ups. Then I'll sit and watch.
That's not how I get into shape.
Stretch the leg.
That's it. Now shoulders down
and bring the hip down as you go.
And stretch through the toes.

Tomb.

And finish. Good.

I don't care about the ballet,
but I need your help with the freeform.

- What's up, boy?

- Chilling.

Girl, who is Snookie talking to?

I don't know. Anything with legs.

I think something

just got spilled on me.

- Ain't nobody watching you but me.

- Yeah, right, nobody's watching.

Come on, you've got

to get ready for Julliard.

Go, girl!

Go, go, go, girl!

Watch me squash this shit.

Damn, Nikki!

Who's breaking it down?

You'll never look

as good as she does with him.

That's oil. You're milk.

Ain't no point trying to mix.

Hey, what's up?

Look, we were just dancing.

And her ass just happened

to fall into your hands?

You were dancing with Snookie,

I was dancing with Nikki.

The music was going and...

I just thought we were all

having a good time.

There's nothing between me

and Nikki any more.

I didn't mean to hurt you.

Sara, I would never

do anything to hurt you.

I'm sorry.

I really am sorry.

- Do you want to go?

- Yeah.

Come on, let's go.

This is it. This is where I live.

This is my dad's music room.

He plays trumpet.
No shit.
He's actually pretty good
if you like jazz.
He's got some nice stereo equipment,
it's off the hook.
And this is our living room.
It's not anything special.
My dad's gonna fix that.
It's kind of messy in here.
- Do you want to see my room?
- Yes.
This is it. I sleep on the couch.
There's a bed underneath, but it gets
stuck. My dad says he's gonna fix it.
He's... at work right now.
He'll be... gone all night.
Yeah...
I'd sleep in the dresser too
if I had six brothers to sleep with.
Hey, fellas, what's up?
What's up, baby?
No love, no love.
I hear you've been
travelling in new circles.
Are you tapping that white girl?
That's why you ain't got time
for your boys? Too busy fronting?
Too busy snowflaking.
And if that's the case, watch your back.
White women don't bring
nothing but trouble.
- That ain't white women, but women.
- That's your women.
We're gonna check out some honeys
on the west side. You riding?
Hell, no. This ain't about no honeys.
I know what it's about.
Those fools we stomped at Steps
hit my corner four strong last week.
- I gotta handle myself.
- They're gonna handle you.
They can bring it. I've got my heat.
That gat's only gonna create mayhem.

That's a black man's life.
Madness and mayhem.
How do you know?
You just got out of Juvie,
and now you're talking
about starting some more shit?
That shit ain't funny.
You act like you don't know
who you are no more.
And what's up out there
for anybody who ain't you?
I'm still from this neighbourhood,
but you...
Happens when a white girl
goes to your head.
- Or gives you some...
- Shut up, Lip.
I know what's out there,
it ain't like you can't get past it.
- But you're getting in your own way.
- I had help getting in my own way.
Hey, what's up?
- What the hell was that?
- I was trying to block the ball.
You bitch!
Good going, Sara!
That's it! Nikki, back off!
Oh, yes! All day!
What is this shit?!
- Malakai! Are you all right?
- Yeah.
It ain't over, bitch.
I don't even know why it started, bitch.
'Cause you're always in my way.
Only when it comes to Derek.
That's what this is all about.
No, it's about you.
White girls like you.
Creeping up, taking our men...
The whole world ain't enough,
you gotta conquer ours too.
Derek and I like each other,
and if you have a problem
with that, screw you.

I'll get it.

Yes, I'm coming.

- Oh, hi.

- Shit!

- I'm okay.

- Let me see.

- I'm really okay, I'm...

- What did she do?

Now is really not a good time
to talk. I'll call you.

- Here, let me see.

- That stings.

Yeah, but it's gonna keep your face
from swelling up like a pumpkin.

Hold it on there.

So, what are you gonna do?

Come on, it's payback time.

Either you're down or you're not.

Either you're my boy or you ain't,
simple as that.

Hey, baby, we lit it up out there.

Did you see us, D Man?

Do you see us? We're talking.

Anyway, we lit it up and...

Come on, that shit ain't funny.

- Damn right it ain't funny!

- I thought you liked it down there.

Your specialty, ain't it?

Crawling like a bitch?

That was a reflex action
in the heat of a moment.

You're rude and wrong to bring
that shit up in mixed company.

- I'm gonna go home. Are you ready?

- No, he's not. He's talking to me.

This is an A and B conversation.

You gotta go? See yourself home.

- Fuck you.

- What the hell is your problem, man?

- You gonna cover her back, not mine?

- Because you're wrong.

No, you're wrong. You've been wrong.

You ain't even worth shit no more.

Get out of my face, college boy.

