

FLESH AND BONE

Pilot

Written by

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A jittery FLASHLIGHT BEAM shines on a SCREWDRIVER as it twists a final SCREW securing a HASP across a door jamb.

SOUND of *SHALLOW BREATH*. The flashlight is being held between teeth, but we only see fractions of a female face.

A SHINY NEW PADLOCK is fitted through the hasp and locked tight with a soft *CLICK*.

INT. CLAIRE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

The beam now swoops downward revealing BARE FEMALE FEET tiptoeing across worn carpet. A BAND-AID covers a big toe.

The beam cuts, shard-like, to an open SUITCASE packed full atop a bed -- the sheen of pink POINTE SHOES visible within.

The beam swoops to a nearby window illuminating a GLASS BALLERINA that dangles on the pane in sudden spotlight. Just as a delicate hand reaches out to pluck the figurine...

SOUND of a DOORKNOB turning. The flashlight *CLICKS OFF*.

ANGLE ON THE DOOR. In the shadows, we discern a DOORKNOB. It turns fruitlessly this way and that. *RATTLES* a bit.

REVERSE to find CLAIRE ROBBINS, 21, beautiful and serious, sitting beneath the window, breathing softly. Legs squeezed to her chest. Eyes wide. Dormant flashlight in hand.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)  
(fervent whisper)  
Claire... Claire, come on...

But Claire stays silent, and stays where she is.

EXT. MODEST ROW HOUSES - LATER THAT NIGHT

Streetlights cast a harsh glare on brick row housing. Claire bursts out a front door and sprints down the street, ponytail flying, a large, HEAVY SHOULDER BAG swaying, suitcase in tow.

A MAN appears -- indistinct in the shadows of the doorway.

MAN  
Claire! CLAIRE!

Claire disappears down the street between pools of light.

NEW ANGLE. As she gains distance from the house, instead of slowing Claire runs faster and faster, gulping for air, desperate, emotional, as if running for her life.

INT. AMTRAK TRAIN - TRAVELING - LATER THAT NIGHT

*RUMBLE and THRUM.* Passengers slumber. Claire is wide awake. She wears EAR BUDS and moves her hands in front of her in odd fluttering patterns like *signing* ("marking" dance movements).

INT. AMERICAN BALLET COMPANY - HALLWAY - DAY

The light-filled hallway brims with a hundred or so nervous ballerinas sitting, standing, stretching, eying each other.

Claire sits on the floor near her bag and suitcase. She adds another BAND-AID to the one already wrapping her big toe. Pulls her tights over her foot. Slips on a POINTE SHOE.

INT. AMERICAN BALLET COMPANY - MAIN REHEARSAL HALL - DAY

An immense room with high ceilings, wood floors and magnificent windows. Mirrors line one long windowless wall. Ballet barres stretch along the other three. There are a few floating ballet barres in the middle of the room and a piano.

Nervous female dancers stand in a horizontal line across the floor. NUMBERS are attached to their leotards with safety pins. Claire is among them. Number 138. She's nervous.

PAUL (V.O.)

If I call your number step forward.

Against the mirrors at the front of the room, THREE PEOPLE sit at a table facing the long row of girls.

PAUL, 50's, the Artistic Director, is dramatic, bipolar and bisexual. He always wears monochromatic clothing (today he wears tangerine). Paul has a flair for curt and dismissive. Wielding power and holding court are his favorite activities.

PAUL

Zero one five. Zero two seven...

Paul studies the girls (appearance only). References RÉSUMÉS and HEADSHOTS that REGGIE, mid-20's, his African American assistant, hands him. Paul leans over to consult IVANA.

PAUL (CONT'D)

One zero six?

Ivana, 60's, the Russian BALLET MISTRESS, has had one face lift too many. She wears a bright slash of red lipstick and holds a tiny little Pomeranian DOG with a bow in its fur.

IVANA  
 (Russian accent)  
 I don't like. Hips -- too wide.

PAUL  
 (announcing, adding)  
 Zero five four and... one three  
 eight. If I called your number  
 you'll be staying to work at the  
 barre. Everyone else, thank you  
 for coming. Next group.

Claire exhales with relief. She and the other three selected girls stay in the room and move to the side as the dejected rejects head out the door.

A new group of numbered girls take their places in a line.

TIME CUT TO:

A very large audition class is in progress. Claire and many excellent dancers work at the barre to PIANO accompaniment. The girls' faces are rigid masks of concentration.

Paul observes as Ivana leads the dancers through exercises.

IVANA  
 (stern)  
 And-a one, and-a two, plié, passé!

She *CLAPS* her hands in a dancer's face.

IVANA (CONT'D)  
 Think! You don't think!

The girl reddens and starts to cry. Ivana, disgusted, looks to Paul. He makes a slashing motion across his throat.

INT. AMERICAN BALLET COMPANY - HALLWAY - A LITTLE LATER

Several dancers audibly *sob* as they pack their things to go. Crumpled, discarded NUMBERS litter the floor.

INT. AMERICAN BALLET COMPANY - MAIN REHEARSAL HALL - LATER

Claire and many remaining dancers stand panting, waiting.

CENTER FLOOR. Claire and the dancers perform turns and jumps across the floor. We see only IMAGISTIC FRAGMENTS: spinning Pointe shoes, heaving chests, dripping wet skin.

TIME CUT TO:

Claire, sweating, exhausted, and other dancers once again stand in a line. Only a handful of girls step forward. Devastation on faces. Claire is the last one to be chosen.

PAUL

I'll see you one at a time for solo work. Please wait in the hall.

INT. AMERICAN BALLET COMPANY - HALLWAY - LATER

Claire sits on the floor and leans against a wall, spent. She mops her face with a towel. Looks down at her feet.

CLOSE ON one POINTE SHOE. The pink toe is stained RED.

Claire removes the shoe to reveal her BAND-AIDS are soaked with blood. She gently unwraps them, pulls them off...

Her BIG TOENAIL dangles, still attached by a sinewy thread.

Claire inhales and... *yanks* the toenail OFF. Her toe looks like raw meat. It's painful, but Claire's stoic. She presses the towel to her toe while fishing in her bag for more band-aids. Pulls one out.

Reggie comes out, clipboard in hand, escorting a dancer.

REGGIE

Thanks. We'll be in touch.  
(then, reading)  
Claire Robbins?

CLAIRE

Yes!

Claire hastily shoves her Pointe shoe back on -- no band-aid.

INT. MAIN REHEARSAL HALL - MOMENTS LATER

Claire stands before Paul and Ivana at the table.

PAUL

You're twenty-one and I'm confused. It says here you were apprenticed at the Pittsburgh Ballet at age eighteen, but left after the first year. And nothing since. Nowhere.

Claire opens her mouth to speak --

PAUL (CONT'D)

No-no, I do the talking. I have to say I'm disinclined. Suspicious. No one walks away from that kind of opportunity. Thank you for coming.

He's dismissing her. Claire blurts out --

CLAIRE

It was a family issue, Sir.  
(off his glare)  
Sorry. Please, let me dance.

IVANA

(to Paul, "no")  
I like other girl. One before.

CLAIRE

Just five minutes of your time.

Paul leans back in his chair. Like a King to a Jester --

PAUL

Impress me.

Paul nods to the accompanist, PASHA, late 30's, thick glasses. He intros the "*Prelude from Les Sylphides*".

Claire begins -- not a trace of discomfort on her face.

ANGLE ON Paul, Ivana and Reggie watching Claire. Rapt.  
SLOW PUSH IN ON PAUL. His eyes narrow with laser focus.

INT. AMERICAN BALLET COMPANY - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Claire has just exited the hall, breathing hard. As soon as the door closes, she limps. Sits down hard on the floor. Unties her stained Pointe shoe. BLOOD trickles and drips.

INT. MAIN REHEARSAL HALL - SAME

PAUL

(to Reggie)  
I want her. Go!

INT. AMERICAN BALLET COMPANY - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Reggie steps out. Claire looks up at him. Reads his face. Her eyes light up and she ignites with a smile.

TIME CUT TO:

A LITTLE LATER. Long shot down the empty hall. Claire and Paul walk and talk moving towards us. (We don't privilege their conversation.) Claire wheels her suitcase. Paul's solicitous. Expansive. When they get closer, we HEAR:

PAUL

Lucky for us your father is on the mend and willing to part with you.

Paul puts his arm around Claire and she *flinches*. They stop.

PAUL (CONT'D)

I'm excited to have you with us.

Paul takes her hands in his. Claire reluctantly allows this.

PAUL (CONT'D)

(kisses her hands)

I know you won't disappoint me.

Off Claire, as Paul throws down a heavy gauntlet.

INT. AMERICAN BALLET COMPANY - ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE - LATER

Claire sits across from MONICA, 30's, heavysset, with glasses.

MONICA

You have a Pittsburgh address listed. What's your address here?

CLAIRE

I, um, don't have one yet.

Monica looks up at Claire then over at Claire's suitcase.

MONICA

Wow. Okay. Well, I can help get you some company accommodation.

EXT. NYC SUBWAY STEPS - LOWER EAST SIDE - LATE AFTERNOON

Claire hefts her suitcase up the crowded steps. Emerges at the top and stops, dragging her bag out of the way. She pulls out a PIECE OF PAPER, orients herself. Starts walking.

INT. MIA'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - SAME

A lithe NUDE GIRL arches back over a sofa arm as a fit NAKED GUY pummels into her. The girl's hair dangles and sways -- her head almost touching the floor, tits jiggling with sexual mayhem. This is MIA, a dancer, 22, cute, feisty. And noisy.

EXT. LOWER EAST SIDE APARTMENT BUILDING - GOLDEN HOUR

Claire stands outside an old four story building attached to a block of similar buildings. A fire escape zigzags up the front. She checks her piece of paper. *Yep. This is it.*

INT. MIA'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - SAME

Mia and the guy have changed positions. Now he sits on the couch and she bucks on his lap. He drills into her and she lifts her graceful arms over her head in sensual abandon.

