

# Tiny Pretty Things

Episode 101

"Corps"

by

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**EXT. CHICAGO BALLET ACADEMY ROOFTOP - NIGHT**

Under a full moon, a young Dancer scratches out *pirouettes* and *grand jetés*, the city's sultry wind rippling her short frock as PULSING MUSIC drifts across the rooftop.

One great leap reveals CASSIE SHORE (17), a lithe and stunning dancer taking crazy risks as she carves out jumps four stories above the city's gritty Lower West Side -- atop the brick parapet crowning the Chicago Ballet Academy.

In the distance, a cluster of other Dancers drink and party around a tin fire-pit -- glimpses of them laughing, stretching, massaging each other by the fire's tawny glow.

Dancing on that edge, Cassie starts a *fouetté*, sneakers scratching on the ledge as she turns on a dime...

Another pirouette, then another, whipping her head around to spot the same corner of the roof shack, her turns reaching a dizzying speed on the narrow capstone. On one pirouette, in the split-second when she turns her head...

BOOM, someone has appeared in the shadows: a HOODED FRIEND leaning against that penthouse wall.

Startled, Cassie nearly stumbles over the edge. Holy shit.

But she steps from the brink, mustering an unsettled smile.

CASSIE  
Hey, Stranger.

The Hooded Friend's only answer is to offer a bottle of something strong. Cassie hesitates -- she really shouldn't.

Elsewhere, the party gets wilder, the music louder, unidentifiable teens up dancing while others make out.

Cassie hesitates, then braves an approach...

CASSIE (CONT'D)  
I guess if everyone else is...

... And takes a swig.

Then WHOOMP -- the Hooded Friend grabs her. Cassie panics, scrambling to wrest herself free.

CASSIE (CONT'D)  
Ow -- don't. Hey!

But instead she gets pulled in close -- a stiff grip on her neck has her trapped for what: A kiss? A secret? A threat?

While the distant party rages on, Cassie pushes away to stumble backward, desperate for distance.

CASSIE (CONT'D)

No. No. No...

Then bam: a heel hits that damned ledge. It's unclear: did she trip or was she pushed? Either way, her arms grapple for something to hang onto but she only keels backward...

**EXT. NIGHT SKY - NIGHT**

As Cassie falls through the night, we hear her speak with a calm entirely at odds with her terrifying fall.

CASSIE (V.O.)

*The power to fly. It's what most of us dream of. Just knowing it's in you, that dazzling ability. Sure, it costs you everything to find enough strength and skill to launch yourself through space. But there's nothing finer.*

Cassie continues to fall, eyes wide in terror.

**EXT. CHICAGO BALLET ACADEMY - NIGHT**

BAM! Cassie hits the asphalt, her glassy eyes fixed on the view high above... that roof's deadly edge.

CASSIE (V.O.)

*Though you only fly for a second or two, above a stage or studio floor... before gravity takes back what you tried to steal.*

From above, The Hooded Friend peers down, drops a white rose.

CASSIE (V.O.)

*Because no matter how hard you work, how strong you are or how thin you get?*

Petals scatter in the breeze, onto Cassie's unmoving body.

CASSIE (V.O.)

*Gravity always, always wins.*

As we PULL UP from the carnage past the building's sign **Chicago Ballet Academy** (she landed smack in front of the place) sharp searing CLACKS sound like fucking gunfire...

**EXT. SOUTH-CENTRAL LOS ANGELES, DANCE ARTS STUDIO - DAY**

The HAMMERING POPS continue over the view of a gritty urban block, its sun-blistered sign: "Los Angeles Dance Arts."

**INT. DANCE ARTS STUDIO, CORRIDOR - DAY**

In these well-worn corridors, the GUNFIRE-LIKE SOUNDS grow stronger. Various diverse Teenage Dancers canter past.

One warm-faced Teacher MS BANKS (55, African-American, with a dancer's undeniable poise) strides upstream into...

**INT. DANCE ARTS STUDIO, DANCE STUDIO - DAY**

Ms Banks walks past Students of all races. They're busy with pre-rehearsal stretches, rolling arches, taping toes, tying pointe shoes, rosining up.

She crosses to the far corner -- and the source of this damned gunshot-like BANGING now echoing off the mirrors:

NEVEAH STROYER (16, African-American) kneels, wearing a busted-up tutu, threadbare tights and sweater, face etched with fierce determination.

In her hand is the one pristine thing in the whole place: a pale pink satin pointe shoe. Which Neveah proceeds to SMASH into the old wooden floor.

NEVEAH

I gotta quiet the box. You're always telling me not to clomp around here like some cowgirl at a hoedown. Gonna hear a pin drop when I land my *jetés*.

MS BANKS

Well speaking of noise, I just heard --

NEVEAH

I bought these babies working the birthday circuit. This whole dancing princess thing? You make good bank.

MS BANKS

Yes. Neveah, thing is, Chicago called.

This silences Neveah -- and the whole room. Her shoe drops.

NEVEAH

They said they didn't want me.

MS BANKS

Well something changed their mind.

There sits Neveah. Her life just changed forever.

**CREDITS: TINY PRETTY THINGS**

**EXT. ACADEMY ROOFTOP AND CHICAGO BALLET ACADEMY - DAY**

Days later, the long-doused fire-pit blows black ash over the roof's fateful ledge, down to the street below...

... Where Officer ISABEL DIAZ (27) reels in tattered caution tape, training a skeptical eye on a stain still tinting the asphalt. Isabel has a dancer's ram-rod discipline, but in her case it's from two tours of duty before she traded in one uniform for another.

FLASHES of memory invade her view:

*The fateful night, Bystanders watching as Isabel kneels, desperately performing CPR on Cassie's motionless body. Isabel's police cruiser illuminating the awful scene, the girl's glassy eyes fixed on Isabel as she pumps, pumps...*

*Arriving Paramedics wrestle Isabel off, expertly taking over as they cart the girl into a wailing ambulance. Isabel watches on, helpless and surprisingly emotional. Then:*

NEVEAH (O.S.)

What happened?

Pulled from her reverie, Isabel turns to see Neveah on the street, scuffed luggage and wary eyes on the crime scene.

ISABEL

I wish I knew. Good luck in there.

As Isabel finishes furling the tape, Neveah takes in the edifice: a handsome old building now brilliantly renovated with glass walls and cantilevered floors -- yet still a haunted vibe. Isabel watches kindly as Neveah enters.

**INT. ACADEMY HALLWAY - DAY**

In heels and a pencil skirt, MONIQUE DUBOIS (50s) marches along, trailed by Chicago Tribune reporter ZANDARA SEGAL (40s) and her photographer VERNON (20s).

MONIQUE

I'm telling you, there's no story.

ZANDARA

Our readers beg to differ.

MONIQUE

The Chicago Ballet Academy has bolstered its security protocols, offered counseling to all students, and put the focus squarely back where it should be -- training the next generation of world-class dancers.

ZANDARA

There are reports of angry parents,  
donors pulling out --

Clinging to her composure, Monique stops, turning.

MONIQUE

One star student defied our rules and  
sadly suffered a fateful misstep --

ZANDARA

"Misstep"? She fell three stories!

As Monique continues pedaling fake news, Cassie chimes in:

CASSIE (V.O.)

*Of course, the higher you fly, the more  
bone-shattering the landing. So you  
learn two tricks for when there's  
trouble in the spotlight: never let  
them see you sweat... and give them  
something else to look at.*

Arriving is Monique's lumpen, loyal assistant SELENA (60).

SELENA

She's here.

Monique nods -- excellent -- and continues her march.

MONIQUE

You want a story? Here's your story.

**INT. ACADEMY LOBBY - DAY**

Luggage in hand, Neveah takes in the CBA's breathtaking atrium. Then she sees them -- the backlit quartet bearing down on her.

NEVEAH

Monique DuBois. Oh my gosh...

Monique wafts over with a warm smile and firm handshake.

MONIQUE

Neveah Stroyer, welcome to The Chicago  
Ballet Academy.

(a calculated glance to Zandara)  
Our newest arrival, here on a full-  
ride scholarship thanks to an  
anonymous patron. We've helped a girl  
escape her dead-end life in Compton.

NEVEAH

Inglewood, actually, but --

MONIQUE

When we see talent, we don't ask where  
it comes from. You had a good flight?

NEVEAH

Nothing to compare it with.

MONIQUE

New horizons on all fronts. And your  
parents? Zandara, you'll want to hear  
how admission to the Harvard of ballet  
schools can lift up whole families.

NEVEAH

My folks? They're not here.

As Monique fumes at Selena for her scant briefing, Vernon  
snaps pics of a confounded Neveah, and Zandara steps in:

ZANDARA

It's a late age to be entering such an  
elite academy. Dancers here have  
trained since they could walk.

NEVEAH

Well I had years of gymnastics, then  
ballet three years now. I like to  
think I'm catching up.

MONIQUE

With a girl of Neveah's talent, two  
years here will prime her for success.

ZANDARA

Dancing in Cassie Shore's footsteps.

NEVEAH

Who's Cassie Shore?

As Zandara takes notes, Monique shifts to damage control.

MONIQUE

We've a tired young lady here.

VERNON

Be in touch for a photo release.

Monique snatches up his card. As Zandara and Vernon exit,  
Monique's demeanor shifts, all warmth evaporating.

SELENA

That went over like a lead balloon.

NEVEAH

Was there something I was supposed to --

MONIQUE

Yes. And you will. But for now, get her to Adam.

As Monique walks away, Neveah looks to Selena: who's Adam?

