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Center Stage

By Carol Heikkinen

And one.

Heel forward.

Good.

That's right. Shoulders down.

And brush.

- Do you know how many they take?

- Usually no more than 12.

- Twelve? Out of this class?

- Out of the whole planet.

In the middle. Number 15.

Not enough turnout. Bad feet.

But look at her.

- Excuse me!

- You're excused.

Here we go.

Am I a bad mother

if I hope she doesn't get it?

Don't ask me.

I was against this from the start.

- Mom!

- Jody!

Mom, I got in.

- I made it.

- Wonderful, honey.

Can you believe it? I'm going to New York.

What happened?

- They didn't take you?

- No.

No? Those bastards.

Not, "No, they didn't". No, they did.

Do you know who went there?

Everyone who matters in American ballet.

The school feeds right into the company.

But there's no guarantee

you'll make the company, right?

And you could still dance in college, honey.

Indiana has a great dance program.

This is the best thing

that's ever happened to me.

I don't think it would kill you

to at least pretend to be happy.

It's a scholarship. Everybody gets one.

It's the only way they can get people to go.

- When are you going to start?

- I don't know. Maybe I won't go.

What are you saying?

What are you going to do instead?

I could work at the new Hooters.

- As what?

- You do not have the rack.

I'll get implants!

- You need a hand?

- No.

- No?

- I mean, no, thank you.

Okay.

Idiot.

I'm Eva Rodriguez. How you doing?

- Jody Sawyer. Fine. I'm new here.

- Me, too. I took the top.

This is good.

- You know who I saw on my way in?

- Who?

Cooper Nielson.

Yeah? Did he seem as cocky

in person as he is on TV?

It freaks me out that we'll be seeing

people like him around all the time.

You get used to it.

I'm Maureen. I guess I'm living with you.

Don't sound so excited.

I'm Jody.

- Nice to meet you.

- This is Eva.

What are you doing?

I'm knitting a sweater.

If you want to smoke,

you have to go outside.

Fine. I'll go outside. Are you coming?

- Bye, Maureen.

- Bye.

- Erik Jones.

- How you doing, Erik?

My stage name is Erik O. Jones,

after Oprah. She's my idol.

Eva Rodriguez, after no one.

An individual. I like it.

I'm Jody Sawyer.

We were going to smoke. Want to come?
Come downstairs. It's Marlboro Country.

- So, Serge...

- Sergei, Sergei.

Who's the babe?

- It's my girlfriend, Galina.

- Don't get him started.

She was here all four years with me
and now dances with San Francisco Ballet.

- You've been here for four years?

- Yeah.

So you know this Maureen chick
we're living with?

You're living with Maureen?

- Well, good luck.

- Big-time bitch?

Biggest time. And of course,
she has the best technique in the school.
She's been here since she was nine.

Is this the right room?

If it's not, I'm staying anyways.

No argument here, baby.

- You're Charlie? You're in the right place.

- Excellent.

That's Sergei, Jody, Eva,
I'm Erik, and you're cute.

- Long trip?

- From Seattle.

My girlfriend dumped me
for leaving her there.

Morning.

Would the new students
raise your hands, please?

Which of you was the best dancer
in the last class he or she took?

Come on.

It's a heady thing, isn't it? Being the best.

Teachers dote on you.

Other students ask for your help.

And an aura builds

and then you get accepted into ABA.

And whether or not you admit it,
you start thinking...

...soon you'll be doing Giselle

before packed houses at Lincoln Center.
For most of you, that will never happen.
I say this to help you clarify
your expectations for the year ahead.
If you work harder every day
than you've ever worked in your life...
...this school will turn you into
the best dancer you can possibly be.
That may or may not be the kind of dancer
I have room for in the company.
At best, I can take
three boys and three girls.
I'll watch you carefully
over the coming months.
But I won't make any decisions
till I see how you dance in the workshop...
...at the end of the year.
They won't be easy decisions to make
because you're all very talented.
You wouldn't be here if you weren't.
Thank you for bringing your gifts
to our community.
I wish you all a very good year.
I hope he doesn't think
that was inspirational.
One more thing.
Next week's the company gala. We always
invite advanced students to attend...
...and then help at the party afterwards.
I expect you all to be there.
- And you are?
- Eva Rodriguez.
So glad you could fit us
into your busy schedule, Eva.
No sweat.
All right, ladies, we'll start with plis.
First position. Demi and stretch.
Demi and stretch.
Full grand pli. And return.
Port de bras forward.
Full port de bras back.
The same in second,
fourth and fifth positions...
...and then we'll rise

and take a balance in fifth.
Yes? Let's begin. Steven?
Relax those fingers, Janie.
Very nice, Maureen.
Pull those ribs in. Really support.
Nice long lines, ladies.
Put the energy coming up over your heads.
- What's your name, dear?
- Jody Sawyer.
You need to concentrate on your turnout.
From the hip.
We have a dress code here.
Black leotard, pink tights.
Stylish.
No gum.
Get your hair off your face.
Dvelopp cart.
Change to effac.
Pli. Tendu. Lift the leg, first arabesque.
Maureen, will you show us, please?
Now, look at Maureen's arms.
They're perfectly supported
from underneath, not above.
Not wilting at her sides
like dead chicken wings.
She's so good.
Yeah, just ask her.
And one.
Really extend that front leg. Yes.
Ready, second group.
Where did she come from?
Softer landing, ladies, please.
Anna, eyes off the mirror, please.
Thank you.
Watch where you're going, sweetheart.
We don't carry collision insurance.
Who let that disaster in here?
I swear I'm better than that.
I'm just really nervous.
Don't sweat it.
First day never counts. Okay?
Everything counts here.
One and hip.
Fresh meat.