EXT. LOWER EAST SIDE APARTMENT BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

Claire carefully moves up the steps past a shabby, bearded HOMELESS GUY, ROMEO, who snoozes on the stoop.

Claire drops her heavy shoulder bag down and parks her suitcase. Tired. Fishes in her pocket and produces a KEY. Unlocks the front door of the building. She shoulders the door to keep it from closing and reaches to grab her bags.

ROMEO

Need some help up?

Homeless Guy is holding her suitcase.

CLAIRE

No, thanks. I got it.

He doesn't hand it over. Looks her up and down.

ROMEO

Goddamn, you are skinny.

CLAIRE

(perturbed)

Can I have my bag, please?

ROMEO

(re: the heavy suitcase)

Whaddya got in this thing, bricks?

CLAIRE

Yes.

ROMEO

No need to get testy. Just a little Welcome To The Hood humor.

CLAIRE

...Books.

ROMEO  
For real?

CLAIRE  
Do you want money..?

ROMEO  
You a ballerina?

CLAIRE  
(taken aback)  
Yes.

ROMEO  
Got any Vicodin? Oxy? Percoset?

Claire shakes her head. He hands over her suitcase.

ROMEO (CONT'D)  
When you get hurt, count me in.

He goes. Claire drags her bag inside. The door shuts.

INT. MIA'S BUILDING - STAIRCASES - MINUTES LATER

Claire arduously hauls her bags up four flights of stairs.

INT. HALLWAY - MIA'S APARTMENT - FRONT DOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Claire locates the apartment, unlocks the door and steps in.

INT. MIA'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Claire freezes. Her face registers complete shock.

POV. Mia grinds on the guy. He holds her hair in his fist.

Claire abruptly turns away. Squeezes her eyes shut, her breathing shallow. Only the guy can see Claire --

GUY  
Oh, shit --

But... it's too late. He cums hard with a loud *GROAN*.

MIA  
(to him, indignant)  
Oh, nice. Really? Thank you.

The spent guy points to Claire. Mia swivels to discover her.

MIA (CONT'D)  
Who the hell are you?

CLAIRE  
They left you a message...

TIME CUT TO:

A SHORT TIME LATER. The guy is gone. Mia wears a short robe. She examines her CELL as Claire waits, discomfited.

MIA  
Thought maybe I'd dodge the roommate bullet this season.

CLAIRE  
I'm sorry, Mia. They told me --

MIA  
Hey, no worries. That's life in the Corps, right? We're bottom feeders -- take what we can get. My roommate hooked up with a Patron last season. Now the bitch has a penthouse and a baby on the way.  
(annoyed)  
You're fucking gorgeous -- you'll probably get snapped up in no time.

Mia is comfortably brassy -- no filter. An NYC native who loves to talk.

MIA (CONT'D)  
You've got the couch until you can get a bed. It's comfy, though.

Claire looks askance at the sofa.

MIA (CONT'D)  
Or you can squeeze in with me but everyone tells me I snore. Then again, if you snore we'll just drown each other out. D'you snore?

CLAIRE  
I don't know. The couch is fine.

MIA  
You don't know?

CLAIRE  
(uncomfortable)  
I'm fine on the couch. So where should I put my stuff?

MIA

You can have those shelves. Is Romeo bringing up the rest?

CLAIRE

Romeo?

MIA

The guy who hangs around outside.

CLAIRE

The homeless... looking guy?

MIA

Did he freak you out? Aww, he freaked you out. Romeo's alright. Sometimes I give him a few bucks or whatever to carry groceries and stuff when I'm fucking sick of those fucking stairs which is most of the fucking time. Wait 'til you've rehearsed ten hours straight and then danced a performance. Fucking Nightmare.

CLAIRE

This is all of my stuff.

Claire sways, drops her bag.

MIA

You okay?

Mia reaches out to steady her, but Claire steps away.

CLAIRE

It's been a really long day.

MIA

Blood sugar thing? I have a cookie. I bought it fresh yesterday but I was only planning on staring at it.

CLAIRE

Do you have some ice? No big deal -- lost a toenail.

MIA

Sure. I got O.J., too. Sit.

Claire sits on the sofa and takes off her shoe as Mia goes to the adjacent kitchen and opens the fridge.

INTERIOR FRIDGE: The bottom half is filled with USED POINTE SHOES. Mia grabs a small bottle of ORANGE JUICE.

MIA (CONT'D)

(prying)

So... how many times have you auditioned for the company?

CLAIRE

Today.

Mia shuts the fridge door.

MIA

Shut-up. Once? Fuck me. I'm not even gonna tell you how many times I tried out.

(can't help herself)

Three. Jesus.

She opens the freezer door.

INTERIOR FREEZER: Many ZIPLOCK BAGS OF ICE and ICE PACKS.

Mia brings everything to Claire and sits down on the sofa.

CLAIRE

Thanks.

Claire elevates her foot and applies ice to her bandaged toe.

MIA

(aggravated)

So where've you been dancing, the frickin' Bolshoi or something?

Mia breaks the cookie and offers half to Claire. Mia eats the other half with tiny, savoring rabbit-y bites, chewing each bite twelve times.

CLAIRE

(eating the cookie)

Just taking class. I had a nice situation at my studio: I cleaned it at night and they let me study.

MIA

Okay, you're making it worse.

Mia, disgruntled, pulls a throw pillow onto her lap. Underneath, an open empty CONDOM PACKAGE is revealed.

Claire stares. Mia tosses it nonchalantly on the end table.

MIA (CONT'D)

So why'd you suddenly bust a move?

CLAIRE

(forced casual)

It was just time. My brother Bryan just shipped back from Iraq so it's his turn to help out at home.

MIA

Ooh, soldier brother. Is he cute?

CLAIRE

Most people think so.

A *single sob bursts* out of Claire -- sudden and extreme. Just as quickly, she forces herself to stop. Represses it.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

...Blood sugar.

(sincere)

I'm just... really glad to be here.

MIA

(insincere)

Yeah, it's gonna be fun.

(then)

Want me to fill you in on who's who and stuff?

CLAIRE

That'd be great.

MIA

Okay, let's start with the fact that everyone's going to hate you.

INT. MIA'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - LATE NIGHT

The room is dark except for the perpetual glow of the insomniac city filtering in through the windows. Street sounds and car horns bark like a million stray dogs.

The sofa is made up like a bed and Claire is tucked in, lying on her back. She's awake. Preoccupied. She holds the empty CONDOM PACKAGE in her hands. Toys with it. She pulls it open, peers inside. Sniffs it. Probes the inside with a fingertip. Touches it to her tongue. She sets it aside.

She looks down to the floor. Her clothes are set in neat piles nearby. Next to the sofa is...

CLAIRE'S OPEN SUITCASE. It contains many HARDCOVER BOOKS.

She reaches down and, one by one, plucks the books from the bag and places them on her body, starting at her ankles.

We glimpse a few titles; poetry, classics. Soon she is completely covered in books, weighted down. Shielded.

When she's done, she relaxes, sighs deep and closes her eyes.

EXT. AMERICAN BALLET COMPANY - ESTABLISHING - DAY

An old six story building with many windows.

PAUL (V.O.)

Why is everything always a fucking problem with you people?!

INT. AMERICAN BALLET COMPANY - PAUL'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Paul, dressed in red, meets with his administrative staff.

PAUL

You're a bunch of pussies.

Reggie glances over at JESSICA, 40, the Company Manager. Also in attendance is Monica, and an elderly woman, BETTY.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Dream! Live! Embrace the Grandeur! And for God's sake stop *naysaying* -- you know I hate *naysaying*.

JESSICA

I'm not *naysaying*, I'm *saying* and you just don't like hearing it.

PAUL

Damn straight I don't like it. I'm sick to death of all these constraints -- I can't breathe, I feel confined. I'm nauseous.

BETTY

Do you want a glass of water?

PAUL

No I don't want a goddamn glass of water I want some fucking champagne at this fucking event!

JESSICA

Maybe the man likes Prosecco --

PAUL

(blowing up, scathing)  
Well, I don't! It's sparkling  
WINE! It's DISGUSTING! If he  
wants to throw himself a mini-gala  
and *glitter* like he's one of us  
then he should goddamn throw it and  
throw it right!

JESSICA

I have be respectful of his budget.

PAUL

Oh, come on. Budget? Please.  
Anyone with dough enough to sit on  
our Board spends more blasting  
lines off a hooker's tits on a  
Saturday night.

JESSICA

He just saved our season, Paul --

PAUL

(supercilious)  
God, all this bowing and scraping.  
He may think this little shin-dig  
is for him, but it's for us. Us!  
(barking, to Betty)  
Where's that glass of water?

Betty, confused, scurries out. Paul escalates.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Do you seriously expect to entice  
new patrons into giving us hundreds  
of thousands of dollars when we're  
serving them a ninety-nine cent  
glass of cat piss and a warmed-over  
production of *Giselle* as incentive?  
I'm going to lose my mind here, I  
am going to lose my fucking mind.

All the staff are cowed into silence.

Paul paces, collecting himself while the staff silently  
tolerates him and waits out the storm.

Paul stops abruptly and grabs a small, decorative SPRAY PUMP  
off his desk. He *mists* it into the air above his head,  
raises his face -- inhales deeply as the mist descends.

Reggie and Monica meet eyes. Jessica musters her patience.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
 Veuve Clicquot. We serve Veuve  
 Clicquot if I have to give blowjobs  
 on the corner to pay for it.

A beat. Reggie looks at his watch.

REGGIE  
 Better get busy.

Paul stares at him, then... bursts into *LAUGHTER*. The tense staff relaxes a little, everyone except Jessica.