**INT. ACADEMY INFIRMARY - DAY**

In her underwear, Neveah lies on a padded table while kindly physiotherapist ADAM RENFREW (30) manipulates her limbs like she's a slab of meat. She struggles with the clinical vibe.

CASSIE (V.O.)

*They start with your bones. Then your feet, frame and flexibility. Your musicality, charisma and deference. Then after they've taken you apart?*

Eyes blazing, Neveah grabs Adam's hand, which in moving a leg, ventured a little too close for comfort.

CASSIE (V.O.)

*They want to see a spark.*

Off her fiery response, Selena looks up from her clipboard.

ADAM

It's so we can check your alignment, see how your turnout is progressing.

NEVEAH

They did this back at my LA audition.

SELENA

Records were lost. We didn't think we'd need them.

As Adam shifts to testing her feet's structure and arch, Monique slips in to observe. Selena leans over, quietly:

SELENA (CONT'D)

You sure she'll do the trick?

MONIQUE

It's a start. I'm also announcing the premiere of a new ballet, in Cassie's honor. By Ramon Costa.

SELENA

*Ramon Costa?*

At this, even Adam looks up, intrigued. Selena ventures:

SELENA (CONT'D)

We don't have him.



MONIQUE

Yet. Neveah, we've a photo of your dad here on file. What about your mother?

NEVEAH

What about her.

ADAM

We predict how you'll develop from --

NEVEAH

Wait. Unless I'm missing something? You already accepted me.

Adam shares a look with Monique, who just sighs and exits. Unease rising, Neveah takes back her clothes from Adam.

NEVEAH (CONT'D)

This Cassie Shore. What went down?

ADAM

There was an accident.

NEVEAH

So is that why I'm here?

ADAM

You're here, Neveah, because you have something special. Now go out there and make sure they see it.

Neveah takes in the encouragement, and a fortifying breath.

**INT. ACADEMY DORMITORY, WOMEN'S HALLWAY - DAY**

Dragging luggage, Neveah trails House Parent TORRI STERNE (30s). Part headmaster, part ersatz mother, she's a former musical-theater hooper who never made it to triple-threat.

TORRI

You're Tier Three, ages sixteen and seventeen, doors lock at curfew, all guests sign in. Eleventh Grade academics are eight to noon which you missed today but I got your homework. Then Dance from one to six-thirty, lights out at ten. Here's home.

**INT. ACADEMY DORMITORY, NEVEAH AND JUNE'S ROOM - DAY**

Neveah stands on the threshold: On her roommate's side is an explosion of All Things Ballet: books, posters, signed pointe shoes. Her side? A plain bed, desk and wardrobe.

TORRI

You drink or smoke, you're out. Fail your academics? Gone. Get too skinny? Sent home. Get caught screwing a boy, or girl for that matter? Buh-bye. Basically just act like I'm watching everything. 'Cause I am. Toodles.

Torri leaves Neveah to unpack, liberating an array of simple dance-related garb. She marvels at her roomie's dance-themed clock -- then notices the time: **12:55**.

NEVEAH

Wait, did she say class is at one?

**INT. ACADEMY HALLWAY - DAY**

Neveah bolts down empty, polished halls, racing to dress herself as she runs. Then finds what she's looking for --

**INT. ACADEMY DANCE STUDIO - DAY**

... Just as ballet master TOPHER BROOKS (30s, severe and feared) assembles Students for dance class.

BROOKS

All right everyone, let's get started.

As Brooks sets the class, Neveah takes a spot at the barre running down the room's center, ready to rock.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

Facing the barre in sixth. Rolling through the feet four counts, repeat.

But not so fast. As Dancers check out the new arrival, BETTE WINSLOW (16, blonde and ruthlessly perfect) steps in.

BETTE

You're in my spot.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

Open to first...

NEVEAH

Didn't see your name on it.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

... Rolling through again...

Neveah moves to claim another vacancy, now face-to-face with JUNE PARK (16, half-Korean, sweet and petite).

JUNE

Sorry, but that's mine.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

Rise, test your balance.

Neveah moves to an empty area but June stops her.

JUNE

And anywhere but there.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

Repeat in second.

\*

BROOKS (CONT'D)  
Finish with side bend right, left...

Nerves cresting, Neveah turns, bumping into the chest of OREN LENNOX (17), a strapping prince of a man.

OREN  
Everyone's got their place.

BROOKS (CONT'D)  
Then full *rond de corps*...

NEVEAH  
Yeah? Then where's mine?

BROOKS (CONT'D)  
... In each direction.

BROOKS (CONT'D)  
Thank you, Amy, let's have a waltz please. AND!

The PIANIST begins, everyone starts the exercise. Neveah's flustered -- where to go? From a far corner, SHANE MCRAE (16, a stacked and fiery Southern redhead) waves her over.

SHANE  
You're in the sticks Darlin.

BROOKS (CONT'D)  
And *demi-plié*...

\*  
\*

Neveah had been too distracted to learn the exercise, so is following other dancers. Brooks notices: not a good start.

Working through the warm-up, the other Dancers also cast sidelong glances at her. This new arrival must be good.

JUMP CUTS as Brooks leads them through *plié, tendu, dégagé, rond de jambe*, etc. He commands the room: "Present the heel in your *tendu*!... You're tucking under, we spoke about this before... That's not an arabesque, get it behind you!... Close your ribs... Drop your hip!"

Neveah works to keep up, eyeing the barre's one empty spot that June had stopped her from taking.

Then a stern tap from Brooks breaks her focus.

BROOKS (CONT'D)  
We don't wear junk here.

NEVEAH  
... Junk?

BROOKS  
You've covered what I need to see.

Embarrassed, she strips off baggy sweats, down to leggings.

BROOKS (CONT'D)  
And *grand battements en avant*...

Eyes now on her, Brooks repeatedly corrects her.

BROOKS (CONT'D)  
You're sinking into your *port de bras*.  
Sternum up. Drop your hip in second.  
Now *lift to attitude derrière*.

They move on to the next step, Neveah doing her best.

BROOKS (CONT'D)  
No no no -- your weight's still in  
your heels. You need to be over your  
supporting leg. Who can show her?

Bette doesn't hesitate, doing the exercise beautifully.

BROOKS (CONT'D)  
Yes. You see?

Neveah tries again -- but Brooks sighs, stopping her.

BROOKS (CONT'D)  
I'll spare you.

NEVEAH  
Look, I can --

BROOKS  
You can't, it seems. Visiting?

NEVEAH  
New admission. There was a last-minute  
vacancy. Sir.

As the room falls silent, Brooks shifts gears:

BROOKS  
I saw your shoes. They're a fiasco.

NEVEAH  
What, I just got 'em a week ago.

As Bette leads the laughter, Neveah shifts, uneasy.

BROOKS  
Visit the shoe room after class.

Neveah darts a glance to Shane -- what's he talking about?

LATER: On *pirouettes*, all dancers turning. Bette eyes the  
newbie instead of focussing on herself. Brooks sees all.

BROOKS (CONT'D)  
Bette. Your weight is back and your  
second arm is too late. Again.

They all pirouette again -- but he's all eyes on Bette.

BROOKS (CONT'D)  
No. Try a higher *passé*.

Bette dutifully tries, but Brooks clearly isn't happy.

BROOKS (CONT'D)  
Another year, and still not a turner.

LATER: it's center work, dancers crossing one by one. Then comes an astonishing jump: NABIL ZIDANE (17, French-Algerian, with the swagger of Baryshnikov and the cold eyes of a serial killer). Brooks offers his first compliment:

BROOKS (CONT'D)  
Very good.

From him, that's a standing ovation. But Nabil shrugs it off, unmoved. In the corner, Neveah and Shane size him up.

NEVEAH  
Wow. He's amazing.

SHANE  
Yeah, if you're hot for psychos. You ask me? He pushed her.

NEVEAH  
Pushed who?

SHANE  
His girlfriend. Cassie.

As Neveah puts things together, Shane takes his turn, launching a series of *grand jetés* across the room...

**INT. ACADEMY DANCE STUDIO - DAY (LATER)**

Brooks walks the room, piercing eyes on exhausted Dancers.

BROOKS  
Your summer break did you no favors. Tomorrow after class, ladies go into pointe with Ms Somova while I take the lads for allegro. I want to see solid double *tours* this year, gentlemen. Then it's straight into partnering. This term we do something different. Each of you will be assigned just one partner, and one partner only.

As Students react to this unusual change, he presses on.

BROOKS (CONT'D)  
It's a way to build trust, a seamless onstage relationship. Dismissed.

As Students file out, Neveah approaches June.

NEVEAH

This shoe-room, can you take me --

But June just scurries out after Bette, leaving Neveah to watch Shane gather his things.

SHANE

Don't look at me.

NEVEAH

Too late.

**INT. ACADEMY, SHOE ROOM - DAY**

Awestruck, Neveah takes in walls of shelves full of pointe shoes in their little bags, all organized by size.

NEVEAH

This cannot be real.

Neveah and Shane start rifling through the shelves.

SHANE

Pinch whatever you need to, and get busy. You're looking at every shoe The Griffin ballerinas decided they don't want, yours for a few bucks. You did pretty good today.

NEVEAH

You kidding me? I couldn't get on my leg.

SHANE

We've all been there.

NEVEAH

At least you've "been there" a lot longer. You think they can make me company-ready in two years?

Bette enters with June, to find shoes and scope the newbie.

SHANE

I've seen 'em do more with less.

BETTE

But if they're wrong? You're gone.

Undaunted, Neveah strides over from the shelves, hand out.

NEVEAH

We didn't meet. I'm Neveah Stroyer.

BETTE

Bette. She's June. Show me your arches.

