

The Understudy

Written By

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FADE IN:

EXT. 15TH CENTURY TOWNSQUARE - NIGHT

A glowing green ANCIENT SNOW GLOBE sits alone in the dark and inside are two dancer figurines. A hand snatches the globe. It belongs to MR. CONSTANTINE, 30s, as an ARMY OF SKELETONS with glowing green eyes approach him.

Reveal town square. Skeletons lunge out from doors and darkness. Mr. Constantine does ballet a la second turns and knocks out two round of skeletons with his outstretched foot. He slides on his knees presenting the globe to:

A panicked BALLERINA. She timidly grabs the globe.

MR. CONSTANTINE
(Romanian)
Now!

A skeleton snatches Constantine, pulling him away.

BALLERINA
(Romanian)
*I wish for things to return as they
were!*

Constantine now has skeletons climbing on top of him, burying him, his outstretched arm disappears in the sea of bone. The globe's green glow burns out and the skeletons drop lifeless.

Finally, Mr. Constantine bursts out of the boney rubble, stands, taking Ballerina's hand. They both turn to face...

A MODERN DAY AUDIENCE erupts in applause, tossing bouquets of flowers onto the stage. Ballerina turns to Constantine-

BALLERINA (CONT'D)
I swear, I didn't mean any harm.

A skeleton hand twitches. FOUR YEAR OLD FRITZ rushes onto the stage from the audience with a wooden sword, bludgeoning the lifeless pile of bones.

Heavy red velvet curtains close.

BLACK OUT.

WHITE SCREEN

As OPENING CREDITS begin, we're bombarded with photo after photo, video after video of NATALIE PRIMAVERA's, 17, social media pages. Natalie is ballet perfection, executing difficult poses with an omnipresent smile.

With 985,000 followers we see her profile picture and name: Natalie Primavera. Wilburn Arts HS Senior. Aspiring Ballerina at Royal Ballet. Coffee Obsessed.

Photos of Natalie at school, hair down in "casual clothes." Posing with her two ballerina best friends: JASMINE, 17 and ZOE, 18, alongside designer cupcakes and mochas.

A selfie video of Natalie with a tight bun and fresh makeup focuses on her in front of a poster for Nutcracker auditions.

NATALIE

Hey guys! It's Natalie here about to walk into my very last Nutcracker audition for Senior year and I'm hoping this is my year to be the Sugar Plum Fairy! Finger crossed!

Natalie blows a kiss to the camera.

EXT. WILBURN ARTS HS - DAY

Natalie stands near the front doors of WILBURN HIGH SCHOOL OF THE ARTS next to "Nutcracker Auditions" poster flapping in the wind. She tucks away her phone as she notices dark clouds roll in over the school.

Natalie pops in earbuds and Tchaikovsky's "Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy" fills the air, she takes a deep breath and enters through the doors of the school. The wind rips the poster off the door.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY/REHEARSAL STUDIO - DAY

Natalie walks down an empty hallway and turns on pointe of her sneakers to a hallway FULL OF DANCERS, stretching and on their phones in various groups.

All turn to look at Natalie, including her designer dancewear friends at the end of the hallway: JASMINE KEARN (17) and twins, ZOE and BROCK DENNINGS (18).

Natalie makes her way down the hall when the double doors of the dance studio swing open to reveal-

MR. CONSTANTINE, mid-40s, the same Romanian man seen holding the green globe, but now a bit older. Thunder claps. Lights flicker on and off.

Natalie pauses and the two look at one another.

The door shuts with a sign, "AUDITIONS" posted on the door.

Natalie cracks open the door to investigate, but a messy pony tail obscures her view...

It's AVA ROSS, 17, a meek girl in schlubby sweats, pushing a large broom in the studio. The two girls suddenly face-to-face, reel back from each other. Ava laughs nervously.

AVA

Did you need to talk to Mr.
Constantine?

NATALIE

... Where's Mrs. Brewer?

Ava shrugs.

AVA

Oh, good luck today.

NATALIE

It's bad luck to wish good luck.

Some squeals from the hallway pulls Natalie's attention away-
Ava's smile drops, continuing to sweep and watch:

NATALIE (CONT'D)

Mom?! What are you doing here?

Zoe, Jasmine and other dancers surround MRS. PRIMAVERA (50s),
stylish and elegant woman with a box of pointe shoes.

MRS. PRIMAVERA

I brought a fresh pair, just in
case. And you left so fast I didn't
get to wish you a big pile of shit.

The dancers excitedly gasp and Natalie shoots her mom a LOOK.

MRS. PRIMAVERA (CONT'D)

Merde, my love.

NATALIE

Thanks, Mom.

ZOE

Are you costuming the show again?

MRS. PRIMAVERA
 I wouldn't skip your last year if
 it was the end of the world.

NATALIE
Mom. You can go now.

As Mrs. Primavera exits, she points to Natalie and places her hand on her heart, mouthing "You are my heart." Natalie repeats the quiet ritual to her mom with a smile.

INT. REHEARSAL STUDIO - DAY

AUDITIONERS in pointe shoes and dance attire are seated in cliques as Mr. Constantine and MISS MIYAKO and MISS LANA, 40s-60s Ballet Mistresses, stand at the front of the studio.

Natalie, Jasmine, Zoe and Brock stretch in slow motion, legs pulled over their heads and perfectly lit as though they're in a dance ad.

Zoe kisses her phone.

NATALIE
 Did you just kiss your phone?

ZOE
 I kiss Timmy three times and my
 wishes come true.
 (gives phone three pecks)
 I wish to be Clara.
 (to Natalie)
 Wanna try?

Zoe flashes her lock screen: a picture of TIMOTHEE CHALAMET.

NATALIE
 I'm good.

BROCK
 What roles are you auditioning for?

NATALIE
 Just the Sugar Plum Fairy.

JASMINE
 Is your bun too tight? What if you
 don't get it?

NATALIE
 I've got it.

Ava sits with KENZIE, 17, on the gloomy side of the studio, their eyes fixed on Natalie and her friends.

AVA

Look at her, she's like a Bolshoi
sleeper agent. Why am I here again?

KENZIE

Cause Miss Miyako said you should
audition for the Sugar Plum Fairy.
She's like Master Miyagi- talent in
you she sees. Wait, that's Yoda.

AVA

Did you know it's bad luck to wish
good luck?

KENZIE

Yeah, everybody knows that.

Miss Miyako eagerly approaches the center of the studio.

MISS MIYAKO

Dancers! While Mrs. Brewer is on
maternity leave, we're very lucky
to have Mr. Constantine here from
the Romanian Ballet to direct this
season's Nutcracker-

MISS LANA

- not to mention he's sadly
married. What does a woman need to
do to find an eligible bachelor-

MR. CONSTANTINE

Enough.

(to Dancers)

What enters your mind when you
think of the Nutcracker?

ZOE

(hand up)

Christmas.

MR. CONSTANTINE

Yes. Winter. Cold. Shrouds of snow.

Natalie exchanges glances with her friends.

MR. CONSTANTINE (CONT'D)

Anyone else?

Silence.

Mr. Constantine holds up the ancient Snow Globe containing two dark figures in a frosted forest. He cranks the knob, playing a tinny Pas de Deux from Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker.

MR. CONSTANTINE (CONT'D)
The Nutcracker. A Christmas ballet over a hundred years old, danced by by thousands of dancers, millions of times, music reaching billions of ears. There is magic in this. *Real magic. Is there magic in you?*

Mr. Constantine gingerly places the snow globe on the piano.

MR. CONSTANTINE (CONT'D)
Let the auditions begin--

The front door OPENS and all dancers turn in unison to look at GRAYSON, 18, a charming shaggy haired Senior. Grayson halts as ALL THE FACES ARE STARING AT HIM.

MISS MIYAKO
(looking at clipboard)
... Mr. Garcia?

GRAYSON
That's me. Grayson... Super-chill group here, huh?

Natalie chuckles.