JESSICA  
 Seriously, Paul, you want it?  
 Great. Go ahead and ask Mr.  
 Merrieux for extra money for the  
 party he's throwing in his own  
 honor and for our company's future!

PAUL  
 Just shame him out of his bad  
 taste. How hard is that?

JESSICA  
 (fed-up)  
 Maybe you can give me a tutorial.

PAUL  
 You can bet our new Chairman wants  
 to look good in front of his cash-  
 stuffed pals. And since I want to  
 empty their pockets I suggest you  
 make it happen, Jessica darling.

JESSICA  
 (resigned)  
 Sure. I'll just pull the money out  
 of his ass.

PAUL  
 If that's where he keeps his cheque  
 book. Monsieur Merrieux wants to  
 make a splash in the ballet world.  
 Just ensure he makes it with  
 champagne.

Just as Betty scuttles in with a glass of water --

PAUL (CONT'D)  
 Now everyone out of my office --  
 out! I need to go over the roster  
 before I address the troops.  
 (rapturous)  
 (MORE)

PAUL (CONT'D)  
 God, I love first days! So full of  
 possibility..!

His staff heads out, Betty still holding the glass.

REGGIE  
 (sotto, to Jessica)  
 If only they were full of lithium.

INT. MIA'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - SAME DAY

WATER RUNS from a faucet. Claire brushes her teeth. Mia scoots in and opens the mirrored medicine cabinet.

INSIDE THE CABINET: BOTTLES of DEXATRIM. BOXES of LAXATIVES. BOTTLES of IPACEC.

Mia grabs the Dexatrim and taps a few PILLS out. She cups some water, slurps the pills down.

MIA  
 Breakfast of champions. If you  
 could get your own that'd be great.

She goes, leaving Claire alone with her pale reflection.

INT. AMERICAN BALLET COMPANY - FOYER/HALLWAY - DAY

Claire and Mia enter, each carrying a big DANCE BAG.

Claire pauses, looks around -- excited and nervous -- *first day*. Mia keeps walking, calls over her shoulder.

MIA  
 Changing room's on the third floor.

CLAIRE  
 Where's Wardrobe?

INT. COSTUME WORKROOM - MINUTES LATER

Huge work tables, sewing machines, mannequins, fabrics. Claire enters and glances around. MATILDA, 40's, British and enormous, emerges from her adjacent office.

MATILDA  
 You're bright and early, eh? You  
 must be the new one. I'm Matilda.

CLAIRE

I'm Claire. Claire Robbins. I...  
I need shoes.

MATILDA

Of course you do. Alrighty, let me  
just take down your size and style  
and I'll get the order right in --

CLAIRE

The thing is... I need a pair now.  
(off Matilda's surprise)  
Mine are completely shot. I-I  
couldn't... I don't have a paycheck  
yet so I'm hoping you have my size.  
Any style, used, I can make do.

MATILDA

Let's see what I have on hand.  
(starts across the room)  
First day. You must be excited.

CLAIRE

Scared out of my mind.

MATILDA

Sometimes it's hard to tell the  
difference.

Matilda reaches for a KEY RING that hangs from a cord around  
her neck buried deep in her cavernous cleavage.

INT. COSTUME STORAGE ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The door opens revealing a floor-to-ceiling mass of COLOR.  
Claire follows Matilda in. Gazes around in wonder at...

Row upon row of COSTUMES. Every shape, style and color. The  
garments line the walls. There are racks of POINTE SHOES,  
jeweled and beaded HEADDRESSES and RAINBOW VERTICAL STACKS of  
flat TUTUS from floor to ceiling.

As Matilda looks through the Pointe shoes, Claire crosses to  
the tutus. Reverentially runs her hand along them.

MIA (PRE-LAP)

Oh my God, I missed you so much!

INT. LADIES' CHANGING ROOM - DAY - MINUTES LATER

The large space is crammed with many female dancers.

All the women are in varying states of undress; sitting, standing, gearing up and chatting in clusters.

Mia chats with SUZANNE, a terrifyingly thin dancer. They *air kiss* -- their fondness for each other heightened and fake.

SUZANNE

Oh my God, you look so awesome!

MIA

You do. How is it possible you're even skinnier than at the end of last season?

SUZANNE

Are you kidding me? I'm a fat cow.

MIA

No, that'd be me.

AT THE LOCKERS, slightly apart from the others, a beautiful dancer, KIIIRA, 31, hides an ANKLE BRACE under leg warmers. Winces. Then surreptitiously rummages through her BAG.

INSERT: INTERIOR KIIIRA'S BAG. PRESCRIPTION PILL BOTTLES. Within, her hands deftly unscrew a cap and shake out a PILL.

Kiira discretely pops the pill dry -- no water -- a pro. She eavesdrops on two nearby dancers.

PATRICE

And Paul signed her on the spot.

ASHLEY

Really? That sucks. You sure?

PATRICE

And the bitch hasn't even been in a company for like, three years.

ASHLEY

Maybe she blew him or something.

PATRICE

Maybe. But if that worked I wouldn't still be in the Corps.

They giggle. Kiira digests this unwelcome "new girl" information. She closes her locker and glides out through the throngs of girls who part for her like the Red Sea.

ASHLEY

I hate that perfume Paul gave her.

PATRICE  
You should be so fucking lucky.

As Mia changes, DAPHNE arrives and dumps down her stuff.

MIA  
(cheerful, sincere)  
Daphne! What's up, Diva?

DAPHNE  
Hey, Maniac.

DAPHNE is 24, gorgeous -- confident, relaxed and down-to-earth, with a great wry sense of humor.

MIA  
Where were you all month?

DAPHNE  
I went to Spain for a while. Then over to Portugal. You know how I hate New York in the summer.

MIA  
Were you on that huge boat again?

DAPHNE  
Yacht? No. Yes. A different one.

MIA  
Awww, a different one. Didn't you like it? State room too small?

DAPHNE  
Your brain is too small.

MIA  
So are my tits. Such is life. I'm dealing with it.

DAPHNE  
I liked it fine, it's just that my dad invited these dudes from Dubai -- this prince and all his creepy peeps -- and it got old fast.

The door opens and Claire steps in. The chatter dies.

DAPHNE (CONT'D)  
Who's that wide-eyed little thing?

MIA  
Bambi. My new roommate. Twenty bucks says she's gone in a week.

PATRICE  
 HIIIIIII! Welcome!

All the girls *AD LIB* big, overly-cheerful greetings. Claire, with pasted-on smile, offers her own small *hellos*.

As she passes through the room heading for Mia, all of the women appraise her. Many smiles fall from many faces.

Claire sets her stuff down next to Mia and Daphne.

DAPHNE  
 Well, you look like a Bambi.

CLAIRE  
 What?

MIA  
 This is Claire.

CLAIRE  
 Hi.

DAPHNE  
 Hi. I'm Daphne.  
 (sweetly, to Mia)  
 And you're a *douche*.

MIA  
 Daphne's a demi-soloist. And a spoiled brat. You should see her apartment -- it's sick. So's her closet.

DAPHNE  
 (to Mia)  
 I like what you're wearing, it's a nice color on you. What's it called, "Bitter Bitter Jealousy"?

MIA  
 That's why I love this girl. She's not afraid to be an *out loud* bitch. She's the only one here I trust.

Across the room, a naked ballerina, MONA, grabs PAPER TOWEL and shoves it in her crotch, exclaiming --

MONA  
 Goddamn it! Does anyone have a tampon?

SUZANNE  
 Still get your period? Poor thing.

CLAIRE  
 (rummages in her bag)  
 Um, I might have one. Somewhere.  
 (holds out a crushed box)  
 They've been in here a while...

MONA  
 Can I just keep the box? I'm  
 bleeding like road kill.

CLAIRE  
 Uh, sure. No problem.

Mona grabs the box and strides away, cursing.

PATRICE  
 Shove in two at a time or you'll  
 never make it through the barre!

MONA  
 Why does God hate me?!

Daphne grins and gets up to go. Many dancers are leaving.

DAPHNE  
 Welcome to the fray, new girl. Try  
 not to fit right in unless you want  
 to spend your whole salary on  
 shrinks.  
 (indicates Mia)  
 This one. Watch out. Bat shit  
 crazy. And a total whore.

MIA  
 (grinning)  
 Fuck off. I'm not crazy.

Daphne and Mia head out with the last of the dancers.

MIA (CONT'D)  
 See you in the shark tank.

CLAIRE  
 Let me just grab my stuff --

The door closes. The room is empty except for Claire.

INT. MAIN REHEARSAL HALL - DAY

Claire hustles in. All the MALE DANCERS check her out.

She sets down her bag, sits on the floor and starts to  
 quickly sew elastic and ribbon onto her new toe shoes.

The company of dancers gets ready to begin:

SERIES OF QUICK SHOTS:

- Male and female dancers hugging "hello."
- Female dancers sitting on the floor taping up and padding their feet with a wide variety of supplies. Putting on Pointe shoes. Tying ribbons.
- Stretching arms, legs, torsos and feet.
- Sociable dancers chatting as they warm up at the barre.
- Aloof dancers silently, seriously warming up.

PASHA, the accompanist, enters. He's a petite man. Many of the dancers call out greetings, *Hi Pasha, Good morning, Pasha*, etc. Pasha is introverted, but answers politely.

PASHA  
(Russian accent)  
Hello. Hello. *Zdravstvujtye*.

He sits at the piano. Pulls a ton of SHEET MUSIC out of his satchel and sets it near him on the floor. Puts on a pair of THICK GLASSES. Does a few scales to warm up -- he's gifted.

Dancers take their places at the barre. Claire, unsure of where to be, wanders over to an available space at a barre. A female dancer approaches and stares daggers at her. Claire gets the message and moves off.

Dancers fill in the spaces at the barres. It's crowded.