NEVEAH

What, like... my feet?

BETTE

They're what make a dancer.

Neveah reluctantly offers herself up for inspection.

SHANE

Bette's just scoping the competish,  
scared that if they decided to let you  
in at your age, you must be fierce  
Prima material.

Testing Neveah's flexibility and arc, Bette gives a nod.

BETTE

All right. Friends. Where'd you train?

SHANE

Neveah, these look perfect for you.  
Double X, high vamp...

Shane approaches, pointe shoes in hand. Taking them, Neveah  
sees a stamp on the bottom: **Delia Winslow**.

NEVEAH

These were Delia Winslow's shoes?

BETTE

Well, her rejects.

SHANE

I can show you where to get the right  
pancake, marry the satin to the skin.

As Neveah tries them on (bending the shank, checking them  
on her feet) Bette stares Shane down, dripping contempt.

SHANE (CONT'D)

They fit. Isn't that interesting, Bette?

BETTE

You're trash, Shane. Have fun  
scavenging with your new *petit rat*.

Bette exits, June in tow. Neveah looks to Shane: WTF?

NEVEAH

Did she just call me...

SHANE

A rat, yup. But like everything in ballet, it sounds better in French. A "little rat" is a dancer who's young, pretty, poor... and hella strong. And starting today, this one wears the shoes of Delia fucking Winslow.

NEVEAH

Truth is, I only applied here 'cause my teacher told me it's where she went.

SHANE

Yeah? Then time for a front-row seat.

Intrigued, she watches him toss her dead shoes into the bin.

**INT. ACADEMY, GYM - DAY**

Gleaming cutting-edge machines, reformers, wild devices. Oren works out hard, spotted by his friend CALEB (16, African-American, a lean and handsome dancer from class).

CALEB

Easy, man.

But Oren pushes himself -- until Caleb grabs up the weight.

OREN

... The fuck?

CALEB

You're good.

OREN

I'm not good. Had another one in me.

CALEB

Blowing a pec won't help your dancing.

Gasping for air, Oren glowers through the window at his prime motivator -- Nabil, talking to Officer Isabel Diaz.

OREN

You heard Brooks -- I'm out of shape.

CALEB

Guaranteed he wasn't talking about you.

OREN

Second time that cop's talked to *him*.

CALEB

She must smell blood.



OREN  
You tell her anything?

CALEB  
Renny, we all stuck to the same story.  
Cassie was alone and we weren't there.

His chat wrapped, Nabil enters, crossing to a wobble board to commence graceful adage movements with breathtaking control. Oren and Caleb marvel at his insanely good balance.

OREN  
You sure impressed Brooks today.

NABIL  
(a French accent)  
Not really. A little rusty.

OREN  
Yeah, must've been a long plane-ride.

CALEB  
Where was it from -- Algeria?

Despite his vulnerable balance, Nabil still dominates.

NABIL  
Paris. Heard of it?

OREN  
Must suck, coming all this way to be with your girlfriend, and she goes and falls off the fucking building.

NABIL  
I came here to study dance.

OREN  
What, Europe didn't want you?

NABIL  
Chicago make an offer I cannot refuse.

OREN  
Too bad. I was watching you --

NABIL  
I know.

OREN  
You don't have the American style.

NABIL  
True, I'm more than tits and teeth. I watch you too. You're bland. Safe.

OREN

Yeah, safe till you showed up, then  
beeeuuwww splat. And now the cops?

NABIL

I tell them how Cassie tell *me* how you  
always drop her. Perhaps sabotage?

Biting the hook, Oren give Nabil a shove off the ball.

OREN

I was the best partner she ever had.

NABIL

Yes? Then show her some respect.

As their scuffle intensifies, Caleb races to step in.

CALEB

Guys. Hey. Break it up.

MUSIC UP as Oren storms out. Grateful, Nabil glances over  
to Caleb... who just glowers, pumping iron.

**INT. GRIFFIN BALLET STAGE - DAY**

MUSIC CONTINUES as alone on a starkly-lit stage, the great  
DELIA WINSLOW (26) rehearses, dancing a breathtaking solo.

Neveah and Shane hide in a theatre box, watching. For  
Neveah, seeing dance of this caliber is a revelation -- a  
glimpse of the beauty she aspires to one day achieve.

NEVEAH

Delia Winslow and me. Breathing the  
same air.

RAMON COSTA's baritone can be heard in the dark auditorium.

SHANE

Griffin's lucky to get her  
back. After rocking it in  
Europe last year, she could  
write her own ticket.

RAMON (O.S.)

Delia, you're behind the  
phrase. Don't be dragged by  
the tempi. Anticipate.

\*

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

NEVEAH

I'd be happy dancing for The  
Griffin in two years.

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

All right, let this section  
travel more.

\*

\*  
\*  
\*

SHANE

You and me both.

Solo over, Delia stands catching her breath. Ramon (45)  
emerges from the shadows, a lean Cuban god in a black tee.

RAMON  
Footwork needs refining.

DELIA  
I'm giving all I've got, Ramon. There's  
no room for me in the choreography.

From her secret perch, Neveah watches Ramon approach her  
alone on stage, a soothing touch to her head...

RAMON  
You're dancing from here.

... Then lowering his hand to her breast...

RAMON (CONT'D)  
But I need to see it here.

... Then even lower, to her crotch.

RAMON (CONT'D)  
And when the night comes? Here.

Delia welcomes his touch... and offers her own in return.

RAMON (CONT'D)  
This piece is in you, Delia. I'm only  
drawing it out. Come on. Touch an  
audience the way you touch me.

Shane and Neveah watch amazed as she reaches for a kiss.

DELIA  
Like that?

RAMON  
Yes. Now use it.

Shane's leaning in...

SHANE  
Come on, girl -- tear off his shirt.

... But Neveah shifts, uncomfortable to be watching this.

NEVEAH  
Let's go. Now.

Shane sighs, disappointed, but lets Neveah pull him out.

**INT. ACADEMY DORMITORY, NEVEAH AND JUNE'S ROOM - DUSK**

Back from watching Delia, Neveah takes in her gear-strewn  
jumble, and finally starts to properly unpack.

In the wardrobe she finds a photo slipped behind a shelf, peels it free: **Cassie in a bikini on a boat, arm draped around...** but half the photo's torn off. Strange.

Then she hears a ripple of LAUGHTER from down the hall. Stashing the pic, she goes in search of its source.

CASSIE (V.O.)  
*Always something hurts. Somewhere on  
your body there's pain.*

**INT. ACADEMY DORMITORY, WOMAN'S COMMON ROOM - DUSK**

Bette, June, ESMÉ (another music-box ballerina from class) and other young women lounge, recovering from the day. They massage each other, roll out muscles, plunge feet into ice buckets and salt baths, pour shellack into pointe shoes.

CASSIE (V.O.)  
*An ache that comes from pushing beyond  
what any person was ever meant to do.  
But there's strength in being part of a  
larger body -- the corps de ballet.*

Neveah finds some scoffing and laughing around a cellphone. On it, **a YouTube video**, hip-hop R&B music.

JUNE  
Well she's definitely got style.

BETTE  
For a backup dancer in a Drake video.

ESMÉ  
This isn't even ballet.

Dread rising, Neveah steps in to find **the video is of her in front of an LA underpass mural, dancing her heart out.**

NEVEAH  
At least I love dancing. I mean, do  
any of you?

June pounces to stop the video as Bette stares Neveah down.

ESMÉ  
Is this seriously what you did before  
you got here?

BETTE  
Good to have something to fall back on.

NEVEAH  
You just told me in the shoe-room I  
was good enough to be your friend.

BETTE

Not because I thought you were good.  
Because I knew I was better.

Refusing to be cowed, Neveah stands up to her, eye to eye.

NEVEAH

I get that I'm late to the party. I get  
you're scared I might also wreck your  
little plans for world domination. But  
that doesn't make me your enemy.

Others turn, surprised to see Selena in the doorway.

SELENA

Miss Stroyer. Madame DuBois wants to  
see you. Now.

Oh shit. Amid a ripple of reaction, Neveah strides out.

**INT. ACADEMY, DIRECTOR'S OFFICE - SUNSET**

A capacious room lined with art and city views. Hair and  
make-up done, Monique wears a stunning dress -- laying a  
syringe and vial on her desk. Officer Diaz watches on.

MONIQUE

Relax, Officer, it's cortisone.

ISABEL

If I could just speak to a few more  
students --

MONIQUE

I spoke to your sergeant -- the case is  
closed. Yet here you are, exploiting a  
tragic accident, traumatizing my  
students, and for what -- a promotion?

ISABEL

You can't tell me you're satisfied.

MONIQUE

And you can't tell me you're getting  
anywhere. You had a week to find one  
iota of foul play, but all you've got  
is a silly girl and an awful accident.

ISABEL

Piercing this takes time. Every  
institution has its secrets.

MONIQUE

To a woman working in a man's world,  
yes. Before the police it was army?

ISABEL

Two tours in Afghanistan.

MONIQUE

Did you leave or were you kicked out?  
Now there's a mystery.

ISABEL

It was time to finally do some good.

MONIQUE

Well you won't find redemption in  
ballet. *Entrez*. We're just wrapping up.

There's Neveah and Selena on the threshold. Monique waves them in. Isabel eyes Neveah, taking in what she can.

ISABEL

Settling in, I hope.

Neveah balks at the sight of a cop: what's she done wrong?

MONIQUE

*Dégagez-vous*, Detective.

ISABEL

Some other time.

As Isabel exits, Selena crosses to ready the needle.