In the middle.

- And one. Good. Not bad.

- Cute. Who is he?

Charlie, from Seattle.

We only met him yesterday.

Is he gay or straight?

Straight.

Hey, you guys. Look.

Hi, girls.

Maureen, Anna.

Hi, Kathleen.

- That was Kathleen Donahue, wasn't it?

- Yes.

The Kathleen Donahue.

Oh, my God. She's beautiful.

Well, I think she looks kind of like a gerbil.

What?

She does.

She just married Mr. Reeves, right?

Wait a minute. She married the director?

- Now I get it.

- Yeah. This summer. It was a scandal.

She had been with Cooper a few years.

Then out of nowhere she tells him
she's leaving him for Jonathan Reeves.

No one even knew of their affair.

Cooper throws a huge fit in rehearsal
in front of the company. Calls her a slut.
It was unbelievable.

Then he drags his broken heart
to London to dance for the season.

Where rumour has it, he drinks like a fish
and screws every girl in tights.

- He's back, you know.

- I know.

I heard he hasn't spoken to anyone.

He talked to me.

What?

He offered to help me with my bags.

Bob, it's a benefit.

If I give you an extra seat,
I'm taking money from the company.

Besides, when was the last time
your paper ran anything on us?

What the hell. Three seats at will call,
only because I'm nice.

- Hi, Mom.

- Hi, sweetie.

- Well?

- Nothing to worry about.

What's the competition?

How about your roommates?

Jody's hopeless. She'll never make it.

- Is she the one from Boston?

- No, that's Eva.

Eva's actually good. Amazing extension.

But her attitude stinks.

Jonathan hates her already, thank God.

So you still think it'll be you,

Anna and Emily?

Yeah. Although,

have you seen Emily lately?

Look at her.

Hello, Emily.

Hi, Mrs. Cummings.

Dear.

Her pas de deux partner's

going to need a crane to lift her.

Stop it.

No way do people actually buy this shit.

- It's signed by Kathleen Donahue.

- It's a smelly old shoe.

- How you been?

- Can I tear you away for a minute?

There's a widowed woman here

worth \$200 million, who adores you.

- Excuse me. That was beautiful.

- Let me introduce you.

Now, why does that feel wrong?

It's just a hello.

It would be great for the company.

Well, if it's good for the company.

I mean, you know me. Team player.

Joan Miller. Cooper Nielson.

- Hello.

- Well, this is an honour.

I am, without a doubt, your biggest fan.

And my loveliest.

Now, what on earth were you doing
way over there in dreary London...
...when everyone loves you so much here?
Don't you listen to the gossip?
I was being huffy. Scorned lover. All that.

- God. I'm so sorry.
- Not at all. It's fine.

Joan, this is one
of our advanced students...
- Jody Sawyer.
- Sorry.

We have so many promising students.
It's hard to keep them straight.
You see?
That's how taxing Jonathan's job is.
So much is going on, he can't remember
the name of a beautiful girl.
Don't worry, Jody Sawyer.
I don't run a company.
I won't forget.
Excuse me.
I will trade you one bliss potato
with caviar for one of your tiaras.
My old one's broken and I'm desperate.
What will you use it for?
You know, state funerals,
abdications, the usual.
I'll see if we have your size.
Guys, want to see something?
Come on, just go with this.
I've already told Kathleen,
but what a treat, that Romeo and Juliet.
You're the finest Romeo
since Jonathan himself.

- It's a great piece.
- And you two together.
I don't do anything.
It's all her.
Come on.
Save it for the workshop, Charlie.

- Look at him.
- Get over here.
- Let's show them.
- Sure.

- What's wrong with you?
- You know exactly what you did.
You've got no right to paw me
in front of all those people.
I wasn't pawing you.
I can't even touch you?
We're not friends anymore?
Okay, listen.
I think it's great you're back.
You're a wonderful dancer.
But I am just as happily married
as I was before you left.
Then how come we danced better
tonight than we ever have?
For God's sake, that was acting.
Pretending.
That's our job.
I got to get back.
- My God.
- I know.
In the grand scheme of things,
it was a pretty cool night.
Except for that slave-labour part,
it didn't suck.
Excuse me. Coming through.
No luck?
- What?
- The tiara.
She went off to find one in my size.
No luck.
I'm sure you tried your hardest.
- Anyone want a fruit tart?
- I'll take one.
- It's practically all fat, Emily.
- Hello, Emily. I'm Jim Gordon.
You guys work here?
No. We're students
at the American Ballet Academy.
Ballerinas. Very cool.
Oh, my God.
You got to try one of these, Maureen.
Well, she has a name. Maureen.
We have to go.
Me, too.