Claire scans the room. Heads toward another spot and begins warming up. Some dancers exchange smirks.

Just then, Kiira smoothly steps in and takes that particular place at the barre, edging Claire out.

KIIRA  
Good morning.

Claire knows exactly who Kiira is and is flat-out awestruck.

CLAIRE  
Morning, Miss Hawthorn.

KIIRA  
Kiira.

CLAIRE  
Kiira. Hi. I'm Claire. I'm new.

KIIRA

Yes.

Kiira does a forward *port de bras* effectively dismissing Claire who steps away.

Claire stands in the middle of the room with nowhere to be.

A male dancer, ROSS, strapping, macho, jocular, signals Claire. He makes room for her to stand in front of him at the barre. She gratefully hurries over and takes the spot.

CLAIRE

Thanks.

ROSS

De nada. I'm Ross. And you must be... let me guess... Adorable.

CLAIRE

Claire.

ROSS

I can tell I'm gonna have a hard time concentrating.

Claire, uncomfortable, turns away and starts to warm up. Ross turns to the male dancer behind him, TREY, gay, cute --

ROSS (CONT'D)

(whispers, singsong)

I smell viiiiiirgin.

TREY

You're insatiable.

ROSS

Like you're not?

TREY

You have proclivities. I like it when they know what they're doing.

ROSS

When does a gay guy not know how to suck cock?

TREY

Exactly.

Unbeknownst to the boys, Claire has heard every word. She steels herself and tries to concentrate.

Paul enters followed by Jessica, Ivana and her little dog.

All the dancers stop what they're doing and face Paul. Everyone straightens -- he clearly commands respect.

PAUL

Welcome, welcome, welcome blessed  
Terpsichoreans, to our new season!

All the dancers *APPLAUD*.

PAUL (CONT'D)

I am thrilled to have you all here  
...and at my mercy.

The dancers laugh nervously. Paul loves this stuff --

PAUL (CONT'D)

I'm convinced that this will be our  
most celebrated season to date. As  
you know, I have put together a  
stunning repertoire that I'm sure  
will astonish and delight both you  
and our devoted audience.

(then)

I have many of you in mind for  
particular roles, and of course  
some...

(bows to Kiira)

...are already destined, but many  
of you will be auditioning this  
week and I'll make my remaining  
selections.

(then)

Alright, let's begin.

The dancers all place their left hands on the barre. Jessica and Ivana take seats at the front of the room. Paul strolls among the dancers and quickly, routinely instructs them (he knows his stuff -- a total pro):

PAUL (CONT'D)

*Pliés*. In first, *demi*, *demi*, *full*,  
*porte de bras* front and back, same  
second and stretch into the barre  
and out, fourth, fifth the same,  
*sous-sus* and reverse.

(waves his hand)

Pasha.

*PIANO MUSIC* as Pasha starts to play.

The dancers prepare and begin. Paul walks among the dancers offering small corrections or praise. He touches an arm or a back as he passes, adjusting, reminding...

PAUL (CONT'D)  
 (melodious)  
 Heels down... ..lift up as you  
 descend... knees stretch, use all  
 the music...

The dancers' faces are masks of calm concentration as everyone strives for perfection.

The dancers surreptitiously check out Claire -- especially the other female dancers.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
 Good, Kiira, lovely...  
 (moving on)  
 And forward... work the turnout...  
 (to Ross)  
 Lazy, lazy boy, pull up, up.  
 (to all)  
 Bellies tight, inhale as you lift  
 to go back... shoulders down...

**MONTAGE AT THE BARRE:**

The dancers move through a typical Barre. (Note: with each new set of exercise the music changes). We only see small portions of each.

Paul strolls among the dancers throughout the montage, touching, correcting, nodding.

VARYING EXERCISES: *Tendus, Battement Frappés, Rond de Jambe a terre, Grand Rond de Jambe en l'aire, Battement Fondu Développé Relevé. Passé Arabesque.*

By the end of the sequence all the dancers are sweating.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
 Nice work. Let's move the barres  
 and come to center.

Dancers move the free-standing barres away to the side of the room. Some remove a layer of warm-up clothing, drink water.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
 Adagio.

Claire hovers in the back. Paul demonstrates in a minimal way. The dancers watch and *mark* the movement.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
*Chassé* on one, to first *arabesque*,  
 lift the leg, hold.  
 (MORE)

PAUL (CONT'D)

Penché on five, six, come up seven,  
*pas de bourée* eight. *Pas de basque*  
 on one, *attitude* two, *chassé*,  
*fouetté*. *Tombé*, *pas de bourée* to  
 fourth and many, many turns. Let's  
 finish fourth, *tendu*, and find your  
 fifth.

(then)

Groups of five.

(then)

Pasha.

Five dancers take the floor. Kiira is front and center.  
*PIANO MUSIC* as Pasha begins to play a lovely slow piece.

As the dancers begin, the SOUND OF A CELL PHONE RINGING.

Everyone freezes.

The RINGING continues. It's a distinct tune: "I'm A Yankee  
*Doodle Dandy*".

PAUL (CONT'D)

What the fuck am I listening to?

Everyone is appalled at this intrusion -- cell phones are  
 verboten. Any interruption is unheard of.

Claire pales. She knows... it's her phone. She's unsure  
 what to do. The metallic tune seems to go on forever.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Whose phone is that?

CLAIRE

I'm so sorry...

Claire scurries over to her bag.

PAUL

Ah, the hard luck story.

The phone is visible -- illuminated from within Claire's bag.  
 She quickly fishes it out.

INSERT: CLAIRE'S CELL. The readout says BRYAN.

Claire shuts the phone off. Stands there, mortified.

CLAIRE

I'm sorry. It won't happen again.

PAUL

No, it won't. Get out.

Time stops for Claire. She's devastated. Immobilized.  
After several shocked beats...

PAUL (CONT'D)

Go.

Claire quickly starts to gather her things.

All the dancers steal glances at each other -- *holy shit*.  
Mia and Daphne meet eyes. Kiira stifles a smirk.

Claire, barely holding it together, heads to the door.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Wait. Come here.

Claire drops her bag down and, full of trepidation, hurries  
over. She stands before Paul, contrite, close to tears.

PAUL (CONT'D)

(cat with a mouse)

I wonder what the hell I was  
thinking when I scraped the bottom  
of the barrel and brought you on.

(then)

Let me see the Adagio.

(off her terror)

Demonstrate. Now that you've  
blasted it out of everyone's head  
with that heinous melody I'll be  
damned if I'll be subjected to some  
mishmash. Do it. Now.

All the dancers move away to the back of the room. Claire  
stares at Paul wide-eyed.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Pasha!

As Pasha starts to play the introduction.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Begin.

Claire prepares and... begins the Adagio. As she performs  
it, she's not only technically flawless, but her emotions  
infuse the combination with meaning and heartbreak. This is  
the first time we've really seen her dance. She's stunning.

She finishes and the room falls silent.

Jessica's eyes are moist and Ivana stares at Claire like  
she's seen a miracle.

The other dancers display a blend of admiration and jealousy. Kiira is seething, threatened, but attempts to disguise it.

Paul keeps his cards close to the vest. After a long beat...

PAUL (CONT'D)  
Well, at least you remembered it.

Claire is frozen in place, unsure what to do.

Paul observes her, head cocked, assessing. Inscrutable.

Suddenly, Pasha *PLAYS* an improvised classical version of "I'm A Yankee Doodle Dandy" with great flourish.

Many dancers *LAUGH*. The tension in the room is broken.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
(to Pasha)  
How very amusing.  
(to Claire, a reprieve)  
Go to the back.

Claire scurries to the back of the group of dancers.

Everyone avoids looking at her except for Mia and Daphne. Claire, breathing heavily, keeps her eyes down.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
(to all)  
May I have the first group, please?

The first five dancers hurry forward and prepare.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
Pasha. Just the Adagio -- there's been enough patriotism for today.

TIME CUT TO:

Morning class is over. All the dancers are grabbing their bags and heading out. Claire sits alone in a corner, head down, untying her toe shoes. As the dancers exit they all throw sidelong glances at her.

Claire is left alone. She examines her bandaged toe. Presses on it -- *ouch*. She picks up a toe shoe and brings it down hard on her damaged toe -- *BAM*. She *INHALES* sharply with pain. Then... she *smashes* her toe again. *GASPS*. She can barely breathe or see straight, but the pain is good.

PRE-LAP: THE SOUND of *RAPID PANTING* and *RHYTHMIC CLICKS*.

INT. AMERICAN BALLET COMPANY - HALLWAYS - A LITTLE LATER

Ivana's fat little dog *WHEEZES* as it trots along the hall. Behind the dog, Paul, Jessica and Ivana walk and talk.

PAUL  
She's brilliant.

JESSICA  
Claire is very, very exciting.

IVANA  
The feet, the emotion... How is it you like to say? She is having full packaging.

PAUL  
I say fuck me, she's a star.

JESSICA  
Are you planning on giving her a feature?

PAUL  
Feature?! I can make her! And she can make us!

JESSICA  
What are you thinking?

PAUL  
This can change everything! I know what I want to do. I'm pulling *Giselle* -- fuck that stale piece of shit!

JESSICA  
Paul, you cannot change the season! The Board --

PAUL  
I'm not licking their asses --

JESSICA  
We talked about this, Paul. This is a game and you have to play by --

PAUL  
Don't you dare tell me what I can and cannot do!

He enters his ANTE OFFICE where Reggie and Betty work.

PAUL (CONT'D)

You think this is a democracy?  
Everything and everyone here is  
MINE to do with as I will!

He crosses into his office and slams the door.

JESSICA

Why did I think I could do this  
job? If he upends this season we  
won't survive!

IVANA

But always we get through. You are  
virgin to this, but you will see.

Jessica paces.