And take
that trailer trash whore with you.
His pyjamas are in the bag. If it is
as cold as it was today, put them on.
Hey, what's wrong
with my nephew here?
Come on. It's okay, it's okay.
- What's wrong with him?
- He don't know you, Kenny.
I'm his father. He knows me.
- What should I do?
- Come around more often.
- I can't talk to you.
- And I can't depend on you.
What do you think I use
to raise this baby? Oxygen?
He has needs, Kenny,
and his needs require money.
Here we go.
And we're gonna keep going
until I get what I need from you.
I'm doing the best that I can. Do you
think your mouth helps the situation?
I'm just trying to deal with
this shit. I didn't ask for this.
What, and I did? I climbed
on top of myself and got pregnant?
I don't have time for this. You want
me to take him to my mother's?
Get his shit ready. Get his shit...
Get him ready!
You're not taking my son tonight,
not with that temper and attitude.
Fine then, I won't take him.
I'm out of here.
Go ahead, leave!
That's what you're good at!
Your son ain't seen nothing
but your back since he was born!
Shawana Clarke. Shawana Clarke.
- Do you want me to take him?
- No.
I have been here for an hour and a half.
Am I gonna see a doctor soon?

- We'll get you in as soon as we can.
- My appointment was an hour ago.
- I got here early.
- We're doing the best we can.
Is there somebody else I can talk to?
Wench, gotta stand over her to make
sure she puts your name on the list.
Trifling bitch.
I'll get that.
I know, I know, I know.
So your dad's tripping
about the fight?
- Yeah.
- Probably thinks it's Derek's fault.
No, I explained about Nikki.
So you put it all on her.
None of it's on you?
She started it.
I told you what she said.
She shouldn't fight with you,
but she had reason to say what she said.
Wait a minute. You agree with her?
You and Derek act like it don't
bother people to see you together.
Like it don't hurt people to see it.
Well, we like each other.
What is the big damn deal?
It's me and him,
not us and other people.
Black people, Sara. Black women.
Derek's about something. He's smart,
he's motivated, he's for real.
He's not gonna
make babies and not care,
run the streets messing up his life.
He's gonna make something of himself.
And here you come, white,
and you take one of the few decent men
we have left after jail,
drugs and drive-bys.
That is what Nikki meant
about you up in our world.
There's only one world, Chenille.
That is what they teach you.

We know different.

I don't understand.

I thought we were friends.

You want to be a friend?

Don't just be here to be here.

Open up your pretty brown eyes
and look the hell around.

Excuse me.

Come on, Sara,

this is for your audition.

Come on. You're not attacking it.

You're not working it, come on.

- I'll get it right the next time.

- You've got to get it right now.

- I can't work like this.

- Like what?

Like this, with you dictating to me.

All right, let's take a break.

I'm sorry. It's just

that the audition's next week

and everything's so messed up

at school. I'm feeling a bit weird.

You know, everything's gonna

be okay. I feel it.

- So, did you pick out a dress yet?

- A dress?

Yeah, you know,

girls wear those sometimes.

Steps, Main Squeeze night.

Couples only Saturday night.

We already talked about this,

remember?

I didn't know we had decided on it.

Well, Steps, what's there

to decide about it?

I just thought that... I thought

that with the fight and everything

maybe we should cool it

for a little while.

What?

What are you saying? Are you saying

that you don't want to be with me?

- Or that you won't be seen with me?

- I'm just saying I'm confused.

Confused about what? Me?

A little bit. I don't know.

- Yes... no... maybe...

- Maybe?

Are we just talking

about Steps and school

or are you talking about the grocery

store, the sidewalk, the museums?

Break it down, I don't get it.

When is it okay for us

to be together, to be seen together?

I'm trying to be honest.

Nobody wants to see us together.

We spend more time defending

our relationship than having one.

- It's just so hard.

- So everything's got to be easy?

- That's the story of your life.

- You know this much about my life.

When shit gets a little rough,

you punk out.

You punked out on ballet

when your mom died.

You don't know shit about my mother.

How dare you talk about my mom!

God!

I'm sorry.

I shouldn't have said that.

It's just that... all this shit has

kind of caught me off guard.

I mean, it's like, damn,

like you don't want to be with me.

Is that what you're saying,

that you don't want to be with me?

No, it's not like that.

I'm just trying to tell you how I feel.

- And you're taking it personal.

- Let me tell you something.

I hit the best friend I have

in the face over you.

I've been taking shit from people

I've known all my life

so that I could be with you,

thinking that we're in this together.