NEVEAH

Ma'am, I don't know what I did wrong,  
but I just want to say --

MONIQUE

And I don't need to hear it. You're to  
attend tonight's donor reception. A  
driver will fetch you with the others.

As Monique hands Neveah a few pages of **talking points**, Selena injects her boss's feet: bunions, scars and mangled toes from years spent on a few inches of contorted flesh.

MONIQUE (CONT'D)

Selena can help you find something  
presentable in the costume department --

NEVEAH

Miss DuBois, I have my own clothes.

MONIQUE

Of course. No doubt you're a unique  
personality, but ballet asks us to  
bend to a greater --

(MORE)

MONIQUE (CONT'D)  
(reacting in pain)  
Merde! That was bone you hit!

Grabbing the needle, Monique soldiers through the pain.

MONIQUE (CONT'D)  
We're about to invest thousands of dollars in you, and need to know that in two years you'll be a product --

NEVEAH  
"Product"?

MONIQUE  
-- We can make use of. You're either the CBA's future or a bad gamble. Our key donors tonight will be asking themselves that very question. On that paper is the story you'll want to tell.

NEVEAH  
Madame DuBois, I'm just here to dance.

MONIQUE  
Wrong. Tonight decides your future as much as anything you do in class.

On that chilling note, Monique tosses down the needle, slips on her glossy Louboutin heels, and gracefully exits.

**INT. ACADEMY DORMITORY, MEN'S HALLWAY - NIGHT**

Torri strides through her domain, looking in on each room.

CASSIE (V.O.)  
*There's a price you pay, learning to fly. They take your childhood, your family, any friend who doesn't hope every day your Achilles will snap. But even then, they don't let you grow up.*

**INT. ACADEMY DORMITORY, MEN'S HALLWAY - NIGHT (ELSEWHERE)**

Shane arrives to find a dance-belt hooked on his doorknob.

CASSIE (V.O.)  
*So if you want to live a little? You gotta get creative.*

With a sigh, he leans against the jamb... and stands guard.

**INT. ACADEMY DORMITORY, OREN AND SHANE'S ROOM - NIGHT**

Oren and Bette lock lips, tearing off clothes as they drag each other to bed. He slips down between her legs...

BETTE

God I needed this.

OREN

I was thinking we should get ourselves  
cast as partners. We'd dominate.

They keep going at it, Bette directing Oren's head.

BETTE

Word is I'm getting paired with Nabil.

OREN

So we fight it.

BETTE

I don't want to rock the boat.

OREN

You think Frenchie's better than me.

BETTE

And you don't wanna be stuck tossing  
around the new girl.

OREN

We can all fake a lot of things on  
stage... but we can't fake love.

BETTE

I can.

Bette pulls close, working her magic. He's loving it. They  
kiss deep, she's arcing closer, pulling him in...

OREN

Whoah. Easy. No condoms.

BETTE

(continuing, driving him wild)  
Orrie. You got me going here.

OREN

Maybe Shane's got some.

He moves to check -- but Bette pulls him back to her.

OREN (CONT'D)

Bette, you get pregnant? It's over.

BETTE

Won't happen. Haven't had my period in  
months.

There she is, so close, so damn beautiful...



**INT. ACADEMY DORMITORY, MEN'S HALLWAY - NIGHT**

Standing guard, Shane sees Torri round the corner, dipping into various dorm rooms as she makes her way toward him.

SHANE

Aww jeeze...

**INT. ACADEMY DORMITORY, OREN AND SHANE'S ROOM - NIGHT**

Ramping up to climax, Oren and Bette hear the CODE-KNOCK.

OREN

Hang on a sec, almost there...

BETTE

Someone's coming!

Bette pushes him away, scrambling for her clothes.

OREN

Well I guess it's not gonna be me.

**INT. ACADEMY DORMITORY, MEN'S HALLWAY - NIGHT**

Buttressed against the door, Shane smiles at Torri as he cranks a hard tennis-like ball into a shoulder blade.

SHANE

Just gotta work out this cramp. Brooks had us do a million pushups after barre.

TORRI

I don't care if you broke a bone -- if Bette's in there, door's open.

SHANE

Except they're busy. Fighting.

TORRI

I don't hear it.

SHANE

The silent-treatment phase. Brutal.

TORRI

You wanna see "brutal"?

No he does not. As he steps aside, Torri yanks the door...

**INT. ACADEMY DORMITORY, OREN AND SHANE'S ROOM - NIGHT**

... To reveal Bette and Oren dressed, studying. Bed made, curtains flutter, not a whiff of suspicion. Oren looks up:

OREN

Oh. Hi, Torri.

TORRI

You know the rules.

BETTE

Did the door blow shut? I hadn't noticed. Oren, did you notice?

OREN

Was deep into causes of the Cold War.

Bette nods, getting up and deftly leading Torri out.

BETTE

Actually, Torri, I'm glad you came by. I'll need the iron tonight...

The two roommates alone, a relieved Oren flops onto his bed.

SHANE

Oren. I'm done playing this game.

OREN

You and me both. Hey. I owe you one.

Oren manages a chummy smile as Shane looks off.

**INT. ACADEMY DORMITORY, NEVEAH AND JUNE'S ROOM - NIGHT**

Neveah pulls various outfits, struggling to assemble a look.

NEVEAH

Why didn't I just borrow one of theirs?

June watches on, feet jammed into the radiator slots, torqued hard in the hopes of an ever-improved arch.

JUNE

That's nice. Shows the goods. I mean, your anonymous patron will probably be there, not that I'd know since you think I ever get invited to these things?

NEVEAH

Oh man. I am so not ready for this.

Confidence waning, Neveah has a mini-meltdown at the mirror. Sympathizing, June extricates herself and approaches.

JUNE

If you tug up the side here, extend the drape, gives more drama.

June expertly assembles her new roomie's look, getting a shawl from her own things. Draping it, she ventures:

JUNE (CONT'D)

The other girls. They're just jealous.

NEVEAH

Of what? You saw the Ballet Master go at me -- "wrong this, wrong, that."

JUNE

At least he was paying attention. Me, I never get a single correction.

NEVEAH

Maybe you're already good enough.

JUNE

It's ballet -- nobody's good enough. If Topher Brooks doesn't see me? Then nobody else does.

NEVEAH

Okay? So how do we fix that?

Sadly chuckling, June backs off to admire her handiwork.

JUNE

It's so cute how you think we actually have power around here.

MUSIC UP as Neveah studies herself in the mirror, girding herself for the evening ahead.

**INT. WINSLOW MANSE - NIGHT**

MUSIC CONTINUES: Welcome to Kenilworth, enclave to retired senators, investment bankers and old money.

Enter the Chosen Four: Neveah, Oren and Nabil trail Bette through a stunning home impeccably furnished in modern decor. They turn heads of various Board Members and wealthy Donors who watch these young marvels with reverence.

CASSIE (V.O.)

*There's a twisted bargain to ballet.  
After all your hard work, your pain  
and sacrifice... when you walk among  
mortals, you become a god...*

Bette's on a charm offensive, shaking hands with various guests. She pulls over stone-cold Nabil, introducing her soon-to-be new dance partner to the powers that be.

CASSIE (V.O.)

*... A perfect, worshiped celebration  
of what the body is capable of.*

On the sidelines, Neveah spots Oren watching Bette. Neveah and he share a look... before he turns to greet a donor.

Elsewhere, Ramon squires Delia around, stopping to pull out his phone. A text had just plinged: **Ignore me all U like, the world will still know what U did.** He reads it, shaken.

LATER, Monique wraps up a speech before the crowd. There's Ramon with Delia, newspaper photographer Vernon snapping society pics, Zandara taking in the spin.

MONIQUE

*... And I admit after this past week,  
I no longer believe that all press is  
good press. But thanks to you all, the  
Academy has never been stronger.*

Taking in the room, Monique can see they're not convinced by her platitudes. She takes a breath, shifting gears.

MONIQUE (CONT'D)

*And perhaps our best indicator is a  
new ballet the school will be  
creating, in Cassie's honor, by  
renowned choreographer Ramon Costa.*

This does the trick. The ripple of excitement is enough to pull Ramon from his phone, muttering to himself

RAMON

*You gotta be kidding...*

MONIQUE

*The world will once again watch the  
school and its dazzling dancers, for  
all the right reasons. And tonight? A  
chance to meet those thoroughbreds. To  
a bright future!*

Stepping in to re-joining the fray, Monique is stopped by KATRINA WINSLOW (40s, rail-thin and ruthless).

KATRINA

*This had better work.*

MONIQUE

*I know. Now if you'll excuse me,  
Katrina, I'm not quite done yet.*

LATER: Taking in the room, Neveah is approached by Adam.

ADAM

So you made the cut. Adam Renfrew, CBA  
physiotherapist. We met earlier.

NEVEAH

Yeah, quite the inspection you gave me.

ADAM

And I'm happy to report, you've natural  
facility and enviably open hips.

NEVEAH

Tell it to that sadistic asscrack.

She indicates Brooks, off chatting up a Wealthy Enthusiast.

ADAM

Topher Brooks does have a reputation.

NEVEAH

He should. If folks knew how he rolls?

ADAM

I do know. He's my husband.

Neveah chokes down her water. Yikes.

NEVEAH

Right. Well I better mingle.

ELSEWHERE: Delia nearby, Ramon has Monique against a wall.

MONIQUE

You saw their response? *Ils sont en extase.*

RAMON

Except I'm not doing it, Monique. Once  
I've set this new piece at The  
Griffin, it's back to New York.

MONIQUE

To choreograph more obscure art-wanks.

DELIA

His new work I'm dancing will be a hit.