JESSICA

Do you have any idea how tight the  
budget is this year? We lost a  
major sponsor, remember? Not to  
mention we have a new Chairman who  
just ponied up because he loves  
Giselle! There's no way the Board  
will put up with changes now -- the  
season is approved. Done deal!

IVANA

Darling, you don't know him yet?  
After so many years you were  
dancing? Paul is happy only when  
the apple cart, it tips.

(in Russian, to her dog)

*Time for your special treat for  
your special tummy, yes it is...*

Ivana goes, leaving Jessica alone.

JESSICA

Fuck.

INT. AMERICAN BALLET COMPANY - LADIES' BATHROOM - LATER

Claire limps into the empty bathroom. She's pale. Leans  
against a sink feeling queasy. She HEARS her CELL VIBRATE.  
It continues to *vibrate* as she fishes it out of her bag.

INSERT CLAIRE'S CELL. A series of texts from BRYAN. "Call  
me" "Call me" "Call me" "Call me" Call me".

Claire dry heaves, suddenly nauseous. She runs into a stall,  
locks the door, and VOMITS.

Kiira enters the bathroom and hurries into a far stall. She locks the door. Extracts a tiny ZIPLOCK BAG OF COKE from her dance bag. The little ziplock has a distinctive PINK HEART STICKER on it. She listens, and quickly seizes the moment to CUT THE COKE on the back of the toilet.

Claire spits and wipes her mouth, reaches for the lever.

Kiira waits and listens. When she hears the toilet *FLUSH*, she *SNORTS* her lines. Smears the vestiges on her gums.

Claire exits her stall and crosses to the sink. Runs water and splashes it over her face.

Kiira emerges. She washes her hands and discretely checks her nose for traces.

KIIRA  
You're old school.

CLAIRE  
Oh... no, it's just all the stress.

Kiira pulls a LIPSTICK from her bag. As she does, her half-full ziplock bag of coke falls to the floor. Kiira doesn't notice, but... Claire does. Claire covers it with her foot.

Kiira applies the lipstick as Claire stands motionless.

KIIRA  
You got lucky today.

CLAIRE  
I know.

KIIRA  
(pleasant)  
You're not special. You know that, right? Infuse an Adagio with what you just happen to be feeling? Anyone can do that. I wonder if you'd still be here if you'd had to skip through a *Grande Allégro* with a big kiss-ass smile on your face.

Kiira smiles, goes. Claire picks up the little bag of coke from the floor. Ponders it. Stuffs it in her dance bag.

INT. PAUL'S OFFICE - DAY - LATER

Paul's lunch congeals on his desk, barely touched. He paces. Grabs his CELL. Hits a preset number.

PAUL  
 (into phone)  
 Where the hell are you?

EDUARDO (O.S.)  
 (Latin accent)  
 Chill out, Papi, I'm walking in  
 now. Don't get a heart attack.

INT. HALLWAY - LATER

Claire stands at the BULLETIN BOARD, reading notices.

ROSS (O.C.)  
 Claire!

She turns. Ross strides down the hall towards her.

ROSS (CONT'D)  
 Can you do me a favor?

INT. REGGIE'S OFFICE (PAUL'S ANTE OFFICE) - CONTINUOUS

Reggie and Betty eat lunch while working at their desks. A  
 lithe, pretty, petite boy, EDUARDO, 17, saunters in.

EDUARDO  
 Hey, Guys.

INT. PAUL'S OFFICE - DAY - MINUTES LATER

Eduardo is naked and bent over an armchair as Paul furiously  
 fucks him while staring out at the city. Eduardo is  
 indifferent, sticks to the script.

PAUL  
 I am a man of vision.

EDUARDO  
 You're a genius.

PAUL  
 I am undeniable.

EDUARDO  
 You're a genius.

PAUL  
 I get what I want when I want it.

Paul hits his INTERCOM while still buried inside Eduardo.

REGGIE (V.O.)

Yes?

PAUL

Call Merrieux. Get me lunch tomorrow. Tell him it's urgent.

He hangs up. Redoubles his thrusting efforts.

EDUARDO

Don't let me forget I'm gonna need some cash for later, okay, Chica?

INT. SMALL REHEARSAL HALL - A LITTLE LATER

An intimate, private space. Ross and Claire have been rehearsing a lift sequence. He's just set her down and she immediately steps away. Claire's tense, unsettled.

ROSS

(charming coercion)

This is really helpful. Can we try it again? I want to see if I can finesse it a little more.

Claire is troubled, but nods her acquiescence.

ROSS (CONT'D)

Great. Ready? And...

He raises her in a gorgeous lift, then slowly, slowly slides her to the floor. Claire's leg is straight up, foot above his shoulder, her arms around his neck. Their bodies are pressed together. Ross should release her, but doesn't.

ON CLAIRE. She's uneasy. Distinctly uncomfortable with Ross's close proximity, his touch. Ready to be freed.

CLAIRE

That's it, right?

CLOSE ON his hands dwarfing her tiny waist. Holding tight.

ROSS

I dunno... is that it?

He strokes the length of her leg. Claire jerks herself free.

CLAIRE

(unnerved)

Don't.

She darts away. Ross loves to play this "virgin" game...

ROSS  
 Alright, alright, I won't push my  
 luck. Can we just try it again?

Claire, distressed, quickly gathers her things.

ROSS (CONT'D)  
 Come on...

Claire bolts out the door.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Claire sprints down the hall, *SLAMS* open a stairwell door.

INT. STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS

Claire runs upstairs, her distress building, the steady *CLUNK-CLUNK-CLUNK* of her toe shoes reverberating as she climbs.

EXT. AMERICAN BALLET COMPANY - ROOFTOP - MINUTES LATER

Bright sunlight flares, blinding us. As our eyes adjust, we discover Claire sitting tucked away in a dark corner behind an A/C unit, knees drawn up, head in her hands.

Daphne steps out onto the roof and walks to the edge. Pulls out a *PACK OF CIGARETTES*, lights one. She inhales, then notices Claire. Shakes her head. Strolls over.

DAPHNE  
 You really need to grow a pair.

CLAIRE  
 I'm sorry, what?

DAPHNE  
 See this? Thick.  
 (slaps her own bare arm)  
 Can't chew through it. Get some or  
 go home. That's for free.

She stubs out the smoke and goes. Claire ponders her words.

INT. LADIES' CHANGING ROOM - LATER

The dancers are changing and packing up for the day.

SUZANNE  
 What're you wearing tomorrow night?

Claire observes Kiira as she rummages through her bag with mounting frustration.

MIA  
Something microscopic.

PATRICE  
Smart.

MIA  
And insanely expensive. It pisses me off. Why do the tiniest dresses cost the most?

MONA  
Because God hates women. I'm exhausted -- I wish I didn't have to go, I'm too busy bleeding.

CLAIRE  
We all have to go?

MIA  
Dude. It's a company party. Not going is not an option.

CLAIRE  
Ballerina eye candy.

DAPHNE  
(yes)  
We grace the patrons with our presence and they feel like they're...

MIA AND DAPHNE  
(quoting Paul)  
Brushing elbows with angels.

INT. AMERICAN BALLET COMPANY - ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES - LATER

Monica and her frazzled boss Jessica are about to leave.

MONICA  
You need a drink.

JESSICA  
I need three. One thing's for sure, I'm going to rue the day Paul plucked her out of the line-up.

Claire enters. She's the last person Jessica wants to see.

CLAIRE

Hi.

JESSICA

Good night.

Jessica brushes past her, glacier cold, and goes.

CLAIRE

I'm wondering if there's any way I  
can get an advance on my salary?

MONICA

Sorry, sweetie, wish I could help,  
but that's not company policy.

Off Claire, nodding -- disappointed, mind racing.

EXT. AMERICAN BALLET COMPANY - EVENING

Several dancers exit the building. Claire rushes to catch up  
to Daphne.

CLAIRE

Can I ask you a huge favor?

INT. DAPHNE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - A LITTLE LATER

Claire, blown away, follows Daphne through the stunning,  
stylish rooms. Lights on the Hudson River twinkle below.

CLAIRE

This is so... gorgeous.

DAPHNE

Thanks. I'm lucky. And spoiled as  
hell -- I don't have to fuck anyone  
for this. Want something to drink?

INT. DAPHNE'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Daphne and Claire carry full WINE GLASSES as they cross  
through the lovely room to arrive at...

INT. DAPHNE'S WALK-IN CLOSET - CONTINUOUS

The closet is huge and custom-built. It's stocked with every  
imaginable dress, tons of coats, and floor-to-ceiling racks  
of shoes -- it could be a store on Fifth Avenue. Daphne  
sifts efficiently through some hangers.

DAPHNE  
 Okay... this could work... Or  
 this. You'd look great in this.  
 (grabs dresses)  
 You should just try a bunch on.  
 Need shoes, too?

CLAIRE  
 I need everything. Except those.

ANGLE ON a section of stratospherically-high shoes.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)  
 I'd kill myself in those -- those  
 are crazy!

DAPHNE  
 Shit -- what time is it?

CLAIRE  
 Almost nine.

DAPHNE  
 Okay. I gotta leave in an hour.

CLAIRE  
 Do you have a date or something?

DAPHNE  
 Or something, yes.  
 (considers, then)  
 You know what? You should come  
 with. Do you good.  
 (dead serious)  
 Can you keep a secret?

CLAIRE  
 (the simple truth)  
 I'm good at secrets.

DAPHNE  
 You'd better be.

EXT. MANHATTAN ALLEY - NIGHT

Daphne and Claire (each carrying a GARMENT BAG) pass by a  
 dumpster and approach a steel back entry door. Claire slows  
 down -- a bit apprehensive. A buff security guy, DANNY,  
 20's, Bronx/Irish, smiles and opens the door for them.

DAPHNE  
 Top o' the evenin', Danny boy.