I'm going to call my mom.
Tell her I've been wrong about New York.
You see, Maureen No-Last-Name,
all this time I've been telling her...
..."It's an interesting city,
but devoid of any true natural beauty."
And now that I've met you...
...I know that's not true.
- Cummings.
- What?
Her last name. It's Cummings.
Go. And one and stretch and stretch.
Good lift. Good, Charlie. Yes.
Stretch that front foot.
Much better. Good. Go.
Take it forward. That's it. Good.
Dip and go.
All right. I'm here. Sorry.
I know. I'm sorry.
And one. The arms lifted here.
The head is here. Yes, yes.
Lift through here, but not tucked, dear.
Ready, Maureen?
Beautiful rond bris.
Feet always stretched.
Look at how lovely her arms are.
Head up, Stephanie.
Everyone, ribs in.
Don't let your elbows droop.
Turnout, Jody.
From the hips, dear.
Just skim the surface this time, ladies.
Jody, flutter.
Yes, Eva.
Exactly.
- You feel the difference?
- Felt like the same old shit to me.
Late out of that turn, Jody.
You're trying too hard.
Thank you, ladies.
Emily.
You should visit the nutritionist this week.
She can give you some good pointers.
Go back. Come on. Let's go.

I need to see the girls
gesture to their partners.
"Hello, I'm waiting."
And the boys rush over and kneel.
"I am your slave."
And...
I am your slave.
I'd believe it more if you didn't stare at
your fucking reflection when you said it.
If someone wants to hear profanity,
Miss Rodriguez, they can take a subway.
They don't need to spend \$60
on a ballet ticket.
Though she has a point.
That foot, my dear. Let's go back.
Come on. Try it again.
You've got to work with me here, Jody.
Lift, Anna.
Excellent, Eva.
Where's the turnout, Jody?
After everything we've talked about,
I'm not seeing it.
You understand what I'm saying?
Use what you have and turn out.
Jesus! She heard you!
Excuse me?
She heard you. We all heard you!
You don't have to speak to her like that!
- Anyone can see she's working her ass off!
- That's enough, Miss Rodriguez.
This is my classroom.
And I will run it as I see fit.
If you have a problem with that,
you are free to leave.
Maureen, if you want to get calls,
please do so in the dorm.
- Don't give out this number.
- I didn't.
A Jim Gordon got it somehow
and has been calling for you non-stop.
Hi. What are you doing here?
Nothing.
I'm just waiting.
I know. I wasn't myself today.

I didn't get much sleep, I was really tired.
It's not just today.
I see you three times a week.
You're not improving.
- I can work harder.
- No matter how hard you work...
...there are certain realities about you
as a dancer that we have to face.
We can wait the end of the year,
or talk about it now...
...while you still have options.
You're not very turned out.
So that needs work.
And you don't have great feet.
And while you're very pretty...
...you don't have the ideal body type.
Margot Fonteyn didn't have great feet.
When Fonteyn was onstage,
you couldn't tear your eyes away from her.
It can't be taught.
In four months, we'll put on a workshop
in front of 3,000 people.
It's an audition for every major
ballet company in the country.
From what I've seen,
I can't cast you in that workshop.
And if you're not onstage that day,
you won't get a job anywhere.
So, what? Are you kicking me out?
No.
I just want you to really think...
...if this is the right place for you.
What a prick.
He was nice about it.
Being nice when you say something prickly
is even prickier.
What if he's right?
What?
Let's be honest.
You're not like most of the girls here.
Your technique is nowhere near
where it should be.
There's more to being a great dancer
than perfect technique.

- Try dancing Swan Lake without it.

- Am I hearing this?

Look, you're really smart.

If you send your application now,
you could get into a good college.

I don't want to go to college.

I want to dance.

Well, so do a lot of people.

Did you go to a special
bitch academy or something?

I'm just being honest.

In my opinion, that's what friends do.

I guess that explains
why you have so many friends.

If anyone asks, I'm in the library.

Truth?

In terms of technique, you are behind.

But the people here
know what they're looking for.

And on the day of your audition,
they saw it in you.

And now all they see is
the wrong body type.

Why can't I have your feet?

- Okay. Enough of this. Get up.

- Why?

Because all we ever do in this place
is take class.

And it's about time we had a little fun.

Hi, Maureen.

Hi, Emily. How you guys doing?

Fine.

Good.

So has Maureen been really busy?

She isn't seeing someone else, like...

...Cooper Nielson or someone?

What do you know about him?

I've been doing my ballet research.

We're not encouraged
to date company members.

I fully support that policy.

Look.

All I came here to say is

I go to Columbia, pre-Med.

I have a clean record, impeccable hygiene and here's my number.

- Go talk to him.

- Come on, go.

The thing is, I've got priorities.

You only get to be a dancer for 10 years.

Maybe 15 if you don't get injured.

So, for the next decade...

All I'm asking for is a date.

God!

That's why I like this guy.

Anna's for sure, right?

She's always been Jonathan's favourite.

- Maureen, too.

- Right.

- Boring.

- Boring or not, Jonathan likes her.

That only leaves one girl spot open.

- Emily.

- I don't think so.

- She's getting big. Jonathan hates big.

- It's a little extra padding for the winter.

You didn't get all done up like that to talk about ballet.

Come on.