MR. CONSTANTINE
Prince Cavaliers and Sugar Plum Fairies stay. Everyone else, wait out in the hall.

Dancers file out as Natalie looks around and sees AUDITIONER #1 staying put. Natalie shoots her a LOOK- Auditioner #1 abruptly gets up and leaves.

Natalie notices Jasmine lingering and raises her eyebrows. Jasmine catches Natalie's look.

NATALIE
What are you doing?

JASMINE
I'm auditioning?

NATALIE
I'll blow my audition if I'm up against my best friend. You'll get Snow Queen. You're perfect for it.

JASMINE
 I was Snow Queen last year.
 Whatever. Fine.

Jasmine scoffs and exits angrily.

Most dancers have left the studio with Natalie, Brock, Grayson, and Ava left. Natalie does a double take at Ava.

MR. CONSTANTINE
 We audition with the Pas de Deux.
 The heart of these roles-

NATALIE
 (hand up)
 The solo has always been the
 audition for the Sugar Plum Fairy.

MR. CONSTANTINE
 Do you know the Pas de Deux?

NATALIE
 Yes. But I've practiced the solo-

MR. CONSTANTINE
 (to Ava)
 Do you know it?

Ava nods.

MR. CONSTANTINE (CONT'D)
 The Pas de Deux! In the other world
 beyond Clara's household while
 everyone sleeps. Ignorant.

GRAYSON
 Ignorant of what?

MR. CONSTANTINE
 The other world.

Thunder booms. The lights flicker. Miss Miyako and Miss Lana look up at the ceiling.

MISS MIYAKO
 (to Mr Constantine)
 What are you doing?

MR. CONSTANTINE
 I'm setting the scene.
 (looking at paper)
 Let's start with Natalie Primavera
 and Brock Dennings.

Natalie pulls on her rehearsal tutu as she walks to her spot on the dance floor with Brock. The PIANIST starts the music.

Natalie and Brock execute the dance with skillful ease. Natalie's turns are in triples, her extensions reach her ear, and with the final lift and drop, Natalie flashes a large smile. Miss Miyako and Miss Lana mouth, "Wow."

Natalie's smile drops as Mr. Constantine shakes his head.

MR. CONSTANTINE (CONT'D)
Miss Primavera, what was going through your mind while dancing?

NATALIE
Well, I was counting, obviously.
And made sure I stayed lifted-

MR. CONSTANTINE
-Next pair. Ava and Grayson?

Ava, in a wrinkled wrap skirt, hurries to the floor with Grayson as Natalie sulkily sits with a frown.

The Pianist begins. Ava and Grayson dance. Ava's leaps are low, her turns are in singles, and her extensions barely make it past her hip, but there's a clear sadness behind her eyes and her body moves as one with the music.

Miss Lana, Miss Miyako, and Mr. Constantine watch, attentively nodding. Even Natalie is pulled in by Ava's performance. Mr. Constantine smiles large as the dancers finish. He looks at Ava and taps his heart.

MR. CONSTANTINE (CONT'D)
Thank you. Goodbye dancers.

Ava's eyes widen- Does she have a chance? Natalie's eyes dart-

NATALIE
Wait, aren't you going to ask her what was in her mind?

MR. CONSTANTINE
I don't have to.

MISS MIYAKO
(jumping in)
You'll hear the audition results tonight by email! Thanks again.

Ava, Grayson, and Brock head out the door.

Miss Lana, Miss Miyako, and Mr. Constantine rummage through papers together. The Pianist COUGHS and eyes the center of the room where Natalie is planted. Arms crossed.

MISS MIYAKO (CONT'D)
(under her breath)
Here we go.

NATALIE
You know Ava Ross has only been dancing for five years? She just got en pointe.

MISS LANA
She probably shouldn't be en pointe-

MR. CONSTANTINE
Your technique is excellent. You don't need to put her down to show how good you are.

NATALIE
That's not what I'm doing!
(takes a deep breath)
Look, I'm a senior and I've played every role in the Nutcracker except the Sugar Plum Fairy. I know every note of that song. It's not a role for beginners, it's the most advanced role in this ballet.

MR. CONSTANTINE
If ballet is only about technique, it would put audiences to sleep. I want to feel something. The song is about heartbreak. I want to feel my heart break.

NATALIE
It's a happy ballet! It's about Christmas! Christmas makes people feel happy.

MR. CONSTANTINE
Christmas makes me feel agony.

The lights flicker.

MISS MIYAKO
That's creepy. It's like I'm teaching in public school again.

MR. CONSTANTINE
Play the piece!

The Pianist obediently begins playing the Pas De Deux.

MR. CONSTANTINE (CONT'D)
Listen. From the other world.

NATALIE
The Land of Sweets.

MR. CONSTANTINE
Memory is not sweet, it's
nostalgic, gone forever. Don't
think about choreography, social
media, or Chris Hemsworth. Find
purpose in it.

NATALIE
Dance is purpose for me-

MR. CONSTANTINE
Listen!

Natalie closes her eyes. The music seems to grow louder and Natalie's shoulders relax, her head swaying with the notes. Mr. Constantine eyes the Globe on the piano and smiles.

NATALIE
(sotto)
Holy shit.

MR. CONSTANTINE
Yes. Holy shit. Can you feel all of
that and dance at the same time?

MISS MIYAKO
Mr. Constantine, there's over a
hundred dancers waiting.

Natalie snaps out of it and charges out the door with a huff.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Natalie closes her dance bag with a furious ZIP. Jasmine and Zoe stand around her with nervous excitement.

JASMINE
That was beautiful, Nat.

ZOE
You have it for sure. Ava Ross is a
corps dancer at best. I've seen
smaller shoes on clowns.

Miss Miyako pops her head out of the door.

MISS MIYAKO
Snow Queens next.
(to Jasmine)
I'm surprised I didn't see you in
there with the Sugar Plum Fairies.

ZOE
Natalie's the Sugar Plum Fairy.

Jasmine walks in confidently with a group of NERVOUS DANCERS.

Natalie walks down the hall when an eager Ava approaches-

AVA
Wow... You made that look so easy.

NATALIE
(walking past)
All ballet looks the same when it's
done right.

EXT. HISTORIC BRIDGE - SUNSET

Natalie is lost on her phone swiping over and over to refresh
her email, sitting on the hood of a car.

A few feet away, Jasmine, Zoe, and Brock are taking in the
view and sipping wine coolers.

MOM (TEXT)
Whatever role you get is wonderful.

Natalie clicks over to Ava's Instagram page and pauses on a
photo of Ava and Kenzie making goofy faces. Natalie turns her
camera on selfie mode and takes a goofy face pic.

GRAYSON (O.S.)
Cute selfie.

Natalie quickly hides the pic and swings around to see
Grayson standing behind her.

NATALIE
What are you doing here?

JASMINE
We invited him! Get off your phone,
Nat! You're getting the role!

INT. REHEARSAL STUDIO - EVENING

Mr. Constantine, Miss Miyako, and Miss Lana sit in the middle of the floor with audition paperwork laid out everywhere.

Ava timidly walks into the room interrupting the teachers.

AVA

Mr. Constantine? I did work-study hours for Mrs. Brewer and I was wondering if I could help with anything and collect some hours?

MISS MIYAKO

Ava, we can't let you in on this end of the process.

AVA

Of course. Sorry.

Ava starts to turn away.

MR. CONSTANTINE

Miss Ross, I could use your help with something.

INT. MR. CONSTANTINE'S OFFICE - EVENING

Ava opens a box in an dusky office stacked with boxes.

MR. CONSTANTINE

Books go on the bookshelf. You can leave everything else alone.

Ava notices the SNOW GLOBE on Mr. Constantine's desk. She picks it up, running her finger over the inscription:

AVA

(reading)

Dare to wish, feel magic's kiss?

MR. CONSTANTINE

Beautiful, isn't it? It's very old-must be handled delicately.

Ava sets it down. Mr. Constantine turns to leave-

AVA

Do I actually have a chance at getting the part?