DANNY  
 (Bronx accent)  
 My Irish eyes are smilin' now.

DAPHNE  
 This is my pal Claire.

DANNY  
 You workin' tonight, Daphne's pal  
 Claire?

CLAIRE  
 Uh, no. Just a tourist.

DAPHNE  
 Is The Mobster here?

DANNY  
 (good advice)  
 You gotta stop callin' him that.  
 I'm serious as shit here.

DAPHNE  
 I don't say it to his face.

DANNY  
 Make sure you don't, get me? Don't  
 fuck around, Daph. And yeah, he's  
 here. Prob'ly in his office.

DAPHNE  
 Thanks. Later.

She blows him a kiss and the girls go inside.

INT. STRIP CLUB - BACK HALLWAYS - CONTINUOUS

Distant thumping *MUSIC*. Daphne leads the way and Claire follows in her slip-stream through the back hallways. (Consider this the nightclub entry sequence from "Goodfellas" -- one long continuous shot).

They pass several LATINO MEN in white shirts and black pants carrying boxes of booze, palettes of clean glasses. Daphne and Claire push through a door to...

INT. STRIP CLUB - CLUB HALLWAYS - CONTINUOUS

Suddenly, the music is *LOUDER* and the decor is glamorous navy brocade, tapestry, scone lighting -- very high end. WAITRESSES in uniform bikinis and high heels pass them by.

Claire and Daphne round a corner and head down another hallway with several doorways adorned with layers of drapes.

They pass by PRIVATE ROOMS. Glimpses of girls on laps.

Claire, intrigued, peeks in as they pass by.

DAPHNE

Yo, Bambi. Gotta work on your poker face.

CLAIRE

Sorry.

DAPHNE

I can't believe you've never been in a club.

CLAIRE

I can't believe you work here.

A BOUNCER in a suit escorts THREE STRIPPERS and a group of YOUNG BUSINESSMEN into a room. THREE WAITRESSES in matching bikinis follow on their heels -- two of them carry trays with bottles of champagne, one carries a tray with glasses.

The last girl gives Daphne a quick kiss on the cheek before disappearing inside. Daphne and Claire keep walking...

DAPHNE

It's not work, it's play.

CLAIRE

So, you just dance or... do you also do the... other stuff?

DAPHNE

Define *other stuff*. Do guys cum in their pants? Sure. But they can't touch. The rules are super strict.

CLAIRE

But the girls are on their laps...

DAPHNE

The girls are in charge. Some of them make arrangements though, for later. Outside the club, you know? But management frowns on it.

SERGEI

(Russian accent)

On what is it I frown?

SERGEI, the handsome, immaculate Russian club owner, late 40's, wearing a suit so sharp the lapels could cut glass, has just come down some plush stairs.

His burly associate/body guard, TEDDY, re-clips a velvet rope at the bottom of the staircase.

                  DAPHNE  
Not me, I hope.

                  SERGEI  
No, never you.

                  DAPHNE  
                  (flirtatious)  
Good. I'd crumble under the hot glare of your disapproval.

                  SERGEI  
                  (playing along)  
Since you put it like that perhaps one day I'll allow you to disappoint me.

                  DAPHNE  
Sergei, I'd like you to meet my friend and colleague Claire.

                  SERGEI  
                  (takes her hand, kisses it)  
Ballerina! Enchanted.

                  CLAIRE  
Very nice to meet you, Sir.

                  SERGEI  
Please, I am Sergei. It is my sincere pleasure meeting you -- I am honored. I cannot tell you the joy for me that is ballet.

                  DAPHNE  
Claire's going to hang out while I do my thing, is that cool?

                  SERGEI  
                  (to Claire, re: Daphne)  
She always get what she wants, this one. I hope you delight in your evening with us and that we'll see you again. And again. Very soon.

The girls take their leave.

CLAIRE  
Is he really a mobster?

DAPHNE  
Does James Bond drink martinis?  
(then)  
I gotta let Remy know I'm here.

They round another corner and climb up a couple steps.

INT. STRIP CLUB - DJ BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

REMY, a young, handsome African American man sporting *dreads* spins records and discs from his booth above the dance floor.

REMY  
Hey, Girl. When you wanna hit it?

DAPHNE  
Can you put me on in about thirty?

He grabs a CLIPBOARD and adds her name to a list.

REMY  
What's your flavor tonight?

DAPHNE  
King of Pop's still floating my  
boat.

REMY  
Whatever blows your skirt up.

The girls go. Remy checks out Claire as she walks away. He turns his attention back to his work, speaks into the mic:

REMY (CONT'D)  
That was the lovely Sapphire --  
she's quite a gem.  
(cranks up a new song)  
Remember gentlemen, private dances  
are available all night long.

Claire and Daphne open a door and enter...

INT. STRIP CLUB - DRESSING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The dressing room is both functional and comfortable.

There are several make-up stations surrounded with lights, plush armchairs and sofas, chandeliers and lockers. A few girls hang out and a few girls get ready.

All of them are young, voluptuous and attractive. One girl is texting, one knits, and one pokes at an iPad. Two girls share a joint. At a locker, one girl snorts something.

Some girls are doing their makeup and hair, oiling their naked bodies, stepping into g-string's and adorning themselves with jewelry or wigs.

Claire tries not to stare. And fails.

DAPHNE

Yo, Bitches.

Most of the girls ad-lib *hellos*. Some ignore her.

YASMINE

I thought you weren't gonna show.

YASMINE is a stunning African American girl with close-cropped hair. She's putting on a giant afro wig.

DAPHNE

You know I hate to miss a shift.

YASMINE

Gots to get your groove on.

DAPHNE

Man, do I ever.

(to Claire)

You wanna hang here or do you want to go out front and watch?

CLAIRE

(without a doubt)

I want to watch.

INT. STRIP CLUB - MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

*THROBBING* MUSIC. Gyrating lights. The club is large and posh -- dark tablecloths and club chairs. Tasteful and elegant. Several tables are occupied by well-dressed men of a variety of ages in groups of twos and threes. A few men sit alone. Several men sit in chairs that line the stage.

The stage is a T-shape, with a glossy main stage section at the top with a pole in the center and a long runway section -- also with a pole -- that extends through the middle of the room. Mirrors at the back of the stage double the trouble.

A LATINA STRIPPER works the pole, sheds some lamé.

Cocktail waitresses in bikinis carry drinks on trays.

Strippers in costume sit chatting with men at their tables.

Behind a long pony wall, several divided banquettes for lap dances are discretely hidden from view.

INT. STRIP CLUB - BAR - CONTINUOUS

The bar is off to one side of the main room. Claire perches on a bar stool, sips a cocktail amid the sights and sounds.

As MUSIC *PUMPS* and *THUNDERS*, Claire and the customers watch the curvaceous Latina as she releases her top and drops it to the floor. All that remains is her g-string.

She struts down the runway, stopping to writhe or sink down in front of each man with her knees spread wide, collecting cash as she goes.

As the music comes to an end, the stripper makes the most of her sashay back up the stage. REMY'S VOICE over the PA:

REMY (V.O.)

That was our spitfire, Elena.

The stripper retrieves her discarded clothing and times her exit just as the lights change and...

REMY (V.O.)

Get ready for some strut. Please enjoy... Raven!

Daphne, in a sexy short black wig, arrives and steps onto the stage. Michael Jackson's "*Leave Me Alone*" begins.

Daphne wears thigh high black boots and black leather lingerie -- her attitude is: *stare if you dare*. She dances with a certain violence; hard-edged and hard-hitting. A force of sinuous nature. This is no typical act -- Daphne is getting off, cutting loose. Tempestuous.

Claire is riveted -- simultaneously shocked and spellbound.

All the men sit up and take notice -- Daphne's moves spark with high voltage. Dangerous. Enticing. She's not just another girl. Occasionally she deigns to let the eager men get close enough to tuck bills into her boot-tops.

PUSH IN ON CLAIRE. Entranced. A whole new world opening up.

Suddenly, a beefy MALE HAND tugs Claire's ponytail.

MALE VOICE (O.C.)

Hey there, my little pony.

The hand belongs to a drunken, POTBELLIED MAN.

Claire reacts instinctively and lashes out, swinging a hard backhand, her drink still in her fist. The potbellied man gets hit in the face with Claire's glass. A small CUT over his brow starts to BLEED. He touches it.

POTBELLIED MAN

The fuck?!

CLAIRE

Oh my god...

POTBELLIED MAN

You cunt!

(wipes blood)

Look what she did!

ACROSS THE ROOM, Sergei has witnessed this and sends Teddy and another BOUNCER striding over. He follows behind.

POTBELLIED MAN (CONT'D)

Fucking CUNT, you fucking cut me!

CLAIRE

Get away from me...

TEDDY

Excuse me, Sir, perhaps we can help you. What a terrible accident. Why don't you step this way and we'll get you taken care of?

They lead the Potbellied Man away. The activities in the room continue. A NEW SONG starts. Sergei approaches Claire.

SERGEI

Claire. I apologize. Are you alright?

CLAIRE

(shaken)

Yes. I'm sorry. I... overreacted.

SERGEI

No-no, he was unacceptable. Never should you have to deal with attention you don't desire. Never.

(then)

What can I do? Let me do something. Another drink?

CLAIRE

I should go find Daphne.

Claire makes her way through the tables trying to navigate her way back to the dressing room. She becomes more and more anxious as all around her girls engage with men, the music throbs, the lights twirl. She rounds a corner and stops abruptly, stares at...

INT. PRIVATE BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

Daphne. She grinds on the lap of a HANDSOME MAN. She's incredible; sensual, skilled, and enjoying being in total command of the situation.

Unnoticed, Claire watches, riveted, as Daphne works the man until it's clear he can't contain himself.