MONIQUE

It's also ten minutes long. Ramon, I'm  
offering you a safe place to work out  
big ideas, get a jump on talent.

DELIA

He's got all the talent he needs.

MONIQUE

It would show loyalty to the school,  
which means loyalty to the Griffin.  
They commission a full-length work  
next year. I can make sure it's yours.

RAMON

I can see you're desperate for a new  
story to tell, Monique, but I'm long  
past being your boy-toy.

Monique takes in this defeat, bowed but not broken.

ELSEWHERE: Schmoozing with Oren, Bette nabs passing canapés.

KATRINA

Darling, there's cheese on that.

Bette turns to see Katrina Winslow smiling kindly.

BETTE

Trust me, Mother, I earned it today.

KATRINA

Glad to hear. Oren, what a delight.

OREN

Mrs Winslow. Thanks for having us.

KATRINA

I swear we host these jamborees just  
to clap eyes on our girls. I hope  
we'll all be seeing lots of you two  
this year, onstage and off.

OREN

(with a look to Bette)  
I hope so too.

Katrina pulls in Brooks, who's passing with Adam.

KATRINA

Tell us, Topher -- do we have a star  
pairing here or what?

BROOKS

Partners have already been finalized.

ADAM

Though I do encourage an open mind.

KATRINA

Well I'm sure you'll do the right thing.

As the men nod and pass by, Bette turns to Katrina:

BETTE

You can't boss around my ballet master!

KATRINA

I wouldn't dream of it. Now let's get you in front of Ramon Costa.

ELSEWHERE: Monique approaches Neveah.

MONIQUE

Miss Stroyer, you look as anxious as the ugly duckling at a party of swans.

NEVEAH

Ma'am. The ugly duckling was a swan.

Monique pivots for a few "candid" shots of them talking. Camera in hand, Vernon snaps them for the society pages.

MONIQUE

Yes of course. Now we're set up for you to speak with that reporter.

As Vernon wraps up ("That's excellent, thank you") Monique leans in, tapping Neveah's sheet of talking points.

MONIQUE (CONT'D)

Anything you'd like to review?

NEVEAH

It's pretty clear. The school's wonderful and you're saving my life.

Monique smiles -- atta girl -- and leads her into the library where Zandara awaits, closing the door behind them.

**INT. GIBSONS STEAKHOUSE - NIGHT**

June sits with sharp-eyed businesswoman SOO-YUN (45), who digs into the bone marrow atop her 32oz tomahawk chop. June picks at her wedge salad, micro-dosing blue cheese dressing.

SOO-YUN

Where's the shawl that goes with that dress?

JUNE

Didn't need it tonight.

SOO-YUN

Well those bony shoulders are turning heads. You're not eating enough.

JUNE

I'm fine, Mom. And glad to see you.

SOO-YUN

I'd a flight back to New York tonight,  
but some things are more important.

JUNE

Exactly. What happened to Cassie  
reminds us all -- life's short.

June's reaching for connection... but Soo-Yun pulls away.

SOO-YUN

So why waste time. What's your role?

JUNE

My... role?

SOO-YUN

In your ballet showcase.

JUNE

Oh. With the accident, they delayed  
any casting announcements.

SOO-YUN

Damn artists can't stick to a schedule.

JUNE

Mom, it's *The Sleeping Beauty* this  
year, which is perfect for me.  
Everyone says I'm a shoo-in to dance  
Aurora. Why can't you believe in me?

SOO-YUN

I do! That's why I didn't raise my  
only daughter to prop up the scenery.

JUNE

I get it. You want a doctor, lawyer,  
senator. But I just want to dance.

SOO-YUN

That's it?

JUNE

That's everything!

SOO-YUN

So dance in your bedroom, the shower --  
go tear up the floor at your high-  
school prom like every other teenage  
girl. But I'm not paying through the  
teeth so you can get a crap education  
and no future. You're either on track  
to make prima ballerina, or you're out.



JUNE

Mom! I am on track!!!

As others Diners look askance, June tamps down her emotions.

JUNE (CONT'D)

I'll get a big part, and every artistic director will want me. Because Cassie's not here stealing my spotlight.

SOO-YUN

She didn't "steal" it, June. She was better than you.

JUNE

Well she's not better than me now.

Soo-Yun stares down her daughter's cold, fervent glower... then gives a hearty laugh, drinking deep from her wine.

SOO-YUN

Now that's my girl.

**INT. WINSLOW MANSE - NIGHT**

Neveah exits the library with Zandara, Monique and Vernon.

NEVEAH

I think it was the gymnastics, helped me advance so quick. The street dancing was just, I dunno... a way to make sense of what's in me.

ZANDARA

And you say it's a kind of... fusion?

NEVEAH

I put up some videos if you want a look. They're pretty rough -- already got a harsh crit from my girls here. I tell you, I've seen some rough stuff on the streets back home, but nothing compared to what goes down here.

MONIQUE

Yes, though I think what Neveah wants to emphasize is how the CBA is about --

NEVEAH

(shifting, speaking by rote)  
The fundamentals, yes. Which I am in great need of. I have raw talent, but it needs shaping if I want a career in ballet. And for that, there's no better place than the CBA.

MONIQUE  
Couldn't have said it better myself.

ZANDARA  
Thank you, Neveah. And good luck.

Quietly proud, Neveah smiles as Zandara and Vernon exit.

MONIQUE  
You had a script.

NEVEAH  
Sorry. It's just... I had a life too.

Watching the reporter exit, Neveah's confidence wavers under Monique's harsh glare.

ELSEWHERE: The party loosens up. Bette stands with Delia.

BETTE  
Why're you here slumming with students?

DELIA  
I figured if Ramon was coming...

BETTE  
Yeah. Smart. Keep an eye on him.

Bette drinks deep, all smiles as Katrina leads Ramon over.

KATRINA  
Ramon Costa, may I present my daughter  
Bette, the CBA's next star graduate.

DELIA  
He's already working with a graduate.

BETTE  
We're not potato chips, Delia. You can  
have more than one.

RAMON  
(smoothing waters)  
Bette. What makes you stand out?

BETTE  
My passion, musicality... and a wicked  
ballon. But don't take my word for it.  
Watch me in class tomorrow.

RAMON  
Not in the habit of viewing students.

DELIA  
Or setting ballets on them.

BETTE

Too bad. You might be surprised.

They're interrupted by Ramon's phone BUZZING, a new text: **U R finished**. Ramon steps away to type back: **What do U want?**

ELSEWHERE: Neveah works the room with Oren and Nabil. They're glad-handing various Donors and retired Dancers.

Then Neveah sees her: Delia Winslow. She braves an approach.

NEVEAH

Just gotta say it: huge fan. I'm sure you're sick of hearing it, but your *Giselle*? They streamed it at this big theater in LA and I begged my dad to take me. When I saw how much feeling you could pack into those old steps... it showed me what ballet could be.

DELIA

You're very kind.

NEVEAH

Neveah Stroyer. Just got into town.

DELIA

I saw Monique parading you around.

NEVEAH

Yeah, except I'm not sure I landed my jumps, you know what I mean?

DELIA

Don't worry, Monique wants her ballerinas to kick high and keep quiet.

Neveah takes in her encouragement as Bette weaves over.

BETTE

This one wears your shoes.

DELIA

My what?

BETTE

Your pointe shoes, crams her bunions into them like she's Cinderella.

NEVEAH

Actually, Cinderella's feet *did* fit.

DELIA

Bette, have you been drinking?

NEVEAH

Did *nobody* here get told fairy tales?

BETTE

We were too busy living them! This isn't your world, Neveah. You're no ballerina.

NEVEAH

Well someone here must think I am.

BETTE

You don't get it, do you?

DELIA

Bette, quit it.

BETTE

The only reason Monique let you in here was to fix her image, give the Academy a shiny new distraction to talk about instead of that stupid girl bleeding out on the street. But you're even stupider, can't see they're using you. No, you'd rather stand here star-fucking my sister.

*Sister?* Reeling from the connection, the insults, Bette's awful logic... Neveah moves to leave, passing others in her search of an exit.

DELIA

Hey. If you're here? You're good.

But Neveah just pushes past, accidentally toppling a CBA display. Others watch as she rushes out. Baffled, Oren looks to Bette, who only shrugs.

BETTE

The Stroyer. Living up to her name.

Elsewhere, Monique sighs. Katrina passes her:

KATRINA

You don't fix this? You're out.

Monique swallows hard: her job is far from done.

**EXT. WINSLOW MANSE - NIGHT**

A shattered Neveah paces, grappling with fury and regret.

Something pulls her focus: a glint of metal in the garden. Picking it up, she pulls a drawstring, unearthing a half-charred hoodie like the rooftop Hooded Friend's (though Neveah doesn't yet know it). She studies it, puzzled --

Her RINGING phone fractures the moment. Stashing the hoodie, she takes a FaceTime call from her brother TYLER (19).

NEVEAH

Hey Ty.

TYLER (ON FACETIME)

*Nugget. Got your text. What's wrong.*

NEVEAH

Nothing.

Tyler adjusts his phone, revealing he's in a wheelchair.

TYLER (ON FACETIME)

*You're doing that thing you do when you're trying not to cry.*

NEVEAH

I don't have a thing I do.

TYLER (ON FACETIME)

*Hell yeah you do. You know, for a star dancer, your muscle control sucks.*

NEVEAH

So does my sitch here. I need money. I'll pay you back when I get home. I'll do those princess birthday things...

TYLER (ON FACETIME)

*You're not coming home.*

NEVEAH

It's not working. They got me playing some crazy script that isn't even me.