- What does she have that I don't?

- She can salsa.

You call that salsa? Come on, Erik.

We'll show them salsa.

Get your asses up here.

- What is that?

- That's not salsa.

- That is not salsa.

- Use the technique, Charlie.

Here we go, girl.

Where are you from?

- Jersey.

- New Jersey?

Me. I'm from Russia.

Yeah? What are you doing here?

I'm a ballet dancer.

How do I do this exactly?

You've never bowled before?

No.

Just roll it on down there.
In Nepal, there's a jungle with an elephant walking and he steps on a thorn.
He says, "That hurts."
He sees a little mouse and says,
"Help me get the thorn out of my foot."
And the mouse goes, "You stepped on my uncle last week. No way."
He goes, "Please, I'll do anything.
It really hurts."
- The mouse goes, "Anything?"
- He says, "Yeah."
So he takes out the thorn.
The elephant feels so much better,
and he says, "How can I repay you?"
The mouse goes, "I want to have my way with you. You're sexy."
And the elephant goes, "No."
He goes, "You promised."
And starts doing the elephant.
The elephant says, "I'll let him finish.
It's the right thing to do."
There's three monkeys in a tree.
They see this mouse hump the elephant.
They pick up these coconuts
and just start chucking them.
They hit the elephant in the head.
The elephant goes. "My God, that hurts."
The mouse doesn't even stop.
He says, "Yeah. Take it all, bitch."
This is my kind of a mouse.
Why can't all dancing be this fun?
All dancing is this fun.
Maybe for you.
Russia?
So, what are you doing in New York?
Mafia.
You got...
I've got it.
Would it...
...be presumptuous to ask to come up?
Yeah.
Plus, you're not allowed. Dorm rules.
So this is good night.

I think so. Yeah.
But not goodbye.
No.
No, not goodbye.
I have to go.
Good night.
Guys, let's go to another club.
I want to dance.
- All right, ma'am. Time to go.
- Taxi, taxi!
You're sweaty.
I don't mind, because you're sweet.
And so is your sweat.
Sweet sweat.
You are, too.
What? Sweet or sweaty?
Both.
- I'm sorry. Sorry.
- Come on, Jody.
Can't do another one of these today.
Careful with that one.
You break it, you bought it.
Okay, stop.
Stop.
You five, come here.
God.
When you show up to class
unprepared to work, it's an insult.
Not just to me.
To your fellow students and to the school.
Get out of my class.
How many studios are there altogether?
Eight.
That's a lot of mirrors.
It was worth it just to see Sergei
getting it on with that old lady.
- I had forgotten all about that.
- We weren't getting it on.
Right.
I thought she was going to detach her jaw
and swallow you whole.
I'm just trying to imagine
what the lovely Galina...
...would say about that.

- No, you can't tell her.
- Yes, I can.
- I was lonely.
- It didn't mean anything, guys.
- I don't know, Sergei. I'm with Jody.

A girl's got a right to know
what kind of hound she's saving herself...

How about this?

I'm sorry! Don't!

Stop it!

So there's this jungle
and all these wild animals, lions and tigers.

There's this elephant
and he steps on this thorn.

It makes sense for Charlie
to partner you in the pas de deux class.

He's very good.

It's a waste for him to be partnering Jody.

It's fine. So anyway...

...the thorn really hurts.

- I'm talking about something important.

- It's not that important.

- Not that important?

Having a bad pas de deux partner
is like having a bad tennis partner.

I wouldn't know. I've never played tennis.

What's wrong with you?

Did you just start your period?

No. God.

Well, you're acting strangely.

I'm trying to tell a joke.

I'm trying to have an important
conversation about your future.

Charlie brings out the best in his partner.

That'll make a difference when
it comes to cast the student workshop.

I won't have a hard time
getting a good part, Mom.

You can't afford to be cavalier, Maureen.

Your entire career hangs
on what you get to dance in the workshop.

I know all this.

Please don't turn into
a sullen teenager on me now.

You've come this far.
I thought we were home free.
Anyway...
...I have a meeting with Jonathan today.
I'll mention the idea of you and Charlie.
What happens is the elephant goes, "Ow"
and the mouse goes, "Take it all, bitch!"
You're threatened by me.
I'm threatened by no one.
Yeah, you are.
You're afraid of opening the Times...
...and reading that at last, someone is
making interesting dances for ABC.
I'm not an idiot.
If you prove to be a great choreographer,
I'll be begging you to make dances.
But for now,
I can only choreograph workshop.
That's my decision.
You're still hanging onto
all that personal shit.
I don't need to hang onto anything.
I got the girl.
Hi. Do you have a 5:30 class?
- What kind would you like?
- Anything but ballet.
All right, everybody!
Let's do it!
Spread out!
Let's start with the usual warm-up.
And, five, six, seven, eight!
Head down. And back.
Right, centre, left, centre.
Right shoulder.
Left shoulder.
You made it! All right.
Alternate.
And second!
That's it. Roll it.
Roll those hips.
Come on. Mix it.
Get ready to get down and contract.
Down and...
...contract. And down.