EXT. STRIP CLUB - BUSY STREET - LATER

2 AM rush hour. The dynamic streets are bright -- hundreds of headlights in one direction, red taillights in the other. Claire and Daphne stand near the curb, garment bags in hand. Daphne, and many others, try unsuccessfully to hail a cab.

CLAIRE

So you don't..? You don't feel..?

DAPHNE

Here we go. Spit it out. What?

CLAIRE

You don't find it demeaning?

DAPHNE

(amused)

You want to talk about being *demeaned*? After what happened to you with Paul today?

She flashes a long stretch of leg. A taxi pulls right up.

DAPHNE (CONT'D)

What I get here I can't get anywhere else: total freedom and total control.

INT. TAXI - DRIVING - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Claire and Daphne continue their conversation.

CLAIRE

Sort of your antidote to ballet?

DAPHNE

There's no *sort of*. It's my drug of choice. I love it. No one bends me to their will or makes me feel five years old -- quite the opposite. Sergei treats me with respect. Guys come in to see me and I... get to get my ya-yas out.

CLAIRE

Guys come in specifically for you?

DAPHNE

That's about the only way the club is anything like ballet. You know, Patrons get attached. Have their little favorites. You'll see.

INT. FORMAL RESTAURANT - NEXT DAY

Paul sits across from ALAIN MERRIEUX, a handsome silver-haired man. They're halfway through their expensive meal.

PAUL

And in order to stand apart and stand out we have got to present something fresh and innovative.

ALAIN

(French accent)

Curious. Why is it you choose this moment to say this to me?

PAUL

The fact is, we need to reconsider *Giselle*.

ALAIN

(not a chance)

It is the very first *Ballet Blanc*. *Giselle* is classic.

PAUL

If we're going to compete with ABT and City Ballet we have to offer something besides the classics.

ALAIN

I disagree. The classics are beloved. *Giselle* is a living example of the Romantic ideal.

PAUL

And it's been done to death. I'm sorry, but you can't resuscitate that thing with a defibrillator.

Alain can't hide his displeasure at this statement.

PAUL (CONT'D)

I know we committed -- I apologize for the curve ball. I also know this is an exciting new venture for you, but you've got to remember I've been doing this a very, very long time, and --

ALAIN

Well, fortunately, I've given you but a small portion of my financial commitment. I'm sure it won't take long to return it to me.

PAUL

Alain. Possibility is upon us.

Alain slowly, deliberately slathers BUTTER on some BREAD.

ALAIN

When I was a small child, I always worried that I wasn't doing it right. The butter. The bread. Which side was which...

Paul receives Alain's message loud and clear. Forges ahead.

PAUL

Do you believe in miracles?

ALAIN

Please.

(to a passing waiter)

I'll take the cheque. Thank you.

PAUL

I'm asking you seriously.

ALAIN

(disdainful)

Miracles? They're for the ignorant, the poor, and the dying.

PAUL

We have in our possession a star who is ready to ascend.

(MORE)

PAUL (CONT'D)

And, if we make the right choices,  
we will rise with her. I want to  
launch her in a new ballet --  
commission a piece from a name  
choreographer. If everything  
coalesces we will be undeniable.

ALAIN

(a beat, cynical)

And just who is this *incandescent*  
for whom you will jeopardize an  
entire season?

PAUL

You'll meet her tonight.

INT. ROOFTOP PENTHOUSE AND TERRACE - NIGHT

A BOTTLE OF VEUVE CLICQUOT fills frame.

PULL BACK to discover it rests in the center of a tray  
surrounded by full flutes of bubbly being carried by a  
formally dressed waiter.

A bejeweled HAND lifts a glass from the tray. It belongs to  
a handsome woman in her 60's. She raises it to her lips.

HIGH AND WIDE to reveal an elegant cocktail party in full  
swing on a rooftop amid sparkling city lights.

Waiters move through the expensive, multi-generational crowd  
carrying trays of champagne and passed hors d'oeuvres.  
Flowers abound. *MUSIC* plays. A turquoise pool shimmers.

The ballet dancers are decked out in their finest cocktail  
attire and they all look ravishing. Well-heeled Patrons  
hover and engage them in conversation.

Ross holds court surrounded by a trio of older women. Kiira  
smiles amid a small group of admirers.

Paul, dressed in deep blue, moves through the crowd expertly  
working the room -- he's charismatic; joking and smiling.

Jessica keeps her eye on Paul as she makes small talk with a  
conspicuously wealthy older couple.

Amid a sea of black clothing, Claire looks fresh and  
arresting in a YELLOW DRESS and heels. She and Mia hold  
champagne flutes and resist the passed canapés.

MIA

No.

CLAIRE

Just one?

MIA

That's why we had crackers at home  
-- so we can drink and not land on  
our asses.

CLAIRE

But everything is so... tiny.

MIA

What did Paul say, huh? What did  
he say?

CLAIRE

"Angels don't eat."

Another tray is presented. Claire gazes at it with longing.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

(to the waiter)

No, thank you.

MIA

(to the waiter)

Back off.

The waiter goes. Mia points to an attractive couple.

MIA (CONT'D)

That's my old roommate.

She points out other former dancers with wealthy men.

MIA (CONT'D)

And she used to dance. And so did  
she. And so did she...

CLAIRE

What do they do now?

MIA

Spend.

(re: her drink)

I need something stronger.

Mia heads off leaving Claire alone. Two ballerinas pass by.

ASHLEY

Nice dress.

CLAIRE

Thank you.

ASHLEY

I've always liked it.

PATRICE

Yeah, Daphne looked great in it a couple of years ago. But it looks really nice on you.

They move off. Claire turns away, stung by their barbs. She crosses to stand at the railing looking out over the city.

Paul whispers something to Reggie who nods and goes.

JESSICA (O.S.)

Good evening, everyone.

Jessica holds a microphone and stands on a small stage. Paul stands near her. The crowd gathers, moves closer.

Claire is about to move forward when Reggie approaches her. He whispers something in her ear and she nods and stays where she is. Reggie heads back over to the stage area.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

On behalf of the American Ballet Company I want to thank you all for being here tonight. We sincerely appreciate your generosity and your support.

(turns to Paul)

Now if this fabulous man next to me needs an introduction, you're at the wrong party!

(laughter)

But what the heck: our fearless leader and extraordinary artistic director, Paul Taymore!

She hands the mic to Paul as everyone *APPLAUDS*.

PAUL

Thank you, thank you so much. Ballet is the ultimate optical illusion. We make *effort* appear *effortless*. We make *difficult...* *divine*. We make gravity our bitch.

(the crowd laughs)

We live to dance and we dance because of you, our Patrons, Board members and treasured friends.

(then)

Some of you may not yet know our esteemed benefactor this evening.

(MORE)

PAUL (CONT'D)

Please allow me the pleasure of  
introducing our new Chairman of the  
Board, Monsieur Alain Merrieux!

The crowd applauds as Alain takes the microphone. He's  
charmingly disinterested in the spotlight.

ALAIN

It is my great privilege and honor  
to help facilitate this glorious  
group in any way I can.

Something in the near distance catches Alain's attention.

POV. Claire and her yellow dress. Alone against the  
railing, she looks like the sun in a night sky. Beautiful.

ALAIN (CONT'D)

I very much hope you will join me  
in this most beautiful and worthy  
artistic endeavor.

(raises his glass)

*Merci beaucoup* and... enjoy.

He hands the mic back to Paul. A lovely woman, Alain's wife  
ISABELLE, smiles with approval and takes Alain's arm.

PAUL

Thank you all not only for sharing  
this evening with us, but for  
allowing us to dance in the  
moonlight for many nights to come!

The *MUSIC* cranks back up. Six company dancers (three  
couples) step onto the stage in their cocktail attire and  
begin to dance. They appear to be improvising but it may be  
a choreographed routine. The crowd is enraptured.

Claire turns away and stares out over the rooftops.

PAUL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

So far so good.

Startled, she turns to face him.

PAUL (CONT'D)

You got his attention. Now let's  
see what else you can get.

CLAIRE

I'm sorry, I'm in the dark here...

PAUL

Play your cards right and you'll be in the spotlight. And the new name on every critics' lips. Ready for some choreography?

Claire is intrigued, and... willing to do anything for Paul.

PAUL (CONT'D)

I'm going to go and chat with Mr. and Mrs. Chairman over there. When I lead her away to visit with handsome Principal Dancer Ross, you will be conveniently located to pick up the conversational slack.

He starts to go. Claire halts him with --

CLAIRE

Paul. Why me?

PAUL

Don't disappoint me. Your future, and mine, is riding on what happens next.

CLAIRE

What happens next?

PAUL

If, by evening's end, Mr. Merrieux isn't imagining his big French cock buried deep between your delectable thighs then you've done something wrong. In which case I will be..?

CLAIRE

...Disappointed.

PAUL

My angel. You're about to have a spectacular life.

(then)

Meet me at the studio at eight tomorrow morning ready to work.

Paul heads over to Alain and Isabelle. Claire takes a big gulp of her drink. Watches Paul enact his plan.

Claire makes her way through the crowd toward Alain, walking carefully in the unfamiliar heels. He is surrounded by a cluster of fawning ballerinas. Claire pauses, unsure, out of her depth -- *how can she possibly compete?*

She makes a decision and strides forward with determination. When she's near Alain she deliberately jams her foot down. Her high heel BREAKS. Claire stumbles into Alain and drops her glass. It *SHATTERS*. Alain catches her arm. Miffed ballerinas scatter.

ALAIN

Why, hello.

CLAIRE

Oh, God, I'm so sorry -- I tripped.

ALAIN

I notice.

A waiter efficiently cleans up the glass.

CLAIRE

Sorry, thank you, sorry.

She pulls off the shoe -- the heel dangles like a broken leg. Alain examines his TIE, holds it out.

ALAIN

I may be challenge to explain this later.

Claire's LIPSTICK has left a LUSH FULL IMPRINT.