Nabil exits the house. In the darkness, he listen on.

TYLER (ON FACETIME)

*Neevie, you did it -- you got out.*

NEVEAH

What for? I came here to dance, to get better at the one thing in my stupid crazy life I can hold onto -- the only thing I ever loved. Only they don't care about that.

TYLER (ON FACETIME)

*So what?*

NEVEAH

I don't fit in!

TYLER

*Well halle-fucking-lujah! What dancer  
wants to? You ain't ever getting this  
chance again, Nugget. So you take  
everything you can from those fuckers  
and when you're done? Stratosphere.*

Neveah has to laugh, basking in her dear brother's tough love. Turning, she's startled to see Nabil in the shadows.

NEVEAH Nabil. Hey. TYLER (ON FACETIME) (CONT'D) *Stratosphere! Stratos --* \* \*

She ends the call, mustering a smile.

NABIL

If you need someone else to tell you you are a good dancer? You already have your answer: you aren't.

NEVEAH

I know, and it's great they got people like us in school, who don't look like we jumped out of a music box. But how many of us ever make it?

CUSSING can be heard behind the garden's back fence.

NABIL

If we are good, we succeed.

NEVEAH

I see who ballet companies hire. And most of the time, I don't see me.

Behind her, Nabil coolly eyes Shane scaling the ramparts.

NABIL

Shane. Party is over.

SHANE

"Party" is definitely not over, Nabil. And trust me, Little Rat, girls like you have been dancing a long time. Say the word if you ever want proof.

Neveah scoffs as his words (and Shane himself) land.

**EXT. ACADEMY ROOFTOP - NIGHT**

Emotions churning, June contemplates the city view.

But sounds distract her from her reverie -- SLOW STEPS ON THE GRAVEL. Someone else is up there. June searches the darkness, knows she's cornered by this deadly ledge.

Panic rising, June scurries through shadows to the rooftop stairwell door's sliver of light. She hears SCUFFLING around the corner. Holding her breath, she makes a dash --

Straight into the shadowy figure. June SCREAMS IN TERROR.

Puffing with fear, June is stunned to see that it's...

JUNE

Officer Diaz. Oh my God...

ISABEL

Didn't think anyone else'd be up here.

JUNE

Hidden key. Everyone knows it.

ISABEL

I see. It's June Park, yes?

JUNE

Isn't your investigation over? It's open-and-shut, the girl jumped.

ISABEL

Then how'd she land on her back?

JUNE

Maybe she wasn't interested in admiring the view on her way down.

ISABEL

No history of depression, no note --

JUNE

Who'd read it? We all admired Cassie, but we didn't much like her.

ISABEL

Yes. A raft of rivals. And this.

She shows scuff marks in the gravel, leading to the ledge.

ISABEL (CONT'D)

Someone backed away, tried to get free.

June sizes up the scuffs, unable to deny their eloquence.

JUNE

... You saying she was pushed?

Isabel watches June take it in, shaken. She reaches out:

ISABEL

Hey. I'm not saying anything yet.

JUNE

You know she'd never shut up. It'd be lights out and Cassie's in her bed, blathering on about the best way to tie a bun or rock a triple *pirouette*. I'd be begging her to clam it so I could get some shut-eye. And now she's gone, it's so quiet. And guess what.

ISABEL

Now you can't sleep.

MUSIC UP as Isabel offers her business card.

ISABEL (CONT'D)

Look, I may not know Swan Lake from a Nutcracker, but I know danger when I see it. And something about this place is wrong. Folks'll get hurt if we don't shine a light. Will you help me?

Sizing up the card, June pulls herself together.

JUNE

There's rules, Officer. And I'm not the one around here to break them.

June goes inside, leaving Isabel with her thoughts.

**EXT. WINSLOW MANSE - NIGHT**

MUSIC CONTINUES as our young dancers cut loose in the pool, now joined by Shane, Caleb, Esmé and other CBA escapees. In underwear, some topless, Shane of course buck-naked.

CASSIE (V.O.)

*All day someone else controls what you eat, what you wear, how you move and who you touch.*

Oren and Shane wrestle, chummy pals. Others goof off, basking in this rare chance to goof off, connect and play.

CASSIE (V.O.)

*You're strapped into the roller coaster with your worst competitors.*

Holding back at the pool's edge, Neveah meets eyes with Bette across the steaming pool working through a vodka.

CASSIE (V.O.)

*But what nobody else gets is, those rivals are also the only people who get you, who celebrate you for who you are and challenge you to do better.*

(MORE)



CASSIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
*There's no better way to say it:  
they're your tribe.*

Neveah steps out of her dress... and jumps in. She joins the others, knowing all the while Bette's staring daggers.

**EXT. PILSON STREET AND CHICAGO BALLET ACADEMY - NIGHT**

Whispering and giddy, the wet-haired dancers walk the deserted street. Neveah sees **Delia Winslow** over and over... her photo on lamppost banners for Griffin Ballet's season.

NEVEAH  
I can't believe you trucked all the way out there just for a swim.

SHANE  
Hell, I was just warming up. Would you believe I'm getting lucky tonight?

She chuckles as he races off to join others at the Academy side door. She takes a last breath before bed. Oren's nearby:

OREN  
It's strange at first, sleeping with bars on your window.

NEVEAH  
Actually, they'll feel just like home.

OREN  
Right. Glad you jumped in with everyone.

NEVEAH  
Well, not everyone.

OREN  
She's on her guard. Give her time.

He looks to Bette at the side door, trying to pull it open.

BETTE  
Treena was supposed to prop this open!

ESMÉ  
They catch us out here? We're dead.

Neveah considers the elevation, then OOMPH, she jumps up to the first-story grilles, beginning to scale the building.

SHANE  
Girl, what are you doing?

NEVEAH  
Getting you guys in. Hang tight.

The Dancers watch Neveah use her flexibility, strength, balance and courage to pull herself from bar to pipe to window ledge. It's like Cassie's fall in reverse, as she makes her way up a thrilling route to an open window above.

**INT. ACADEMY DORMITORY, WOMAN'S COMMON ROOM - NIGHT**

The room now in darkness, Neveah pulls herself through the window, permitting a satisfied smile. She did it.

She's crossing to the door when FICK -- a spotlight hits her: Monique's flashlight and voice piercing the darkness.

MONIQUE

You know the first rule of the Chicago Ballet Academy?

Startled, Neveah sees Monique in a chair. Waiting.

NEVEAH

Don't get messy with a Winslow?

MONIQUE

Honor the sanctity of the art-form.

NEVEAH

It's my fault, Ma'am. Should've known better.

Monique sighs, moving to exit -- but Neveah stops her.

NEVEAH (CONT'D)

But I also did what you wanted, stood in your spotlight as best I could. That's gotta be worth something.

MONIQUE

Yes. But how much, and for how long?

**INT. ACADEMY DORMITORY, OREN AND SHANE'S ROOM - NIGHT**

Shane is naked, his lithe, beautiful body put to good use. (He got lucky after all.) Then reveal...

... He's with Oren, having hot and heavy sex. Shane goes in for a kiss, but Oren flinches.

OREN

Hey. You know I don't go there.

SHANE

It's just... I kinda do.

OREN

Shane, we're just helping a guy out here.

SHANE

Right. Not like this means anything.

But beneath Shane's bravado, it clearly means a lot. He hovers over Oren, moving to suck him off... but Oren stops him, noting the musculature in his friend's lower abs.

OREN

How d'you get your V-cut like that?

SHANE

How's about we use our anatomy, not talk about it.

But Oren's up, enviously examining his roommate's muscles.

OREN

Seriously though, what's your secret?

SHANE

Dunno. I just dance.

OREN

I worked all summer on my external obliques, trying to carve out a set. But I can't get your results.

Shane lies back as Oren examines him, sexy as a tick-check.

SHANE

Lucky me.

**INT. ACADEMY, SHOE ROOM - NIGHT**

Thin lights pierce the shadows, giving the room an eerie vibe. Neveah enters barefoot, wearing that ratty old LA tutu. She inspects the shelves full of shoes.

Neveah's startled to find June in the corner, feet in a medieval-looking stretching device.

NEVEAH

June. I didn't see you.

JUNE

Nobody does.

Unsettled, Neveah turns back to regard the seemingly endless shelves -- and sees Delia there, *en pointe*.

NEVEAH

... Delia?

DELIA

Dropping off the trash, all for you.

NEVEAH

How do I know I'm the right fit?

June looks up from torquing her feet.

DELIA

Just keep your neck long, your hips  
small, and your arches high.

JUNE

And bone. They want to see bone.

June keeps cranking until there's an awful CRACKING.

NEVEAH

June, stop. You're going too far.

June just gives a delighted laugh, even as blood seeps out.

NEVEAH (CONT'D)

You need help. Help!

Neveah tries to escape but there's no door -- only shelves.

Between stunning jumps, Delia shouts encouragement:

DELIA

The only way out is up.

Neveah clammers up shelves as pointe shoes rain down on her.

NEVEAH

Mom. Mom, help me.

Shoes cascading, she sees a hand reaching out a high shelf.

NEVEAH (CONT'D)

Mom!

Climbing crazy-high, Neveah takes her hand. Then sees...

It's not her mother inside. It's Cassie, deathly pale.

NEVEAH (CONT'D)

Cassie...?

CASSIE

You should never have come.

NEVEAH

No. Cassie no. Please don't!

But Cassie's now pouring shellack over Neveah's hands.  
Neveah tries to hold on, but her grip soon slips...

NEVEAH (CONT'D)

Noooo!!!!

... And she's falling, falling, falling...