So don't give me
all this "nothing personal" shit.
Fine. If I'm messing up your life so much,
maybe we shouldn't be together.
You know what? I don't need this shit.
I don't even know why I bothered.
I'm out. To hell with it.
To hell with you.
Hey, man. About the other night,
I don't want there to be any...
Don't even worry about it.
My jaw is not made of glass.
Yeah, well, you know,
blood's thicker than blondes, right?
So, you got my back on Saturday?
Derek... I ain't got nobody else, man.
- You got Lip.
- Lip?
That fool will get
a nigger killed quick.
No, I need you there.
47th street, under the El.
I'll call you, man.
Are you down?
Yeah, I'm down.
Let me get to class
and get some education, like you.
I don't want to bug you,
I just came in here to say good luck.
So, tomorrow is the big day?
Yes.
- Are you scared?
- Shitless.
You got a minute for your old man?
I want to show you something.
Sure.
Be careful. That wall is still wet.
That's your mother when she was 19.
When I first met her.
I know.
It's just a start.
I know you're too old for a twin bed.
It's a nice bed, Roy.
I didn't mean to mess up your life.

Or your mother's.
And I don't deserve a second chance
to be your father.
But I'm hoping
you'll give me one anyway.
Way back when...
I had all the time in the world
to get to know you.
For you to get to know me.
But one day you wake up,
you look around.
All you've got to show for yourself
is a beautiful, talented little girl.
A young woman...
...who hates you...
- I don't hate you.
I miss her.
I miss her so much.
God, everything is so screwed up!
Derek is mad at me,
he's not gonna come tomorrow.
I want him to be there.
I need him to be there.
I just want someone there
who loves me.
I love you.
- Why are you so quiet?
- I don't feel like talking.
Derek, there's something
I ought to tell you.
- I said something to Sara.
- What? What did you say?
Stuff... How maybe Nikki had a point
about black men and white women.
- What? You said what?
- I'm sorry, I...
I don't even like Nikki.
I was tripping off Kenny.
You can't help who you love, Derek.
You're not supposed to.
When you love somebody, you love them.
Look at me. At least you found
somebody who loves you back.
I've got to go.

- Where are you going?
- Stay out of my business, Chenille.
I know what Malakai wants you to do.
Why you tripping off him?
All you're trying to do is get out of here.
Ain't no shame or blame in that.
It's getting cold out here.
Take that baby inside.
Hey.
Hey.
Kai! I've been trying
to catch up with you.
- I gotta talk to you.
- Ready to roll?
I gotta talk to you.
- What's up?
- Look, man. I ain't going with you.
What do you mean?
Did you come here to waste my time?
This shit is nonsense, Kai.
Dangerous nonsense.
Just back up off it, man.
I'll go with you if you go home.
Get the hell away from me,
you punk-ass bitch!
You're the one who don't have
the balls to walk away from this shit.
I should've took you to jail with me.
But you didn't. So you do not
have to get in that car.
Malakai, you are
so much smarter than this shit.
I know what you can be.
I know what you're capable of.
- Let's just walk away.
- Walk away to what?
I'm not you, Derek! I can't do
nothing but what I'm doing.
I can't go to Georgetown
with a 10.0 GPA.
Operating on people,
doing brain surgery.
Yes, you can, man.
If I can do it, you can do it.

All I have is my respect,
and that's what I gotta take care of.
You want to bail out on me?
That's fine.
But you can kiss my ass
with all your future bullshit.
I know who the hell I am. Right now.
Kai, man, wait, man...
Let's go, man.
Sara?
Ready to go?
Yes. Yes.
Sara!
Sara Johnson?
Miss Johnson, we meet again.
- You prepared a contemporary piece?
- Yes, sir. They have my music.
Hold it. Hold it, cut the music.
I'm sorry, sir. I wasn't ready.
Are you ready now?
Yes, sir, she's ready!
Young man, excuse me,
this is an audition.
Who let him in?
How did he get in?
He's not supposed to be here.
- Young man!
- You can do this.
- I can't. It's too late.
- It's not too late.
Miss Johnson?
You can do it.
- Sara, you were born to do it.
- Miss Johnson?
- That judge hates me.
- Forget him.
Ain't nobody watching you
but me. All right?
Now, show me some attitude.
Miss Johnson,
we don't have time for this.
Are you ready to continue?
- Miss Johnson?
- I'm ready.

Yes! That's what I'm
talking about, baby!
Hey, look, all due respect, if you
don't let this girl in, you're crazy.
Thank you, sir. Thank you very much.
Miss Johnson!
I can't say this on the record yet...
But welcome to Julliard.
Thank you. Thank you.
Oh, yeah, hype it up, everybody!
Because it's Main Squeeze night.
Hi! I heard you got into Julliard.
That's like the hottest school
on the planet, right?
Yeah, it's pretty good.
I know they got all these
famous dance teachers and shit.
But if you need some new moves,
some real flavour...
You know who to call.
All right?
All right.
- Congratulations!
- Thank you.
Hold it, hold it, hold it.
- Say "Thank you, Snookie".
- Thank you, Snookie.
Get your asses on the floor.