MR. CONSTANTINE
You have the same chance as Miss
Primavera.

AVA
But... She's Natalie Primavera.

MR. CONSTANTINE
She's a girl trying her best. Just
like you, Miss Ross.

EXT. PEDESTRIAN OVERPASS - NIGHT

Natalie refreshes her email again.

BROCK
You ever heard a watched pot never
boils?

NATALIE
You ever been kicked in the balls
by a ballerina?

ZOE
(on her phone)
Oh my God, it's in! It's in!

On Natalie's phone an email pops up from WILBURN HS DANCE
DEPT with the subject line "NUTCRACKER AUDITION RESULTS"

INT. MR. CONSTANTINE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Ava is slotting books onto the bookshelf when her phone
buzzes: "NUTCRACKER AUDITION RESULTS"

Ava sits down with a deep breath. She presses the link.

EXT. PEDESTRIAN OVERPASS - NIGHT

"ROLE: SUGAR PLUM FAIRY"

Natalie exhales with a huge smile.

INT. MR. CONSTANTINE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Ava slams her phone down in disappointment. Her email opened
to "ROLE: UNDERSTUDY TO SUGAR PLUM FAIRY"

Ava brushes away a tear.

EXT. PEDESTRIAN OVERPASS - NIGHT

Natalie's phone: VIDEO LIVE STREAM with Natalie, Zoe, Brock, and Jasmine. Grayson filming.

NATALIE

Hey guys! It's Natalie Primavera!
My best friends and I were just
enjoying our last summer night out
before Senior year starts-

JASMINE

And voila! We got our audition
results for our final Nutcracker!

INT. MR. CONSTANTINE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Ava is watching Natalie's live stream as Mr. Constantine walks in. She quickly sets her phone down.

MR. CONSTANTINE

We're heading home.
(beat)
You danced well, Miss Ross.

AVA

Not well enough.

MR. CONSTANTINE

An understudy is an invaluable position and only given to someone we can trust with the role.

AVA

I just really wanted that role.

MR. CONSTANTINE

So did Miss Primavera.

AVA

But she always gets the role. She gets everything. Everything always breaks her way and I just wish I could like to be her.

MR. CONSTANTINE

You ever think that Miss Primavera wishes she could be like you?

AVA

(snorts, wiping away tears)
No? Why would anyone wish to be me?
That's... Stupid.

A faint green light seems to twinkle from inside the Snow Globe sitting on Mr. Constantine's desk. He notices.

MR. CONSTANTINE
See you at rehearsal tomorrow, Miss Ross. Get some rest.

Mr. Constantine exits.

Ava picks up the snow globe and cranks the knob. The Pas De Deux variation plays from the globe.

On Ava's phone Natalie's live stream plays in the background:

JASMINE
And you're looking at the Snow Queen! Yep. Two years in a row!

ZOE
And I'm Clara! Eeeee, I couldn't have done it without my bae, Timothee Chalamet!

NATALIE
And Brock here is the Russian Soloist! And I'm the Sugar Plum Fairy! I can't wait to share this journey with all of you from now until Opening Night! Here's to one million followers before first rehearsal tomorrow!
(winks)
Royal Ballet, I'm looking at you!

EXT. PEDESTRIAN OVERPASS - NIGHT

Natalie is mid Penche Arabesque pose. The full moon behind her, making her a beautiful silhouette. Brock snaps a photo. Natalie lets go of the pose and grabs the phone and frowns.

NATALIE
(holds up phone)
What do you think of this?

JASMINE
Love it. Your lines are perfection.

NATALIE
No, but what does it make you feel?

Silence.

Natalie steps back and examines the scene.

NATALIE (CONT'D)
I got it.

Natalie climbs on top of the cement railing of the overpass.

GRAYSON
Whoa whoa whoa! Hey, is that safe?!

NATALIE
It's perfectly safe if you have
solid technique. A million people
are going to see this photo and all
I want is that when I dance, I want
people to feel...

GRAYSON
Worried?

NATALIE
Magic.

Natalie looks up at the stars above her, takes a moment
before stretching into the pose again and her foot wobbles
slightly underneath her.

INT. MR. CONSTANTINE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Ava's on Natalie's Instagram page, scrolling past smile after
smile, role after role.

Ava looks from her phone to the snow globe. She runs her
finger over the inscription, "Dare to Wish, Feel Magic's
Kiss" seems to glisten, she shakes the globe so the snow
within swirls, sparkling green.

EXT. PEDESTRIAN OVERPASS - NIGHT

Natalie is mid-pose.

BROCK
Got it!

Natalie's foot SLIPS and she FALLS over the edge. Shouts and
screams come from her friends-

INT. MR. CONSTANTINE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Ava shuts her eyes and takes a deep breath.

AVA
I wish I was Natalie Primavera.

The Snow Globe ENGULFS in black fog in a flash and a green blinding glow illuminates the entire office.

Ava gasps as her "spirit," a translucent essence of her, puffs off her body.

EXT. PEDESTRIAN OVERPASS - NIGHT

Natalie is falling in slow motion, screaming as Ava's "spirit" ZOOMS toward her from the night sky.

The ground approaches closer and closer. Natalie squeezes her eyes as her "spirit" exits her body just as Ava's enters it.

BLACK OUT upon hitting the ground.

INT. MR. CONSTANTINE'S OFFICE - DAY

POV shot. Blurry at first. Sunlight through the window. The GLOWING GREEN snow globe on its side with the inscription "Dare to Wish, Feel Magic's Kiss" coming into focus.

NATALIE (V.O.)
What the...? Where am I?

A phone lies on the desk, opened to Natalie's Instagram page: the shot of her doing a Penche Arabesque on the bridge. A phenomenal photograph.

Note: Ava's body is now inhabited by Natalie and vice versa. Henceforth, Ava and Natalie will be referred to as their "soul/brain" name rather than their "body" name.

Natalie stands, hand on her head and dazed. The door handle jiggles and Natalie tucks under Mr. Constantine's desk right before the door opens.

Mr. Constantine walks in, Natalie sees his feet planted in front of his desk, picking up the snow globe.

MR. CONSTANTINE (V.O.)
And so we go again.

Mr. Constantine sets the globe back down and exits.

INT. REHEARSAL STUDIO - DAY

Natalie walks out of the office and into the rehearsal room, catching her reflection. Natalie HALTS, rushes back in front of the mirror: face to face with Ava's Body.

Natalie walks closer and closer to the mirror, mouth agape as she touches her face, her hair, breathing heavier.

MR. CONSTANTINE (O.S.)
Miss Ross, is everything okay?

Mr. Constantine is at the corner of the room.

NATALIE
No... This is impossible.

Natalie looks back at the mirror.

MR. CONSTANTINE
It may seem impossible to fill Miss Primavera's shoes due to her-
accident, but I think you'll find
it in you.

NATALIE
... Accident? What accident?

The bell rings. The hallway floods with students and Natalie turns back but Mr. Constantine has vanished.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Natalie stumbles into the hallway filled with STUDENTS of all different art disciplines- DRAMA, ART, MUSIC, DANCE. "Back to School" artwork decorates the hallway.

Natalie spots Zoe, Brock, and Jasmine walking together.

NATALIE
Jasmine! Zoe! Brock!

They continue walking. Natalie runs to catch up to them, reaching for Zoe.

ZOE
Ugh! Do you mind?!

NATALIE
I need your help. I'm seriously
freaking out here.

Jasmine flashes Natalie a sympathetic smile.

JASMINE
Hey, it's okay. I'd be panicking
too if I were in your shoes-

Natalie throws her arms around Jasmine in a tight hug. Jasmine shoots Zoe and Brock a "wtf" look.

NATALIE
Listen! I'm Natalie! But I'm-

JASMINE
I know. We're gonna fix it.

NATALIE
(in awe)
You know how to fix this?

JASMINE
We'll go to Mr. Constantine and let him know that we're switching roles. I can be the Sugar Plum Fairy and-

NATALIE
No, I'm the Sugar Plum Fairy.