And get it up.
Lots of action over here!
Push it out.
Come on, hold it.
All right. Stretch out. Up!
Kick it up! And up!
Okay. Other side.
Up!
And up. You've got it.
All right.
All right. You're going to get up.
And I want you to bow.
And stretch.
I want to take it from the top.
Full out. Just forget about the steps.
Just dance the shit out of it.
And one, two, three, four,
five, six, seven, eight.
Five, six, seven, eight.
One, two, three, four.
Hit it, boys.
Yeah. All right. That was great!
All right, girls. Come on.
Go!
Yes! Go for it.
Go for it!
All right!
Get you, Mr. Choreographer.
It's only for a workshop.
Just make sure you take chances,
because you suck when you play it safe.
Thanks. That's sweet. Really.
- Thank you.
- You're welcome.
Great class.
Thanks. See you.
Jody Sawyer.
See? Told you I'd remember your name.
What are you doing way down here?
I know I'm not supposed to
take class at other places.
Like I care. You looked great up there.
Thanks.
It's just that class. How come I can't

dance like that in my ABA classes?

Because ABA has

a great big stick up its ass?

- Have you had dinner yet?

- Yeah.

Dessert?

- Hop on. We'll go for a ride.

- Okay.

I could've sworn I had some cookies.

It's okay. I'm in enough trouble

with my body as it is.

Where are you getting that from?

Jonathan?

Yeah. Plus, my feet suck.

I'm poorly trained.

And I can never be a dancer, ever.

Jonathan's a moron.

I couldn't take my eyes off you tonight.

Best I could do.

Cheers.

I meant it, you know.

I noticed your dancing

before I recognised your face.

I have to admit I recognised your face first.

You want anything?

- Water? Some more wine?

- No.

I can keep looking for those cookies.

I'm fine.

Cooper, it's Jonathan.

We'll be at girl's class at 10:00 a.m.

Monday morning...

... to finalise workshop casting.

Be there.

Chass, relev. Chass, tendu.

Pli.

Anna, I asked for a double pirouette there.

Not a triple. Again, please.

Faster spotting, ladies. Steven.

It's a chass, not a tomb, Pasquale.

I want a clean double.

Sorry. I thought there was room for three.

Wouldn't it be better if we all did a triple?

A double. End of discussion.

You want to use her?
That's much better, Nicole. Yes.
Really give it size, ladies.
Don't flap the wrists, Emily.
Beautiful, Aesha.
All right, ladies. Maureen.
Good jumps, good elevation.
But you'll really fly more
if it's from the heart.
Who cares what she thinks anyway?
Juliette Simone, please.
It's Julie Simon, she's from Perth Amboy
and her father managed a Wal-Mart.
Just don't let it get to you.
It doesn't mean a thing.
Just in case you guys were wondering,
casting's going up at 1:00 p.m.
Daddy? I got the lead in Italian Symphony.
That's Gelsey Kirkland's old part.
Maureen's the lead in Jonathan's ballet,
but that has way more people.
Well deserved, sweetie.
Aren't you pleased?
Miss Thing, you're doing a piece
with the two of us.
- A totally new ballet.
- A world premiere.
- Made on us.
- Who's choreographing?
We can always find
some more rehearsal time later.
Hi.
This is for you.
Thanks.
I just want you to know how much
it means to me to be in your ballet.
I won't let you down.
Well, you were the best for the part.
Simple as that.
It's some dessert. So...
...you'll have some on-hand next time.
Bye.
What?
I didn't say anything.

Take these.
Nonsense. You heard her.
They're for next time.
Congratulations.
Cooper's ballet.
Yeah. Kind of amazing.
It should be good.
I guess.
Jody says he has theories
about making ballet for the people.
I do ballet because it has
nothing to do with the people.
Give me tiaras and boys in tights any day.
I hear you're in the corps
in Jonathan's ballet.
Yes.
Just goes to show, don't piss off the boss.
No one will see me and I'll never get a job.
I'm sorry.
Big deal. I don't care.
Yeah.
I know.
It sucks, doesn't it?
What?
Not caring.
Kind of, yeah.
Five, six, seven, eight.
All eyes are on you.
Your eyes are only on Maureen.
Present your chest.
Walk gallantly.
Breathe.
The man's a fossil.
He should be in a museum.
Do you have a question, Miss Rodriguez?
Yeah. What is it about?
The music.
It's an expression of harmony
that isn't of this world.
Sergei, chest up.
That's it.
Soft hand.
Soft hand, Maureen. That's it.
I want this as real as it can be.

It's a triangle.
She's a ballerina,
and she's in love with you, Erik.
And Charlie's the other guy.
He's the director of a ballet company.
Okay. Let's fool around with the steps.
See what we got.
Okay. Step, touch, step, touch.
Pas de bourre. Double pirouette.
All right, you keep doing that.
You watch this.
Do the double pirouette,
down to the knee...
...then give me your left arm.
I'll slide you over here.
And then, lift you up like this.
That'll work.
Eva!
You don't like him very much, do you?
I don't blame you.
He's impossible.
Headstrong, egotistical, unforgiving.
Arrogant as all hell.
You'll be hard-pressed to find
any choreographer or company director...
...who isn't like that.
The unwise dancers blame them.
"He didn't like me." "She was unfair."
"I should've had that part."
The smart ones know where to look...
...when things get rough.
It isn't there.
It's here.
No matter what happened in class...
...in performance, last week,
five minutes ago...
...if you come back here...
...you'll be home.
So how was your rehearsal?
It was all right. You know.
- And the king of ballet?
- Jonathan's fine.
But Juliette Simone, what a nosy bitch!
She thinks she knows