**INT. ACADEMY DORMITORY, NEVEAH AND JUNE'S ROOM - NIGHT**

OOMP! Neveah wakes. Shaken by her dream, she tries to calm herself. June snorfles in bed. The radiator pings.

Neveah moves to shut off June's bedside lamp, pulling up June's covers -- then sees she'd fallen asleep, iPhone in hand. Gingerly removing it, she sees June's last text: **Love U Mom**. Unanswered. Wistful, Neveah sets it down.

Then pulls out **Cassie's half-photo on the boat**: a pretty girl, life cut short. She turns to view the wakening city.

**INT. ACADEMY DORMITORY, WOMEN'S HALLWAY - DAWN**

Shellacked pointe shoes outside every closed door. Dressed to dance, Neveah walks along, headphones around her neck.

**INT. ACADEMY DANCE STUDIO - DAWN**

At the doorway, Neveah hesitates, surprised to find someone already in the studio.

It's Bette, sweating in the dawn light as she tries to perfect the *pirouette* that Brooks had corrected her on. Over and over she turns, turns, turns. Neveah watches, impressed.

But not Bette, who curses herself harshly.

BETTE

Pathetic. You're shit.

Catching Neveah in the mirror, she pulls herself up.

BETTE (CONT'D)

Here to steal my secrets?

NEVEAH

No thanks. Got my own.

BETTE

Thanks for taking the fall last night.

As Bette continues her attempts at repeated *pirouettes*, Neveah ventures inside, starting her own warm-up.

NEVEAH

You're thinking about it too much.  
Trying to show how hard you're working  
like it gets you points or something.

Bette fires a withering glare, but Neveah continues.

NEVEAH (CONT'D)

Except nobody wants to see us sweat.  
Die all you want on the inside, but  
ballet gives us the tools to hide pain  
so long... you forget it's in you.

BETTE

I've had the country's top teachers --

NEVEAH

And look where they got you. But hey,  
you keep taking off from that stodgy  
old Cecchetti fourth.

Fuming, Bette goes back to her work. Neveah shrugs, does her own warm-ups. But in time, Bette can't help herself:

BETTE

You know you want to say something, so  
just say it.

NEVEAH

Wouldn't want to mess you up...

BETTE

*Please.*

Bette meets her eyes, their first real bond. Neveah steps in:

NEVEAH

What I do is I think of my hips turning  
on an axis. Then when you start your  
turn? Stay in your *plié* longer before  
you *relevé*. That way you're half-way  
into your turn before you're up.

BETTE

So it's a cheat.

NEVEAH

Call it a dance-hack.

Bette gives it a grudging try, to undeniably better results.

NEVEAH (CONT'D)

Good. Now even later on the *relevé*.

Bette tries again. An exhilarated laugh -- it works.

NEVEAH (CONT'D)

Now you're dancing like a Winslow.  
(off Bette's cooling look)  
Supposed to be a compliment.

BETTE

You know what it's like having a sister who just made youngest principal dancer in The Griffin's history? People think Delia's why I even got in their school.

NEVEAH

Well I don't.

BETTE

Thank you.

NEVEAH

I think your parents' money got you in.

Burn! The two stare each other down... then Bette grins.

BETTE

Which is why crack of dawn, I'm here.

MUSIC STARTS as Neveah pops on her headphones, a killer track filling her with life as she starts to warm up.

**INT. ACADEMY DORMITORY, NEVEAH AND JUNE'S ROOM - DAWN**

MUSIC CONTINUES as June redoes her hair over and over, obsessively trying to get it into the perfect bun.

**INT. ACADEMY DORMITORY, OREN AND SHANE'S ROOM - DAWN**

MUSIC CONTINUES: Finishing push-ups, Shane stands puffing, assessing himself in the mirror. Spotting a condom wrapper, he tosses it in the trash... to join two others.

**EXT. ACADEMY ROOFTOP - SUNRISE**

MUSIC CONTINUES as Nabil finishes salah, the Muslim prayer. It's a private, peaceful moment before the day ahead.

Emerging from the staircase door behind him, Caleb is surprised to see Nabil rolling up his small rug, regarding the roof-edge with a cryptic expression. Unseen against the elevator penthouse, Caleb watches with contempt.

**INT. ACADEMY DORMITORY, MEN'S BATHROOM - DAY**

MUSIC CONTINUES as Oren puke in the toilet, then leans against a partition, pinching (nonexistent) belly fat. He takes a ledger from its hiding spot, logs the deed. In it, **an obsessive recording of everything eaten, every purge.**

He gives a calming breath... then walks out the door.

**INT. ACADEMY INFIRMARY - DAY**

MUSIC CONTINUES: Bette winces, taping her bruised foot for the day ahead. She examines it sadly, girding herself... then pulls off a bloody toenail before sliding her foot into the plush and comforting veil of a silicone sleeve.

**INT. ACADEMY DANCE STUDIO - DAY**

MUSIC CONTINUES as Neveah strides through the room. Hours later, it's now full of students warming up before class. This time she claims that empty spot. Cassie's spot.

Others look askance as she grips the barre and confidently launches her first *demi-plié*. Shane nods: you go, girl.

**INT. ACADEMY REHEARSAL STUDIO - DAY (LATER)**

Pacing through the class, Brooks addresses the Dancers.

BROOKS

Partnering. It's about working together, yes, but also about *opposition*, finding a language of reach and response, archer meets arrow.

Bette glances to Nabil. She knows her future and likes it.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

A partner need not be a friend. Nureyev was twenty years younger than Fonteyn. Hallberg and Osipova don't even speak the same language. But through dance, you'll find a bond or die trying.

Bette and the others listen expectantly as Brooks continues.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

Ann, you'll dance with Raul. Sarah, you're with Troy. Willa and Kyle. Lindy and Matthew. Esmé and Caleb. Neveah and Oren. June and Nabil... Bette and Shane.

JUNE

Wait. I'm with Nabil?

As pairs assemble, Bette screws up the guts to approach Brooks and save herself.

BETTE

Mr Brooks, aren't I paired with Nabil?

BROOKS

Ballet is ever-changing, Miss Winslow.



BETTE

I just think I'm better off with him.  
He's taller, *je parle français*, and  
he's, you know... my level.

BROOKS

Shane's a fine dancer quite capable of  
partnering you. Or do you question --

BETTE

Of course not. Thank you, Sir.

Turning from his scathing look, Bette sees Shane waiting.

SHANE

Try to contain your enthusiasm.

BETTE

You'd better fucking dance.

**INT. ACADEMY REHEARSAL STUDIO - DAY (LATER)**

Brooks continues setting a duet on the various dancers.

BROOKS

This is Romeo and Juliet, people -- a  
brewing romantic relationship. Show us  
what draws the two of you together.

As they work, Monique arrives, Ramon in tow. A ripple  
through the room as every dancer turns to look.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

All right, let's focus. Now *cambré*.

Ramon watches on as Brooks (himself rather unsettled by  
this unexpected audience) continues setting the piece.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

And promenade...

Ramon's phone's BUZZES. Below his earlier text (**What do U  
want?**) now sits an answer: **Stay out of New York. Forever.**

Monique looks over, looking to draw back Ramon's focus.

MONIQUE

Everything okay?

BROOKS (CONT'D)

*Tombé croisée*, ladies...

\*

\*

\*

RAMON

Just a message from an old  
friend.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

No one needs to see that  
transition *en face*!

\*

\*

\*

Mustering a smile, Ramon pockets the phone, forcing himself  
to watch class. But it's clear, he's shaken to the core.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

Caleb, get Esmé on her leg there.  
Further forward, that's better. Nabil,  
nice elevation on that lift.

Nabil's partner June keeps dancing, once again invisible.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

No, no. What is this. Bette, it's a  
*soutenu* straight into *grand ronde*, not  
from *passé*. You understand?

Bette turns to her partner (Shane) and tries again.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

More abandon in that *tombé*. This is  
when they fall in love! From the top.

Flustered, Bette hisses at her partner as they dance:

BETTE

Hold my hips, not my waist. Put me  
more over my supporting leg.

Shane may loathe Bette outside the studio, but he's truly  
trying his best. Besides, Ramon fucking Costa is watching.

BROOKS

Bette, the transition into the *fouetté*  
is late. Get into *passé* sooner.

BETTE

I can't if he won't put me on my leg.

BROOKS

That's not the problem here. You need  
to anticipate the *piqué* and spot.

BETTE

But if Shane would --

BROOKS

I didn't correct Shane. I corrected  
you. Again.

Stung, Bette quietly panics, gets rigid, loses her flow.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

Wrong. Again. Just the two of you.

While Bette struggles, Shane leans in, quietly bolstering.

SHANE

Come on, Girl. You got this.

They launch into the dance. They're trying, God knows.

BROOKS  
Up, Goddamnit. Go up!

And then it happens. Bette turns wrong in the air, slipping through Shane's hands...

... And falls hard on the floor.

SHANE  
Lordy fuck, you okay?

BETTE  
I'm fine.

As she's swatting him off, Brooks comes in to check:

BROOKS  
You sure?

BETTE  
Yes. Let's do it again.

But Brooks can see she's furtively nursing a damaged ankle. It's her turn to receive Brooks' blistering words:

BROOKS  
I'll spare you.

With a nervous glance to Monique (*why oh why did she have to watch class today?*) Brooks paces through his Dancers.

BROOKS (CONT'D)  
If a lift's preparation isn't ideal,  
you don't change the steps -- you  
change yourself. You adapt to save it.

Ashen and for once sincere, Shane sidles up besides Oren.

SHANE  
Oren, I'm so sorry --

OREN  
Don't worry. She's all right.