JASMINE
Nobody expected what happened to Natalie to happen.

BROCK
I honestly saw it coming.

NATALIE
The accident? What happened?

ZOE
Don't play.

Jasmine leans in toward Natalie.

JASMINE
(whispers)
You're balance challenged and as flexible as a petrified fossil. The Sugar Plum Fairy needs to go to someone actually capable of dancing the role. Someone like me.

Natalie stumbles back away from her friends and into-TREVOR, 17, a gaunt undeniably nerdy kid with a viola case. He plants a kiss on Natalie's lips. Natalie slaps him- HARD.

TREVOR
Ow! Sorry! I don't know how to congratulate you when it's because of something so terrible.

Natalie's breathing becomes irregular, her vision blurry and sound muffled. An EXIT sign illuminates down the hall. Natalie makes a beeline for it.

TREVOR (CONT'D)
Cool cool! We'll talk later!

Kenzie pops in front of Natalie.

KENZIE
Ava! Are you okay? I just heard.

NATALIE
Oh my God, I'm dead.

An overhead screen starts playing the abrasive song for morning announcements and we see PRINCIPAL WATERS, 50s.

PRINCIPAL WATERS
Welcome back all returning and new students. I regret to start the first morning announcement of the school year with some unfortunate news about our very own Natalie Primavera.

NATALIE
Oh shit. I'm actually dead.

PRINCIPAL WATERS
The Wilburn Arts Senior fell fifteen feet last night and is currently at St. John's hospital. Her family asks for privacy and we're all looking forward to welcoming Natalie back when she recovers... Go wolves.

NATALIE
I'm not dead!

KENZIE
I know it's a lot, but you've got this. You're Jodie from Center Stage, starting from bad-feet underdog to badass dancer.
(pulls out her phone)
This is a great photo though.

Kenzie holds her phone showing the moon photo on Natalie's Instagram page.

NATALIE
Thank you.

Kenzie looks at her- confused.

NATALIE (CONT'D)
I gotta go.

KENZIE
What about Chemistry?!

Natalie rushes out of the hallway and into-

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - DAY

Natalie walks hastily and makes a turn-

The sign INTENSIVE CARE UNIT looms overhead and she stops before the locked double doors, waiting.

Then, an ELDERLY COUPLE exits and Natalie slips through.

INT. ICU NURSE STATION/ICU ROOM 202 - DAY

The chart in the door says "Primavera, Natalie". The curtain is drawn in the room, with just a leg in a cast in view.

Natalie reaches to pull back the curtain when NURSE SANDY, 30s, pops in front of her.

NURSE SANDY
Family only. Step out please.

Natalie backs out of the room, herded away by Nurse Sandy.

MR. PRIMAVERA, 50s, walks up in a wrinkled suit, blood shot eyes, carrying a small coffee cup and spots Natalie.

NATALIE
Dad! Uh, Natalie's Dad. I need to talk to her- Natalie.

MR. PRIMAVERA
She's... Still asleep.

NATALIE
Is she going to be okay?

MR. PRIMAVERA
(hesitates)
Yeah.

NATALIE
Awesome. Are you drinking vending machine coffee?

MR. PRIMAVERA

Guilty. Don't come closer. My
breath will knock you out.

NATALIE

There's a Coffee Lovers down the
block. Want me to get you one?

Mr. Primavera studies Natalie.

MR. PRIMAVERA

You're one of Natalie's friends?

NATALIE

(nods)

It's really important that I talk
to her. Trust me.

MR. PRIMAVERA

Okay. We might be ready for
visitors in a few days?

NATALIE

... A few days... Okay.

Mr. Primavera raises his coffee cup as a "Bye" and exits into the room. Natalie follows Nurse Sandy to the Nurses' Station.

NATALIE (CONT'D)

How long is that cast going to be
on her leg? Is it a clean break?

NURSE SANDY

I can't answer any of your
questions. It's a law called HIPAA.

NATALIE

How long does it take for a broken
leg to heal then? Like generally?

NURSE SANDY

Six to eight weeks.

NATALIE

And have you noticed anything weird
with her? Like with her head or
something? Hypothetically, if the
spirit of Natalie is in someone
else then logically, that someone
else's spirit is in Natalie, right?

NURSE SANDY

Well, HIPAA-thetically, we think in terms of medicine here, like-facts. What you're talking about is more like magic. Like bullshit.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

Natalie pats her jeans and pulls out a work-study form signed by Mr. Constantine and Ava's phone. The screen has a crack and a picture of Ava with Trevor kissing her cheek.

NATALIE

Gross.

Natalie goes to Ava's Instagram page: 86 followers. She clicks on a pic of Ava and Kenzie captioned: "AUDITION DAY!"

Natalie goes to her own Instagram page and sees that she now has 1.6 million followers.

NATALIE (CONT'D)

Oh my God.

Natalie clicks on the Moon photo and scrolls through comment after comment of well wishes. One comment makes her pause:

ROYAL BALLET: Fast recovery, Natalie. We look forward to your audition here!

Natalie's eyes widen and she presses the phone against her heart like a love letter. She sees her reflection in the elevator doors- Ava's face staring back at her.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Natalie rushes down the hall to Ava's locker and struggles with the lock, spinning, guessing random digits.

After several failed attempts, Natalie pulls on the lock and lets out a frustrated scream.

MISS MIYAKO (O.S.)

Miss Ross, did you lose something?

Natalie sees Miss Miyako stepping toward her cautiously.

NATALIE

My body.

MISS MIYAKO

Well, that sounds like a conversation for your therapist. You're late for rehearsal.

(lowers voice)
This is a really bad first impression you're making.

NATALIE

I'm kind of going through a life crisis here, okay?

MISS MIYAKO

Hey, show a little compassion, mm?
I think maybe Natalie is having a worse day than you today. I vouched for you. So let's go.

NATALIE

You vouched for Ava? Why?

MISS MIYAKO

Don't make me regret it.

INT. REHEARSAL STUDIO - DAY

Natalie enters the studio, already FULL OF DANCERS lining the wall: stretching, taking selfies, putting on pointe shoes.

In the middle of the studio, Zoe dances the Clara solo with Kenzie dancing simultaneously in the back- a place designated for the understudy.

FRITZ, a nine year old Romanian boy grabs the imaginary doll from Zoe and smashes it to the ground. Zoe and Kenzie put on their best "surprise" faces.

FRITZ

Awful! Father, we need do it again.

MR. CONSTANTINE

Fritz, be nice.

ZOE

That's your son? And his name is Fritz?

MR. CONSTANTINE

I have many children, but this is the one I prefer most. Places!

Fritz joins the other PARTY CHILDREN, but they all move away from him. He eyes them and takes one step closer and they all take one step away.

MR. CONSTANTINE (CONT'D)
Don't mind them, Fritz. They will all be dead one day.

The Children look at him dumbfounded.

MR. CONSTANTINE (CONT'D)
My apologies, I meant to say that in Romanian. Again!

BEAN ROSS (8), a precocious punk in a leotard and skirt grabs Natalie on the arm.

NATALIE
Ow! Do you mind?

BEAN
Where were you last night? Mom is freaking out and you're so grounded!

Natalie dodges Bean. Bean crosses her arms, shaking her head.

MISS MIYAKO
(snapping fingers)
You have ten minutes, Miss Ross.

Natalie spots her former friends: Jasmine, Zoe, and Brock and starts to head toward them when-

KENZIE
Ava! Hey! Over here!

Kenzie enthusiastically waves standing in the corner with THEO, 18, slightly portly male dancer wearing a rainbow bandana. Natalie reluctantly makes her way over.

NATALIE
Hey Kenzie and- Theo, right? Uh, what were we up to last night? Ouija boards? Weird witchy spells?

THEO
I thought you were doing work-study for Mr. Constantine last night?

Miss Miyako tosses her hands up to say, "What's the hold up?"

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Natalie is dressed in Ava's dance clothes, her tights have runs and her wrap skirt is a wrinkled mess. Natalie pulls out Ava's pointe shoes, they look disgusting.