everything about everyone.
And where are you guys going?
It's Erik's birthday,
so we're going to take him out.
Well, have fun.
Do you want to come?
Jim was going to swing by.
Can he come, too?
Sure. Bring your mom as well. Okay?
I got a little something here for you.
What? What is this?
You shouldn't be eating doughnuts.
They're bad for you.
Okay. I don't want to miss this shot.
Come on. Erik, in front.
You never stop, do you?
They still hate my body.
You're way too hard on yourself.
You looked great in rehearsal.
- That ballet is so not ABC.
- You don't like it?
Who cares what I like?
The workshop's about what Jonathan likes.
Is getting into the company
really all that matters to you?
It's so different for you. They love you.
They practically printed your name
in the programs already.
You need to take some time
away from all this.
That is the last thing that I need.
We could go out sometime.
Like a date?
Yeah. Like a date.
That's really sweet,
but I'm kind of seeing someone.
Sorry. I didn't realise.
No. It's just that it's new
and I don't want to make a big thing of it.
Sure, yeah. No big thing.
You haven't seen my girlfriend, have you?
Tall, thin, legs for days?
Yeah. I pushed her overboard.
You okay?

Fine. Just motion sickness.

- You want some water?

- No, it passed.

- Sure?

- Yeah.

No, Erik!

This is about sex.

I want you to feel it. Let me show you.

See where I am? I'm right up against her.

My hips are right up against her.

- You got it?

- Yeah. I got it.

What do you think about this

for the end of the pas de trois?

Can I see that?

Sure.

I changed it a little.

It could work.

That could work, too.

How about like that?

Why don't you just try this?

I could work on it.

You do that.

Moving on.

Girls! Arms over the top

before going into the arabesque.

Boys, you've got to watch each other
in the lift.

Emily, you're out of line.

Look at the diagonal. Look at it.

Maureen, wake up. Where's your focus?

You'll be onstage in less than a month.

Why would 3,000 people watch you
raise your arm if it's not beautiful?

- What are you doing here?

- I wanted to surprise you.

You looked amazing out there.

- Thanks.

- Your pirouettes were amazing.

Amazing and tiring.

Friend of Cooper's?

Kind of.

You are in big trouble.

She's in my ballet.

Please.

She's a heartbeat away
from tattooing your name on her ass.

- Want to go to my place?

- Sure.

All right.

- See you.

- See you tomorrow.

Where are we going?

Night.

Lexington?

Good night.

- Excuse me.

- Goodness.

No, my fault entirely.

It's good I didn't step on one of your feet,
you could sue me.

Don't worry. They're not as valuable
as they used to be.

How's Jonathan's ballet coming along?

- It's going to be beautiful. Really lovely.

- Good.

- Is Maureen feeling better?

- Better than what?

She said she felt like she was
coming down with something. A bug.

Right. That bug.

What brings you here
to our humble part of the city?

Cooper invited me to watch his rehearsal.

He did?

How nice you two have kept in touch.

Just a bit.

- He's being nice to a tired old lady.

- Nonsense.

Have fun.

Okay, guys. Let's take it from the bridge.

Is that clear?

Jody, you're here.

Yesterday I was stage left.

Today you're stage right.

What am I going to be tomorrow?

Excuse me?

You keep changing your mind.

It's hard to keep track.
It's not that complicated.
I want what I say I want,
when I say I want it.
- You got a problem with that?
- Yeah. Maybe I do.
What about what I want?
I don't give a shit what you want!
You're a dancer. Period.
You do what I want and if you're not,
then why are you here?
I'm afraid that's how ballets get made.
It's all very dramatic.
Don't look at me. I'm too embarrassed.
You were saying how you felt.
What's embarrassing about that?
How a dancer feels
doesn't matter to a choreographer.
No, but how a woman feels...
...should matter to the guy she's seeing.
Do you think I'm an idiot
for getting involved with him?
No.
I think he's an idiot
for not treating you well.
Come on. Let's go back.
- I can't.
- Sure you can.
No. I'm all splotchy.
I feel...
So use it.
What?
Whatever you feel. Just dance it.
And you're not splotchy.
I'm sorry.
I'm ready.
All right. Let's take it from the top.
Good morning, Mrs. Cummings.
Good morning, Emily.
Maureen, can I see you for a moment?
- I've got class.
- This won't take long.
Juliette says you've been off lately.
- You talked to Juliette about me?

- She sought me out. She talked to me.

- She did?

- Yes, she did.

She asked if you're doing better,
which means you were doing poorly.

A bug. For God's sakes,
it's not even a good lie.

I know what's going on, Maureen.

You should ask yourself,
what's this boy doing to your dancing?

And the ladies have to make fifth
before the show starts.

Stop! Stop!

You make it look like work.

I need to see the movement,
not the effort behind it.

Thank you. We're out of time.

We'll pick this up tomorrow.

Can I see you in my office, please?

What happened?

I'm going home.

What did he say to you?