CLAIRE

(sincere, thrown)

Oh, no. Oh, God. Uh, let me get some soda water or something.

ALAIN

Quite pretty, really. Perfect.

CLAIRE

Soda might get it out. Or maybe dish soap? I'm not sure. I could get it dry-cleaned for you...

ALAIN

Please, you must stop this worry. Your foot. This is a concern. You should step away in case of glass. Your feet are your trade.

CLAIRE

My feet have had worse, trust me.

Alain guides her over to a chaise -- she limps awkwardly from the height differential -- and they sit down together. Claire pulls off her other shoe. She's now barefoot.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

You should avert your eyes -- I don't want to do any more harm. Seeing a ballerina's feet can actually damage retinas.

ALAIN

(amused)  
You're very charming.

CLAIRE

I'm very clumsy. But, thank you. I'm Claire, by the way.

ALAIN

Ah. I meet you in the flesh. Paul has mentioned you to me.

CLAIRE

Did he say I'm charming and clumsy?

ALAIN

He said you are... a revelation.  
(then)  
I said I want to see for myself.

CLAIRE

(nervous)  
...See for yourself?

ALAIN

Paul has invited me tomorrow.

CLAIRE

Oh. Yes. I hear you love *Giselle*.

ALAIN

I do. However, it seems there is much excitement surrounding you.

CLAIRE

(the truth)  
Everything's been happening really fast. I've only been in New York a few days, and...

ALAIN

Already the city is at your feet.

CLAIRE

(joking)  
I told you, don't look at my feet.  
(off his laugh, sincere)  
I don't know... I feel lucky.

(MORE)

CLAIRE (CONT'D)  
I can't tell you how long it's been  
since I felt that way.

Alain assesses her, charmed by her candor.

ALAIN  
But you are so young...

CLAIRE  
(embarrassed)  
I should really go. Early morning.

ALAIN  
Perhaps I'll let you work your  
magic tricks on this after all.

He takes off his tie, folds it up small and hands it to her.

CLAIRE  
I'd be happy to.

She takes it and tucks it in her purse. Claire smiles and rises. Alain stands. A waiter passes by forcing them to move close to each other...

CLAIRE (CONT'D)  
I hope I don't disappoint.

ALAIN  
I can't imagine.

Claire grabs her shoes and pads away barefoot. As she goes, she accidentally drops the broken shoe. Cinderella moment? No. Claire picks it up, shrugs and smiles at Alain, goes.

ACROSS THE TERRACE, both Paul and Isabelle note this interaction. Isabelle is not pleased. Paul, on the other hand, might as well be purring with pleasure.

INT. MIA'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - EARLY NEXT MORNING

Claire rushes around, dressed and ready to go. She quickly grabs TOE SHOES from her rack in the fridge. Nabs a couple of ORANGES from a bowl. Mia appears, barefoot and bleary.

MIA  
Did I miss a memo?

CLAIRE  
No, I'm just... going in early.

MIA  
Why?

CLAIRE  
 (a lie)  
 I'm not sure.

She goes. Off Mia, instincts tingling.

EXT. MIA'S BUILDING - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Romeo sleeps on the stoop. Claire races out the door, bolts down the steps. Suddenly, she turns around and runs back up.

CLAIRE  
 Romeo..?  
 (his eyes slit open)  
 Here.

She holds out an ORANGE. Romeo slowly unfurls a hand. Claire places the fruit in his palm.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)  
 I have something else for you, too,  
 but it'll have to wait for later.

She smiles and runs off. Romeo stares after her, puts the orange to his nose, inhales the citrus scent.

INT. AMERICAN BALLET COMPANY - REHEARSAL HALL - LATER

Paul rehearses Claire who wears warm-up clothes.

PAUL  
 Ya-da, da-da-da, higher up. Yes.  
 Five and-a six, up-up-up, turn!

Claire works hard on the new solo. She continues as we...

TIME CUT TO:

AN HOUR LATER. Pasha accompanies as Claire dances. Now she wears leotards, make-up, and her hair is down. Alain and Paul sit in front of the mirrors watching her. She's lovely.

ANGLE ON: THE DOOR. MIA'S FACE stares in through the window.

TIME CUT TO:

Alain smiles, kisses Claire on both cheeks. He shakes hands with Paul, and goes. Paul and Claire are left alone.

Paul moves to offer Claire praise by taking her by the shoulders, but she reflexively takes a step back.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
 Still so skittish...  
 (then)  
 Come with me. Come here...

Paul takes Claire gently by the hand like he's taming a colt. He leads her to the mirror and positions her right in front of it so that she's looking at her reflection.

Paul stands behind her. Claire is profoundly uncomfortable. He moves closer, closer, until his body is centimeters from hers. Claire manages to allow it -- fights her unease.

Paul reaches around and gently tips her face one way, then the other -- a Puppetmaster.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
 Do you see what I see?

Claire isn't sure how to respond.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
 You need to understand your power.  
 Your talent. Your beauty.  
 (softly)  
 Harness it. Love it. Use it.

Claire is almost hypnotised. From behind her, Paul kisses her neck -- a lingering kiss. Tastes her salt.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
 And never forget... You're mine.

INT. LADIES' CHANGING ROOM - SAME MORNING - A LITTLE LATER

Per usual, the space is crammed with dancers. There's a lot of talk -- all on one topic: Claire.

Kiira is attempting to paste a look of serenity on her face.

MIA  
 Definitely not *Giselle*. It was  
 something new.

All chatter stops as Claire enters. The hostility: palpable.

Claire, self-conscious but stoic, crosses and sets her bag down right next to Kiira.

Claire deliberately opens her bag wide so Kiira can get a good view of her lost ZIPLOCK BAG OF COKE with its distinctive PINK HEART STICKER.

Kiira sees it, notes it, but pretends otherwise. Cool-headed, Kiira continues changing. Claire opens her locker, sets her bag inside, shuts the door and locks it.

INT. REHEARSAL HALL - A LITTLE LATER

All the dancers are taking their places at the barre. Many eyes cut to Claire -- everyone's heard the gossip. Ross takes his place at the barre behind Claire.

ROSS  
(opportunistic)  
Hey, Adorable -- sorry I didn't get  
a chance to talk to you last night.  
Maybe we could grab a drink later.

Behind him, Trey rolls his eyes. Before Claire can reply, Paul, Ivana (and her dog) and Jessica enter.

PAUL  
Good morning, my lovelies. I have  
wonderful news. We are shaking  
things up and stepping into the  
now. I am commissioning a brand  
new ballet!

The dancers APPLAUD. This sound merges with...

THE SOUNDS OF SEXUAL GRUNTS, MOANS and BREATH.

INT. MIA'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The windows are OPEN. Claire sits cross-legged on the sofa, ready for bed, listening to THE SOUNDS OF ATHLETIC SEX coming from Mia's bedroom. The door is ajar.

Like a moth to flame, she rises and tiptoes to the door.

POV. THE BED. Mia, naked, sits astride SOME GUY, her current male dancer fuck buddy. She's riding him hard and his hands dig into her ass. She's beautiful. Powerful.

This time, Claire watches. She's drawn in. Fascinated.

Suddenly, from behind her on the sofa, her CELL PHONE RINGS -- the same "I'm a Yankee Doodle Dandy" tune as before.

She sprints over, grabs her phone. BRYAN. She hesitates --

CLAIRE  
(with trepidation)  
Hello?

She climbs out the window onto the fire escape.

EXT. MIA'S APARTMENT - FIRE ESCAPE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Claire sits outside on the landing, knees to her chest.

BRYAN (V.O.)  
(furious)  
Where the hell are you?

Claire doesn't answer -- she's fast becoming upset.

BRYAN (V.O.)  
Dad's really worried.

CLAIRE  
(distressed)  
I left him a note.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. CLAIRE'S BEDROOM - PITTSBURGH - SAME

ANGLE ON THE WINDOW PANE. The glass ballerina dangles.

BRYAN (O.C.)  
That was a chicken-shit move.

PAN SLOWLY across the moonlit room to Claire's pink childhood bed. We don't yet see Bryan.

BRYAN (O.C.) (CONT'D)  
Are you okay?

CLAIRE  
(upset)  
I'm fine.

MOVE UP onto the bed to discover a BARE MALE FOOT. PAN ALONG a jean-clad outstretched leg. TRAVEL TO INCLUDE the other foot because the other leg is bent, propped against the wall.

BRYAN (O.C.)  
I didn't even get to see you.

From inside Claire's apartment, Mia *CRIES OUT* with ecstasy. Claire frowns at the sound, shakes her head as if to stop it.

BRYAN (O.C.) (CONT'D)  
You forgot your ballerina.

PAN ALONG to reveal Bryan's HAND as it rests on the pink bedspread. The PADLOCK lays in his open, upturned palm.

BRYAN (O.C.) (CONT'D)  
Just left it here...

Claire begins to silently weep.

PAN UP Bryan's bare arm to see part of his naked, muscular torso... then his shoulder... His body gently vibrates with a pulsing rhythm.

REVEAL HIS FACE, eyes closed, concentrating. His phone cradled under his chin.

BRYAN (CONT'D)  
(softly)  
I miss you...

Bryan's breath quickens. His body moves with more rhythmic repetitive force. It becomes clear he's beating off.

It's also clear that Claire knows. But she doesn't hang up.

Pain and confusion are etched on Claire's face. She's listening. Connected. Aroused. And full of self-loathing.

BRYAN (CONT'D)  
Tell me where you are...

Claire shakes her head "no" in silent answer.

BRYAN (O.C.) (CONT'D)  
Tell me where you are...

Claire wraps her fist around her bandaged toe. Presses down hard. She emits a small *SOUND* of pain and grief. Catches her breath. With the phone still pressed to her ear, she squeezes her eyes shut...

SMASH TO BLACK.

END OF EPISODE.