INT. REHEARSAL STUDIO - DAY

The Pianist is playing the Pas de Deux as Natalie and Grayson dance. After the second rotation in Natalie's pirouette, her ankle wobbles and she stumbles out of the turn-

MR. CONSTANTINE

Keep going.

Grayson and Natalie continue. Natalie struggles with every extension, lift, and turn. Grayson supports her, eyeing her with concern. Finally Natalie ankle gives out again and she lands flat on her bottom.

Dancers sitting along the wall giggle.

MR. CONSTANTINE (CONT'D)

You danced this beautifully at the audition yesterday.

NATALIE

Sure, if having a weak core and no flexibility is beautiful. And who approved pointe shoes for these ankles? Not to mention these shoes are dead.

MISS LANA

(to Miss Miyako)

Somebody learned to be a diva pretty fast.

MR. CONSTANTINE

In my office, Miss Ross.

INT. MR. CONSTANTINE'S OFFICE - DAY

Natalie follows Mr. Constantine into the office and leans against his desk with the glowing globe sitting on the edge.

MR. CONSTANTINE

I know you're upset, but sometimes things happen for a reason.

NATALIE

What things? Do you know what's
happened with me?

MR. CONSTANTINE

Last night you were sitting there,
upset to be cast as the understudy,
wishing you could be Natalie
Primavera... And here you are.

NATALIE

(eyes widen)

Here who is?

MR. CONSTANTINE

The Sugar Plum Fairy.

(beat)

Miss Ross.

NATALIE

That's it! I need to find some
crystals to touch or a well to
throw some cash in because nobody
has any answers for me, especially
you. And why would they? It's
literally psychotic. I've gone
completely insane!

Natalie throws her hands in the air swiping the globe- making it FLY. Mr. Constantine DIVES for it and catches it before it can hit the ground.

MR. CONSTANTINE

You have to be more careful, Miss
Primavera!

NATALIE

I knew it! Nice gaslighting by the
way. Fix it! Fix it right now!

MR. CONSTANTINE

It takes two to pas de deux.

NATALIE

What?

MR. CONSTANTINE

Last night, Ava wished to be you
and you wished to be-

NATALIE

I would *never*. I wasn't even here!

MR. CONSTANTINE

The magic transcends space, Miss Primavera. I don't know how, but I do know to change places, it would have taken both of you. Was there no moment last night-

NATALIE

-I'm telling you, I would *never* wish to be Ava.

MR. CONSTANTINE

(shrugs)

Okay, wish to go back.

Mr. Constantine hands Natalie the Snow Globe and exits. Left alone in the office, she studies the globe.

NATALIE

(reading)

Dare to Wish, Feel Magic's Kiss.

(shutting her eyes)

Okay... I wish-

Suddenly Natalie hears commotion and opens her eyes and sees Mrs. Primavera in the studio.

NATALIE (CONT'D)

(whispers)

Mom?

INT. REHEARSAL STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

Mrs. Primavera looks as though she's been crying, but has a smile on her face. Everyone huddles around her and Jasmine gives her a large hug.

MRS. PRIMAVERA

I just wanted to stop by and give you all the update on Natalie.

(takes in a deep breath)

She hasn't woken up yet, but they're done with testing and she's going to be okay.

Dancers exhale with relief. Jasmine and Zoe hug each other. Natalie steps out into the studio.

MRS. PRIMAVERA (CONT'D)

But the specialist told us that she shattered her right hip and-

(swallows)

She won't be able to dance again.

Natalie's face falls. Mrs. Primavera continues talking, but it's muffled. Everything around Natalie turns white.

Natalie snaps out of it: sight and sound are back to normal. Dancers murmuring and comforting Mrs. Primavera.

Natalie looks at the Snow Globe in her hand and races out of the Studio, unnoticed by all but Mr. Constantine.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Mr. Constantine exits the studio and follows Natalie storming down the hall with the Snow Globe in her hand-

NATALIE
I wish my body was healed and I was
back in it.

The snow globe continues glowing, unchanged.

MR. CONSTANTINE
This isn't a lamp or monkey paw.
You can't go back in time.

Natalie notices Mr. Constantine behind her.

NATALIE
... But I'm the Sugar Plum Fairy.

Natalie stares at the globe with dismay.

MR. CONSTANTINE
Ava is the Sugar Plum Fairy. You're
in a hospital bed.
(softly)
There's an opportunity to learn
from Ava and when you wake up-

NATALIE
(light bulb)
What opportunity? Wait, to fulfill
my destiny as the Sugar Plum Fairy?

MR. CONSTANTINE
Uh, well the show is three months
away... I should warn you, there
are consequences in staying in too
long. The magic becomes unstable-

The lights flicker on and off. Natalie notices, concerned
momentarily before looking back at the snow globe.

NATALIE

As soon as Ava wakes up, I'll
switch back. If I can get this body
Sugar Plum ready, I can recover
from a broken hip.

Natalie lingers on the glowing globe for a moment before handing it back to Mr. Constantine. He takes it cautiously.

MR. CONSTANTINE

Miss Primavera, be careful.

NATALIE

Mr. Constantine, I've survived high school. I got this.

INT. ARTISTIC DANCEWEAR - DAY

A PILE OF POINTE SHOES, REHEARSAL TUTU, and DANCE ATTIRE lands on the CASHIER's counter. Ava's phone lights up, "MOM CALLING." Natalie swipes to ignore.

CASHIER

Whoa. You get robbed or something?

NATALIE

Something like that.

CASHIER

(punching buttons)

That'll be... \$1,416.25.

NATALIE

Yikes. I guess it's the beginning of the season, right?

CASHIER

Right.

Natalie rummages through Ava's bag and pulls a credit card out of her wallet, handing it to the Cashier with a smile.

EXT. PRIMAVERA MCMANSION - DAY

Natalie stands outside of her beautiful house, the Uber driving away, and her pastel car parked out in front.

Natalie turns the door knob, but doesn't push it open. Instead she carefully releases the knob and knocks.

A moment later, Mrs. Primavera answers the door, hair in a messy bun and a measuring tape in her hands.

MRS. PRIMAVERA
Hi, can I help you?

NATALIE
Oh, I thought you'd be at the
hospital.

MRS. PRIMAVERA
Are you one of Natalie's friends?

NATALIE
Yes. I'm-

MRS. PRIMAVERA
The understudy.
(catches herself)
I mean, Ava. You're not the
understudy anymore.
(beat)
Come in. Come in.

INT. PRIMAVERA MCMANSION - DAY

A labradoodle, CLICHE runs up to greet Natalie.

NATALIE
Cliche! How are you, girl?

Natalie kneels and lets the dog tackle and slobber all over
her. Mrs. Primavera smiles.

MRS. PRIMAVERA
Have you been here before?

NATALIE
... Once. You weren't here. And
animals love me.

MRS. PRIMAVERA
Animals love Natalie, too.
(beat)
I'm sorry, my head's in a million
places. Why are you here again?

NATALIE
Oh, uh- I wanted to decorate
Natalie's hospital room with some
of her things so she feels at home
when she wakes up.

MRS. PRIMAVERA
(choked up)
WOW. That is so sweet. I didn't
know you and Nat were so close.

Natalie swallows and nods.

NATALIE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Natalie walks into her bedroom. It's like out of a magazine. King size bed in the middle of the room. Vanity mirror with a vast makeup collection displayed. A ballet barre installed with a large hanging mirror.

Natalie runs her hand over the barre, her makeup, and plops down on her bed.

Cliche jumps on her lap to cuddle.

Natalie spots a framed photo collage titled "Nutcracker": A photo of young Natalie captioned: "Baby Mouse, Age 5" followed by portraits of her as all other Nutcracker roles with a single EMPTY FRAME labeled "Sugar Plum Fairy."

Natalie pulls a duffel bag out of the closet, a royal ballet keychain hooked to the zipper, and collects a stuffed animal, a sweatshirt, a family photo.