Brooks continues, scanning the Dancers.

BROOKS  
Anyone here paying attention?

The room goes quiet, every couple afraid to brave it. Then?

NEVEAH  
We are.

Oren darts a look to Neveah: *you crazy?* Neveah nods.

NEVEAH (CONT'D)

Let's rock this.

She takes his hand and leads *him* into the center, taking the initial "B+" position awaiting the Pianist's cue.

On the margins, Monique turns to Ramon:

MONIQUE

We can go now.

The two are moving to exit when the MUSIC STARTS and the duet launches.

BROOKS

More extension out of that *rond de jambe*, travel more here.

Glancing back, Ramon hesitates, not quite ready to leave.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

That's it, trust his timing on that lift. Yes.

Brooks falls silent as the music seems to SWELL TO FULL ORCHESTRA, Students fading from view. A miraculous moment, two people who barely know each other... they just dance.

Oren's hands anticipate her every move, his lifts are strong, his leaps never higher. Neveah seems weightless, her extensions breathtaking. Their lines perfectly complementing each other, they dance their hearts out.

As soon as it began, the duet ends. The room falls silent. Brooks just nods -- his version of a rapturous "bravo."

Neveah and Oren share an elated hug. Over his shoulder, Neveah meets Ramon Costa's eye. He'd come to watch Bette, but here he is, eye on the wrong girl.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

All right then. We continue tomorrow.

But Ramon (surprising even himself) steps into the room.

RAMON

Tomorrow is spoken for. Tomorrow we begin auditions. The rep for this term is no longer *The Sleeping Beauty*. Tomorrow I begin work on a new ballet.

Hearing this, Monique smiles, Students marvel. June wilts:

JUNE  
No *Sleeping Beauty*?

... And Bette seethes at Neveah...

BETTE  
That little bitch.

... While Ramon continues, building a head of steam.

RAMON  
Instead we create a ballet of passion  
and darkness on the edge of desire. We  
tell the story... of *Jack the Ripper*.

SHANE  
The sex maniac who killed those women?

MONIQUE  
We'll find something more appropriate.

RAMON  
What could be better? We live in a  
dark, twisted world full of loss,  
violence and shadowy truths, where  
brave women beat back the darkness.  
Monique DuBois? You have your ballet.

MONIQUE  
Auditions tomorrow. Now rest up.

While the Students chatter and pack up, Monique leans in:

MONIQUE (CONT'D)  
Just know, Ramon, we already have our  
favorites.

RAMON  
And so do I.

An inspired glint in his eye, he watches Neveah exit.

**INT. ACADEMY DORMITORY, WOMEN'S HALLWAY - DAY**

Neveah passes admiring looks and congratulations. It's a  
sweet moment of victory, unsettled by the burden of what  
comes next. As she continues...

**EXT. OAK WOODS CEMETERY - DAY**

Uniformed Officer Diaz strides along, on her cell phone.

ISABEL  
I appreciate you calling, and can  
promise it's entirely confidential --

JUNE (V.O., ON PHONE)  
*Cassie Shore wasn't alone on the roof  
and Madame DuBois knows it.*

Isabel hesitates, taking in this bombshell.

ISABEL  
Who was up there with her?

JUNE (V.O., ON PHONE)  
*Every Tier Three student. There was a  
secret party.*

ISABEL  
"Hidden keys." Every student, you say?

**INT. ACADEMY DORMITORY, NEVEAH AND JUNE'S ROOM - DAY**

Rolling out her arches, June continues on the call.

JUNE  
Well everyone but me. I was in my  
room, where I was supposed to be.

ISABEL (V.O., ON PHONE)  
*Thank you, June. Now if there's  
anything you see or hear --*

JUNE  
There won't be. I'm not going to be  
here much longer.

**EXT. OAK WOODS CEMETERY - DAY**

Surprised by June's sudden hang-up, Isabel pockets her phone. She takes a fortifying breath and turns to a well-tended gravesite: **Zoe Estrella. Sister, daughter, hero.** As Isabel pays her respects, there's the WHINE OF A WEAPON arcing through the air...

*BOOM, a rocket-propelled grenade LANDS IN A DESERT COMPOUND kicking up clots of earth behind Isabel, as she sprints to a wounded soldier whose name Estrella is stitched on her uniform. The woman is dying, gasping her last breaths with urgent eyes. Isabel holds her, begging her to hang on...*

Batting back her grief, Isabel kneels once again... this time to tenderly prune the grave's planted flowers.

**INT. ACADEMY DORMITORY, NEVEAH AND JUNE'S ROOM - DAY**

June musters a smile as Neveah enters.

JUNE  
Once again I'm rooming with the star.

NEVEAH

It was just one good dance.

JUNE

Enough to keep you here, and send me home. I promised my mother I'd get a leading role in this year's showcase, but guaranteed, Ramon Costa is not looking for innocent virgins.

NEVEAH

So we fix it.

JUNE

We do not fix it! You want creative expression? Go make another one of your videos. Here it's all about fitting someone else's mold.

NEVEAH

No. You want to bring it for Ramon Costa? I'll help you fire it up.

JUNE

Except you and I, we're competing.

NEVEAH

So I'll help you loosen up if you show me how the hell to rock an audition for a role. 'Cause I've got no clue.

JUNE

Neveah. I'm not that kind of dancer.

NEVEAH

We'll see about that.

At her wardrobe, Neveah's shucking her dance clothes when Shane pops his head in.

SHANE

You wanted to see me?

NEVEAH

Yeah. I'm saying the word.

SHANE

What word?

NEVEAH

Last night you said you'd seen girls like me dancing. I could do with seeing my sweet self outside of the mirror.

Shane grins, putting it together (even if we haven't yet).

**EXT. PILSON, DVORAK PARK - DAY**

Perched on a bench near a child-riddled playground, Bette glowers at a photo she holds -- which has the same jagged edge as Cassie's. As she flips it, her thumb reveals that this half shows **Ramon on that same boat, arm around...**

OREN (O.S.)  
Got you some ice.

Bette looks up to see Oren carrying over two greasy food-truck lunches -- and a bag of ice. Stashing the photo:

BETTE  
Don't need it.

OREN  
Just chill. Literally.

As Oren lovingly wraps her ankle, she snuggles in close.

BETTE  
You were right.

OREN  
Good. Feels better?

BETTE  
I mean us about dancing together this year. My parents are big donors, they can pull some strings...

Wrestling with his next move, Oren picks at his lunch.

OREN  
No, you were right, it's better we don't mix dance and our relationship.

BETTE  
Why, 'cause you had one good *pas de deux* on some easy choreography?

OREN  
Wasn't easy for you.

BETTE  
It would be if we were partners. She doesn't have the stamina or technique. Plus who wants to lift *that* every day?

OREN  
Bette...



BETTE

She's the reason I fell. She was at me this morning, pushing me to do more than I should.

OREN

Right. It's her fault, or Shane's fault, or Brooks's. Except you're the one who fell, Bette. You.

And with that, Oren walks off, leaving Bette to watch the Kids romp on the playground. She takes in their joy, the kind she never had, that's too late now for her to find.

**INT. CHICAGO INSTITUTE OF ART - DAY**

Neveah walks through various galleries, past great paintings. She can't fathom why she's here. But then she sees it: a bronze statue first viewed from behind.

Approaching it she sees the tattered tutu (like her old one) the dark, lean body. Circling to view it from the front, she's confronted with Degas' masterpiece, *Little Dancer of Fourteen Years*. She stands strong, determined. Hungry.

NEVEAH

... *Petit rat.*

Neveah meets the bronze girl's defiant eyes, her brown body, her rebellious stance, the marriage of anger and fear... and recognizes herself.

CASSIE (V.O.)

*When you make that leap, you fly alone, just you and the air you conquer. It can help if there are others around you, a corps de ballet, each dancer in her own private battle.*

**INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT**

Bouquet in hand, June sits bedside.

CASSIE (V.O.)

*They're the company's lowest, the corps. The hungriest, most vulnerable.*

June massages the patient's leg. Tears fall as she sobs.

JUNE

I'm sorry, Cassie. So sorry...

REVEAL Cassie Shore in bed, on life-support. Comatose. This perfect body now can't even breath on its own.

CASSIE (V.O.)  
*But there's power in that hunger.  
You'll risk more to get what you want.*

June caresses her perfect leg, wracked with guilty sobs.

She looks up to see someone in the doorway: Nabil here to visit his girlfriend. Holding a bouquet of white roses.

**INT. ACADEMY DORMITORY, NEVEAH AND JUNE'S ROOM - NIGHT**

Surveying her corner, Neveah takes a satisfied breath -- a sense of optimism and possibility. She tries her first decoration, pinning a **postcard of the Little Dancer**. Then a **photo of her family** -- father, grandmother, brother.

She hesitates, tacks another pic, of Neveah's **MOTHER in prison garb, beaming at the camera with young Neveah**. Turns out there's a photo of her mom after all.

CASSIE (V.O.)  
*In the corps, your job is to fit in,  
to be an invisible part of a larger  
body while others claim the spotlight.*

Sitting on her bed to admire her handiwork, she flinches in pain. Finger to her lips, she sucks a drop of blood.

CASSIE (V.O.)  
*But who knows any of this shit, and who  
really cares? For most of the world, a  
corps is just French for corpse -- what  
you are when you're dead. Or when  
enough people see you that way.*

Neveah draws back the blanket to reveal a white rose, like the one that fell on Cassie (though Neveah doesn't yet know that). She unfolds a note: **Your turn to fly**.

Neveah picks up the rose, mystified... and working to tease out its meaning.

**THE END**