He told me I couldn't be in the workshop.

He said I don't enough take pride
in my body. He thinks I'm too fat.

I could kill that man.

You're not fat! You're beautiful.

So you're leaving for good?

Yeah. My mom thinks it's best.

Dancing used to make her happy
and it doesn't anymore, so that's enough.

Promise me you won't let anyone
make you feel bad about yourself, okay?

You're perfect the way God made you.

We have to go, sweetie.

Look.

I know I'm not a doctor yet or anything...

...but what you're doing is bad for you.

- I wasn't feeling well.

- Please.

What do you know?

I know that no goal
is worth making yourself sick.

Yeah? Maybe my goal is

a little more demanding than yours.
Medicine is plenty demanding,
but I am not going to hurt myself for it!
I'm not hurting.
I'm making decisions,
sacrifices for what I want.
Like you know what you want!
What's that supposed to mean?
You know what?
Call me crazy, but I find it hard to believe...
...that a girl who is throwing up
everything she eats...
...is all that in tune
with her wants and needs.
You know what? I don't need this.
Not from you. God.
I'm sorry. Please don't run out
in the middle of the night.
Just back off!
Listen to me.
Wait. Look. I don't...
I don't want to drive you away.
- I just want to help you.
- I don't need any help. I'm fine.
I am the best goddamn dancer
in the American Ballet Academy.
Who the hell are you? Nobody.
If you let go of your centre...
...it will just happen, naturally.
Now release the neck.
Lovely.
Do you want to show me again?
You wouldn't mind?
Not in the least.
All right, boys and girls,
let's go to the opening diagonals.
Hearing the orchestra for the first time
doesn't mean you can stop counting.
You're all off the music.
You must remember your counts.
Keep going.
- Are you sure it's in here?
- That's what Sergei said.
I want to see straight diagonals...

Oh, my God!

"Dancing a new work choreographed
by Cooper Nielson are Jody Sawyer...

- "...Charles Sims and Erik O. Jones."

- Erik, check this out.

Please. This is a rehearsal,
not a social hour!

- I've never been in the paper before.

- I know. Me neither.

It's kind of cool.

Are you guys warmed up?

Of course.

Five, six, seven, eight. One...

We don't invite press to workshop.

You know that.

I didn't invite anyone.

Nancy says every paper has called,
and all they ask about is your ballet.

If there's interest, that's great,
but other than that...

Bullshit.

One more time.

What are you up to?

Phoning press, kissing Joan Miller's ass.

She's shown no interest in the company
since spending time with you.

What do you know?

I guess I got the girl this time.

Shit.

You all right?

Where is it?

Man, I'm so sorry.

You'd better start rehearsing
the understudy.

It's Andre. He's not good enough.

I can't use him.

You have to use him. Erik can't dance.

I'm going to do it.

You can't do that, Cooper.

The workshop's for students.

If you want your students
to dance my ballet, they'll dance with me.

Otherwise, I'm pulling it.

You okay?

Erik got injured today.
And you know the first thing I thought
when I saw him go down?
What?
I wished that was me.
That made me think,
because that's not a normal reaction.
How much of what you liked about me
was because I was a ballet dancer...
...and how much because I was me?
I can't do it.
- I can't dance with him.
- Why? Because he dumped you?
No. Because he's the best dancer
in the world.
You'll be fine. Just get some sleep.
With Erik, I had a chance to show Jonathan
how wrong he is about me.
Now, because of Cooper,
I'm going to look like a total amateur.
Where were you? Rehearsing?
How's Erik?
He can't dance tomorrow.
How would you be?
- Relieved.
- What?
They think the sun shines out of your ass,
so you'd still make the company.
Just my luck.
I would kill for your luck.
All I've ever wanted
was to be in the American Ballet Company.
There are three places going tomorrow.
If you both chill out and get some sleep,
you could get two of them.
You're welcome to my place.
Me? No. I screwed up any chance I had
back in September.
But I started dancing
long before this stupid workshop...
...and I'm going to keep on dancing
long after it.
So tomorrow is one more day
I get to dance.

Tomorrow's when they decide
the rest of my life.
I'm not dancing for them anymore.
I'm dancing for me.
Let's just go to sleep.
Have a wonderful afternoon.
Thanks for your support.
Erik, how are you?
It's a sprain.
I have to stay off it for six weeks.
Just long enough to ruin my entire career.
Ladies and gentlemen,
this is your half-hour call.
- Is Miami here?
- Everyone's here.
I'd kill to get an offer from Miami.
I can't wear that.
My God. It's totally packed. Come here.
Can you believe this?
Okay, I'm nervous. Let's go.
Nicole, merde.
- Gillian, Lena. Merde.
- Thanks for the work.
- This is what we worked for.
- Anna, merde.
- Still only room for three in the company?
- Don't even think about it.
All right.
Merde. Thank you, ladies.
Places!
And curtain warmers out. Go.
Warm the curtain.
And curtain. Go.
How you feeling? You ready?
I guess so.
Look, those fouetts at the end?
I really need you to be on your leg.
Because in rehearsals,
it hasn't been going well.
It's the end of the ballet
and we need everything together and tight.
I know.
Sorry, of course you do.
I just want everything to be perfect.

Why don't you let me finish warming up?