Natalie opens a drawer and sees a packet labeled ROYAL BALLET AUDITION PACKET. Natalie shoves the packet into Ava's bag along with a few makeup pieces.

MRS. PRIMAVERA'S OFFICE - DAY

Natalie creeps to the doorway and her mother is busy at her sewing machine putting together tutus.

NATALIE
You're costuming the show?

MRS. PRIMAVERA
I costume it every year.

NATALIE
I thought with Natalie out...

MRS. PRIMAVERA
It's what Nat would want.

Natalie frowns, watching her mom momentarily before exiting.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - DUSK

Natalie climbs out of an Uber, looks at an apartment complex.

NATALIE
Hi, I'm Ava Ross. And I'm poor.

INT. AVA'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Natalie enters cautiously.

NATALIE
Hello?

MS. ROSS, 50s, emerges, near running. She sees Natalie and gives her a large hug.

MS. ROSS
Where the hell have you been?

NATALIE
Uh- Did you hear I'm the Sugar Plum Fairy?

MS. ROSS
I know, what horrible news. I can't imagine what her mother is going through.
(sees the bags)
What's all this?

NATALIE
Just some stuff for the role.

MS. ROSS
Why didn't you call?

NATALIE
Oh... It broke?

Natalie shows Ms. Ross the cracked screen.

MS. ROSS
You can't stay out without my explicit permission, you hear? Were you with Trevor? I know I said I was okay with you two having sex, but-

NATALIE
Ew! Stop! I fell asleep at school.
(scrambling)
(MORE)

NATALIE (CONT'D)
Can we talk tomorrow? I just need
to be alone right now. To process.

Natalie rushes down the hall.

AVA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

There are two beds in the room. One with a cartoon character comforter and the other with a plain purple comforter.

Natalie sits on the bed with the purple comforter. A HARVARD UNIVERSITY flag hangs above the bed.

NATALIE (V.O.)
Pull yourself together, Natalie.
(fingers tapping)
Get in character. Who is Ava Ross?

Natalie pulls out Ava's phone and opens up Ava's Instagram page. It has about ten posts. One with Ava and Trevor licking ice cream from the same cone.

NATALIE (V.O.)
Okay, I have horrible taste in
guys. And a mom that's way too
involved in all that.

The Harvard flag catches her eye.

NATALIE (V.O.)
I want to go to Harvard? Weird.
(looking around)
And I'm poor. And share a room with
a little kid.

Natalie spots a PINK DIARY sitting on the floor.

NATALIE (V.O.)
Of course! All losers have diaries!

Natalie picks up the diary and begins reading. It's in kid handwriting: Found condom wrapper in Ava's Drawer. Mom texted Dad yesterday, "We need to talk."

BEAN (O.S.)
What are you doing?!

Natalie looks up to see Bean standing at the door.

NATALIE
(recognizes)
You... Baby mouse, right?

BEAN

Yeah, so?! I didn't want to be a
party girl anyway!

NATALIE

You're too sloppy for Party Girl.

Bean takes her pink diary back.

BEAN

Rude! I'm going to find out what's
up with you.

NATALIE

Okay, Nancy Drew. Get out.

Natalie shoves Bean out of the room and shuts the door. Bean
bangs the other side of the door.

BEAN (O.S.)

MOM! Ava locked me out again!

Natalie looks at herself in the mirror- Ava's reflection and
takes in a deep breath.

NATALIE

Let's get your ass in shape.

END OF EPISODE 1

AVA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Early morning and still dark. Ava's phone chimes: 5:00AM.

Natalie shuts off the alarm and jumps out of bed.

EXT. STREET - SUNRISE

Natalie jogs as the sun rises.

Natalie snaps a photo of the sunrise.

She posts the photo on Ava's Instagram page with the caption:
"Early bird gets the worm. #Sugarplumfairy #Nutcracker"

INT. AVA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Bean wakes up and sees Natalie at her dresser doing ballet
barre exercises. Bean points two fingers from her eyes to
Natalie to say, "I'm watching you."

INT. AVA'S HALLWAY - DAY

Bean rattles the locked knob of the bathroom door.

BEAN

Please! I need to pee!

INT. AVA'S BATHROOM - DAY

Natalie puts her hair into a perfect high bun. She's applying the lipstick she stole from her room and takes a selfie with Ava's phone.

She posts the photo on Instagram with the caption:
"#TutuTuesday #Bunhead #Sugarplumfairy"

INT. AVA'S KITCHEN - DAY

Ms. Ross has breakfast ready: Fruit Loops cereal. Bean is chowing down and Natalie makes a face at the bowl.

NATALIE

Do we have any coffee?

MS. ROSS

When did you start drinking coffee?

NATALIE

Now. Figure I should start.

BEAN

Caffeine is a drug you know.

Ms. Ross walks to the counter to pour an extra cup of coffee. Bean pulls out a PILL container from Ms. Ross's purse and pushes it towards Natalie. Natalie snatches it and tosses it back in the purse.

NATALIE

(whisper)

Stop being weird!

BEAN

Innnnteresting.

Bean jots in her diary as Ms. Ross hands Natalie a mug of coffee. Natalie takes a sip and makes a disgusted face. Ms. Ross folds her arms and eyes Ava nervously.

MS. ROSS

With your AP classes, your work-study, and college applications, maybe we should talk about you switching roles-

NATALIE

You too? I'm the Sugar Plum Fairy.

MS. ROSS

Ava, this is just an extra curricular. You're not a ballerina.

NATALIE

... WOW. I mean, I don't blame you for thinking it. We're all thinking it. Let's face it- this body's weak with shit training. But to say it out loud? To your own daughter? That's really cold, Ms- Mom.

Ms. Ross looks up and her chin starts to tremble. Natalie rolls her eyes.

MS. ROSS

I'm sorry, I didn't sleep. I just want to know what's going on. You skipped school, Ava.

Natalie watches Ms. Ross fight tears for a moment and sighs in defeat. Bean is jotting in her notebook with fury.

NATALIE

You really want to know what's going on?

MS. ROSS

Yes! Just talk to me. You won't get in trouble.

BEAN

Even after saying shit?

MS. ROSS

(to Bean)

Will you get dressed please?

Bean frowns and stomps off.

BEAN (O.S.)

Being a kid is shit!

NATALIE

Okay, here goes... I'm not your daughter. I'm Natalie Primavera. Ava made a wish on a magic snow globe to be me and so now she's in my body- in a coma and I'm stuck in this one. But, I'm going to turn Ava into a ballerina and basically, save the show. And yeah... It is a lot of pressure.

Ms. Ross looks at her, wiping away the tears from her cheek.

MS. ROSS
Natalie Primavera?

NATALIE
(relieved)
Yes!

MS. ROSS
(leaving table)
Not funny, Ava.

INT. CHEMISTRY CLASSROOM - DAY

Natalie and Grayson stand together at a lab table with textbooks and 3D atom models. Kenzie in front of them.

Grayson peeks at Natalie's feet doing dégagés while she scrolls through Ava's phone, reading comment after comment.

"You will never replace Natalie!"

"Too stupid looking for Tutus"

"#NotmySugarPlumFairy"

The chemistry teacher, MR. HALL, 40s, forgettable in appearance and a voice that could be mistaken for white noise. His sweater vest has a portrait of a cat.

MR. HALL
In order to calculate the value of the enthalpy change of the reaction, we'll use the balanced equation for the oxidation-reduction reaction...

Kenzie turns around.

KENZIE
Where'd you go yesterday?

NATALIE
To the hospital. I went to see-

KENZIE
Natalie Primavera?! Ohmigod, I
don't think I've ever seen her
without makeup on. How'd she look?

NATALIE
Super messed up.

KENZIE
Is it bad that that makes me happy
in a small way?

NATALIE
Yes. What's wrong with you?

Kenzie's smile drops.

MR. HALL
Ava, do you have something you want
to share with the whole class?

NATALIE
Oh, me? No thank you.

MR. HALL
Then would you like to explain to
the class what a Happy Atom is?

NATALIE
One that doesn't take this class?

The class "Ooooos."

Mr. Hall's face scrunches up and tries to stifle himself from
crying. Kenzie turns around, raises her eyebrows to say,
"What are you doing?!"

NATALIE (CONT'D)
What? Since when does *anyone* care
about Chemistry?

Kenzie and a FEW OTHER CLASSMATES go up to comfort Mr. Hall.
Natalie puts her face in her hands.

GRAYSON
Is he always this brittle?

NATALIE
Thank you!

CHEMISTRY STUDENT
Catastrophe just died, jackhole.

GRAYSON
Who?

CHEMISTRY STUDENT
His cat!

The class gathers to comfort Mr. Hall as he sobs. Natalie sits alone before rushing to grab the hall pass.

INT. BATHROOM STALL - DAY

Natalie scrolls through her own (Natalie's) social media feed. She scrolls past smiling picture after smiling picture.

Zoe and Jasmine enter. Natalie peers at them through the crack as Zoe puts in eyedrops and Jasmine has her phone out. Natalie can't get a clear look at what's happening.

JASMINE
You're ridiculous.

ZOE
No. Watch. It's gonna look authentic. Okay. On the count of three. Ready? One, Two, Three.

JASMINE
Okay, took it.

ZOE
Perfect. Looks kind of artsy. Do you think Timothee will see it?

Ava's phone buzzes. Natalie looks at it. It's Zoe's Instagram page with the photo she just took: her face with one "tear" running down her cheek captioned: "Devastated about my bestie @NATALIEPRIMAVERA. Get better soon!"

NATALIE
(whisper)
You've got to be kidding.

ZOE (O.S.)
You're made to be the Sugar Plum Fairy. Why didn't you just auditioned for it?

JASMINE (O.S.)
And deal with Natalie Prima Donna?
Not worth it.

Both girls laugh as they exit. Natalie's jaw drops.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Natalie marches down the hallway- fuming. Trevor jogs carrying his viola case and catches up with her.

TREVOR
Aves! Avers! AVA!

Natalie walks faster, dodging students.

TREVOR (CONT'D)
Slow down there, Speed Racer!

Trevor jogs in front of Natalie and walks backwards-

TREVOR (CONT'D)
So, I was wondering if-

NATALIE
You need to stop following me.

TREVOR
Did I do something wrong?

Natalie pushes past Trevor and he keeps following her-

TREVOR (CONT'D)
Wait! Can't you talk to me?

NATALIE
Let's just cool it, okay?

TREVOR
Cool it? What does that mean?

NATALIE
Like, let's just pause this whole thing until after Nutcracker.

TREVOR
That's three months, Ava.

NATALIE
It'll be okay. Really. Just focus on your tiny violin there, 'kay?

Trevor runs into a water fountain and falls. Kenzie at her locker, turns and sees this. Natalie keeps walking.

TREVOR
It's a viola.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY/REHEARSAL STUDIO - DAY

Natalie starts to push the studio door open but hears muffled sounds behind it. She peers through the window and sees Jasmine, Mr. Constantine, Miss Miyako, and Miss Lana all having a meeting.

MISS MIYAKO

Jasmine, if you wanted to play the Sugar Plum Fairy you should have auditioned for it.

JASMINE

And compete against my best friend? You know I couldn't do that. Look, Ava's a hobbyist. I'm hoping to go pro. So, start me off as understudy. I mean, you can't risk the entire show by not having an understudy to the SPF, right?

Natalie pulls away from the door, breathing heavily.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Natalie gets dressed in her new dance attire, eyeing Jasmine and Zoe who are lost in conversation as they stretch.

Kenzie and Theo enter and approach Natalie. SENIOR DANCER, 17, gasps upon seeing Theo.

SENIOR DANCER

Ew! Theo- get out of here!

KENZIE

(to Natalie)

You're Natalie.

NATALIE

... What?

KENZIE

This is an intervention. I thought you'd be more like beautiful white swan Natalie Portman, but you're unravelling into psychopath red eyes black swan Natalie Portman.

Natalie is focused on laughter- it's Zoe and Jasmine.

Kenzie and Theo exchange glances. Kenzie waves her hand as though to say, "Chime in."

THEO

You skipped classes yesterday and now you're blowing off Trevor. We know you're going through a hard time and we want to help, okay?

Natalie eyes Kenzie and Theo standing in front of her-they're schlubby and mismatched. Natalie laughs.

NATALIE

Why don't you guys just work on helping yourselves, okay?

(to Theo)

And what's-her-face is right, you're not allowed to be here.

Natalie pushes past Kenzie and Theo.

SENIOR DANCER

What's-her-face?! You were at my birthday party last week, bitch!

INT. REHEARSAL STUDIO - DAY

Dancers line the wall seated with their various cliques: Jasmine with the cool kids on one side and Kenzie and the misfits on the other. Natalie weighs the two sides before...

Plopping down in the center of the studio.

Mr. Constantine, Miss Miyako, and Miss Lana stand in front.

MR. CONSTANTINE

I have a couple of last minute announcements- Miss Jasmine Kearn will be filling in as understudy for the Sugar Plum Fairy.

A few murmurs. Some polite claps.

MR. CONSTANTINE (CONT'D)

And the role will be subject to recasting at the discretion of myself and Miss Miyako.

MISS LANA

And me. I have a say, too.

Natalie shoots her hand up.

MR. CONSTANTINE

Miss Ross?

NATALIE

Does this only apply to me?

MISS MIYAKO

All soloists have an understudy.

NATALIE

No. Am I the only one with a role subject to recasting at your discretion? Is there a deadline? Or am I supposed to be on pins and needles until the show closes?

Mr. Constantine and the other teachers look at each other.

MR. CONSTANTINE

End of October. Halloween. And yes, it applies to all roles.

Dancers burst in angry protest. Natalie smirks, satisfied and continues putting on her brand new pointe shoes.

MR. CONSTANTINE (CONT'D)

ENOUGH!

Dancers quiet down.

MR. CONSTANTINE (CONT'D)

This is one of the top Performing Art schools in the country and you all shit yourselves over a little competition? How many of you plan on dancing for a company?

Quiet.

MR. CONSTANTINE (CONT'D)

The best dancer for the role will play the part. Let's stop half-assing, what do you say?

MISS LANA

Yeah! In ballet we only full-ass!

Mr. Constantine looks at Natalie.

MR. CONSTANTINE

May the best rise to the top.

Natalie looks at Jasmine, who is smiling back at her confidently as she stretches her leg up to her ear. Next to Jasmynes, Natalie also notices Grayson looking at her and quickly averts his eyes.

As Dancers get up and gather their things, Natalie approaches Kenzie and Theo.

NATALIE
So, are you losers ready to rise to
the top?

INT. EMPTY CLASSROOM - DAY

Natalie writes "R.I.P." on the white board. Kenzie and Theo are seated and exchange looks.

THEO
Are you going to kill us?

NATALIE
First up- Every morning starts with
a Run.

KENZIE
I don't run.

NATALIE
Daily runs is the fastest way to
increase stamina. The more stamina
you have the more you can practice.
And practice makes perfect.

BEGIN MONTAGE - VARIOUS

A) Natalie meets Kenzie and Theo in running attire.

They begin their slow, pathetic jog around the school.

BACK TO:

INT. EMPTY CLASSROOM - DAY

NATALIE
Step Two. Incorporate ballet into
everything. Let's face it: Jasmine,
Zoe, and Brock put in the time-

KENZIE
But we have other things going on
besides ballet.

NATALIE
It's Christmas.

THEO
It's September.

NATALIE
September to December is Nutcracker
Season. The other things will be
waiting for you in January.

B) In Chemistry class, Natalie is doing leg lifts while checking her own Instagram page. Comment: We miss you Natalie! Comment: Get better soon!

Mr. Hall is handing out test papers and puts Natalie's face down. She flips it over and sees a large red F.

Grayson looks over, concerned. Natalie shrugs.