You're going to be great.

- See you out there?

- See you.

Listen, forget him.

Just dance it like you feel it.

Easy as that?

I've got to warm up.

They loved you. Thanks.

- Did you see how on I was tonight?

- Yeah, totally on.

- Okay. Good luck.

- Thanks.

- Good luck.

- Thank you.

What's going on? Does Jonathan know?

Where's Maureen?

What happened to Maureen?

I thought Maureen had this role.

It says here, "Maureen Cummings."

Excuse me.

- Mom.

- What's wrong?

- Are you sick?

- No.

Then why the hell is that trash

out there dancing your part?

Because I wanted her to. She's not trash.

I don't know how to respond to this.

You could ask me why.

Okay, fine. Why, in God's name?

I don't want to be a ballet dancer.

Yes, you do. You always have.

No, Mom. If this were what I wanted,

I wouldn't be as unhappy as I've been.

I'd have friends. I'd sleep well.

I wouldn't throw up half the things I eat.

You watch your weight. So what?

Don't you hear me?

I'm telling you I'm unhappy and sick.

I can't do this anymore. Don't you care?

Of course I care. But this is your dream.

Don't just throw away your dream!

It's your dream.

And it matters more to you
than anything mattered to me.
So I did it, but I can't anymore.
It's not that I don't care
about your feelings. I do.
It's just that...
...I know...
...what regret feels like
and I don't want that for you.
I know what it's like to look back and wish.
That's what ballet would be for me.
A life of wishing
that I found something I really loved...
...instead of something
I just happened to do well.
I'm not you, Mom.
You didn't have the feet.
I don't have the heart.
That was beautiful.
She was fantastic.
She was okay.
Brace yourself for what's next.
And one, two...
...three, four...
...five, six...
...seven, eight.
- I loved it. Beautiful.
- Places, please. Places.
Places for the curtain call. Here we go!
I'm going to kill you.
- What's wrong? Are you crazy?
- I wanted to tell you. I'm sorry.
There you are.
Cooper, you were wonderful.
You were beautiful.
You were wonderful, too.
I'll have to steal him away.
I'm stealing you away.
I have the small rehearsal room.
- Do you want the girls first or the boys?
- Girls.
Will you excuse me, please?
- Tell me more.
- I've got dancers and a place scouted out.

It was her idea!
Oh, God. What happened?
What did he say?
Mom! I'm so happy you guys are here.
We wanted to see
what you've been up to this past year.
And I've got to tell you...
...that was the most fantastic thing
I've ever seen.
It was great, honey. Just wonderful.
You want to know something stupid?
I'd actually started to believe
I didn't need to hear that anymore.
I made it. I made it!
Thank you.
We'll see you later at the dorm.
Yeah, we'll see you at the dorm.
Excuse me. Eva Rodriguez.
Jonathan wants to see you.
What you did today
was completely disrespectful.
I'm sorry.
Or actually, I'm not.
Because that was the best time
I ever had in my life.
Jesus! That's a great ballet!
You know that?
Thank you. And you were great in it.
And I'd like to have you
as a member of the company...
...if you'll join us.
Are you nuts?
I hope not, but that depends
entirely on you, doesn't it?
Guess what?
Joan Miller loved the ballet
and wants to fund my company.
- I'm going to have my own company.
- You're kidding?
Congratulations.
Listen, you have to be in my company.
You'll be its star.
We'll be great together.
They're ready for you.

Wait.

For ten years...

...all I've wanted was to be
one of ABC's perfect ballerinas.

I've wanted to be you, Juliette.

But I'm not you.

And I'm not perfect. I'm just me.

Bad feet and all.

And I'm starting to think

I like that even better.

No.

Please don't.

If you're not offering me a place
in the company, I don't want to hear it.

And if you are...

...I might not have the strength to say no.

And then I'd spend my best dancing years
in the back of a corps, waving a rose.

And I'm better than that.

So thank you, for turning me into
the best dancer I can be.

I appreciate it more than I can say.

Because the best dancer

I can be is a principal...

...in Cooper Nielson's new company.

Girl, you are too many things.

I cannot believe it.

I know. I think Jonathan
should have his head examined.

Yeah, because he's taking
head cases and cripples.

- You're in?

- Yes. Bum foot and all!

- You could've told me.

- I am so sorry. I wanted to tell you.

I got San Francisco, with Galina.

- That's perfect.

- Congrats, bud.

- Thanks. I'll catch up with you later.

- Congratulations.

Everyone says you were beautiful.

You didn't watch?

Are you all right?

Not really. No. But I will be.

You will be.

- What did you think?

- You were okay, for an understudy.

I did what I could.

Congratulations.

I hear you got yourself a spot here.

And I hear you got yourself

a principal dancer.

- Are you with me?

- I'm with you.

You're not going to regret this.

You're an amazing dancer

and you're a great choreographer, but...

...as a boyfriend, you kind of suck.

- So, what happened?

- I got in here.

That's amazing.

- You're joining Cooper's company?

- Yes.

I'm starting out as a principal.

What more could a girl want?

A date for the party tonight, for one thing.

Are you asking me out?

Yeah.

Are you saying yes?

I guess so.

Yeah.

Come on.

Jody Sawyer.