C) Kenzie and Theo at rehearsal in their spot in the back, turns not as tight as the principals and leaps not as high.

D) Sugar Plum Fairy rehearsal- Pas de Deux.

Natalie and Grayson are dancing up front while Jasmine and Brock mirror them in the back. Natalie is growing stronger- her grand jetes in near-splits, but Jasmine's extends in an over-split and seems to linger in mid air forever.

Both pairs hit their ending pose. Natalie falls to the floor- exhausted, looking over to Jasmine who is all smiles.

E) Ava's Kitchen. In pointe shoes, Natalie unloads the dishwasher. Going en pointe to put away dishes.

Bean quietly sifts through Ava's backpack, finding a receipt.

BACK TO:

INT. EMPTY CLASSROOM - DAY

NATALIE
Number Three: Post all the time.
You both have less than two hundred
followers.

KENZIE
Isn't this supposed to be about
dancing?

NATALIE
This is about being desirable.

Natalie pulls up Zoe's Instagram page and swipes through photos of Zoe: amazing poses and perfect lighting.

NATALIE (CONT'D)
 If it's between you and Zoe. Who do
 you think it's harder to say no to?

F) Outside. Natalie, Kenzie, and Theo are running steadily.

G) Hallway. Natalie at Ava's locker decorated with photos of Ava and Trevor. She closes it.

Natalie opens Ava's locker- it's transformed with a collage of ballerina photos and quotes.

Trevor sees this from his locker across the hall and sadly pulls down a photo of him and Ava looking happy.

H) Shots of the understudies in rehearsal in their spot in the back, extensions at their shoulders, but principals have their extensions by their ears.

I) Shot after shot of Ava, Kenzie and Theo's Instagram pages. Hearts growing by the hundreds.

BACK TO:

INT. EMPTY CLASSROOM - DAY

Kenzie stands up.

KENZIE
 Now your turn. Have you been Winter
 Solider'ed?

THEO
 Yeah and I don't know about all
 this. We're not *them*.

NATALIE
 Don't you guys want your chance at
 the spotlight? This is it, okay?!
 Senior Year! I want my swan song
 and we have one last Nutcracker.
 Jasmine Kearn is not playing my
 role. R.I.P., Bitches.

J) Theo, Kenzie and Natalie are all doing their morning jog- this time mixing in leaps and turns while they jog.

INT. ICU ROOM 202 - NIGHT

Natalie walks in holding two coffees in a cardboard Coffee Lovers tray in one hand and Ava's phone in the other hand- now full of pictures at rehearsal, doing dance poses, and selfies with Kenzie and Theo. All smiles.

Followers are now at 7,860. Comment: "You're beautiful, Ava!", "Ava is a #BallerinaBoss"

Mr. Primavera straightens up with company. Natalie looks up and her smile drops upon seeing her body in casts and hooked up with tubes for the first time.

INT. REHEARSAL STUDIO - DAY

Sugar Plum Fairy Pas de Deux. The Pianist is now accompanied with a VIOLINIST. Natalie and Jasmine look nearly identical.

Mrs. Primavera enters and she double takes seeing Natalie dance, she leans into the wall taking a deep breath- moved.

After the final drop Natalie sits on the floor, out of breath. Mr. Constantine shakes his head.

NATALIE

Notes?

Mr. Constantine snaps. The musicians play the Pas De Deux.

MR. CONSTANTINE

Tell me about this music.

NATALIE

(rolls eyes)

It's in four-four and the melody goes down a major scale and-

MR. CONSTANTINE

Stop talking.

Mr. Constantine takes Natalie's hand and they step through the routine.

MR. CONSTANTINE (CONT'D)

This is the last piece Tchaikovsky wrote for this ballet after learning of his sister's death.

NATALIE

So this song is about his sister?

JASMINE

Wow. You really don't get it.

MR. CONSTANTINE

Miss Kearn, let the teachers stick
to teaching, eh?

(to Natalie)

Can't you hear it?

NATALIE

Hear what?

MR. CONSTANTINE

The heartbreak of saying goodbye.

Natalie studies Mr. Constantine, he gives her a knowing nod.
The music swells and Natalie is swept up in the sad song.

NATALIE

I'm not ready.

MR. CONSTANTINE

We don't say goodbye because we're
ready.

Both Miss Lana and Miss Miyako have tears in their eyes.

MISS LANA

Stop! I can't listen to this
anymore!

(to Miss Miyako)

My divorce.

Miss Miyako puts her hand on Miss Lana's shoulder.

The Musicians stop.

MISS MIYAKO

Okay dancers! I think that's all
for today. Great rehearsal.

Remember tomorrow, you CAN wear
your Halloween costumes, but you
still need to be able to dance.

Natalie quickly grabs her bag, eyeing Mr. Constantine who is talking to the other teachers.

MISS MIYAKO (CONT'D)

Kenzie and Zoe... Aaaand Brock and
Theo. Can you stick around?

Natalie's eyebrows shoot up. Kenzie, Zoe, Brock and Theo move toward the three teachers.

MRS. PRIMAVERA (O.S.)
Ava?

Mrs. Primavera timidly approaches Natalie.

MRS. PRIMAVERA (CONT'D)
Can I show you something?

INT. SMALL STUDIO - DAY

Natalie is dancing the Pas de Deux with Mrs. Primavera half stepping through the role of Prince Cavalier. There's no music, just the sound of Natalie working- breathing and pointe shoes thumping and grinding.

Mrs. Primavera corrects Natalie with gentle touches- pulling up her chin and arms. Natalie finishes with a smile.

MRS. PRIMAVERA
That's it. Beautiful.

NATALIE
Thanks. I needed this.

MRS. PRIMAVERA
Your mom doesn't dance, hmm?

NATALIE
Who? Ms. Ross? No, she wants me to quit I think.

MRS. PRIMAVERA
Well, I'm happy to help anytime.
You and Natalie have the same bad habits. Sometimes it's easier for someone on the outside to see what's going wrong.

Mrs. Primavera takes a sip of water. Natalie watches her mother, eyes darting to find something to say, but instead mouths, "You are my heart."

Jasmine pops her head into the studio.

JASMINE
Oh, sorry. Are we still on?

MRS. PRIMAVERA
I think we're done here.
(to Natalie)
Jasmine needs my help with her Royal Ballet audition.

Natalie flashes Jasmine a stunned look. Jasmine winks.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Natalie enters the hallway from the studio and watches her mother and Jasmine through the window. Eyes starting to well-

TREVOR (O.S.)

Boo!

Natalie jumps back in surprise and sees Trevor.

NATALIE

What are you doing here?

TREVOR

Rehearsing. Orchestra for the show.
I'll be in the pit, you'll be
dancing. We'll be together again.

NATALIE

I gotta go.

TREVOR

(pulls out flowers)

Here! I just wanted you to know I'm
here for you. Always. And I'm
wearing my half of our costume
tomorrow.

NATALIE

Your half? Actually don't tell me.

She takes the flowers and heads down the hall. Trevor's chin trembles a bit. Zoe bursts out of the studio sobbing with Brock comforting her.

Kenzie exits with Theo a moment later, watching Zoe and Brock. Kenzie and Theo exchange guilty glances.

INT. ICU ROOM 202 - NIGHT

Natalie enters with Trevor's flowers. Mr. Primavera is drinking coffee and has a second untouched cup. Nurse Sandy is switching out IV fluid bags.

She takes the flowers from Natalie and puts them in a vase.

NATALIE

Any news?

MR. PRIMAVERA

She's stirring a lot. Doc thinks it
can happen any time now.

(beat)

You see her other friends around?
Jasmine and Zoe and Brock?

NATALIE

Every day in rehearsal. Mrs.
Primavera, too.

Natalie sits down next to Mr. Primavera. He hands her the
second cup of coffee.

Ava's phone buzzes, it says "MOM." Natalie swipes to ignore.
Mr. Primavera looks at her- concerned.

MR. PRIMAVERA

So tell me about yourself. What do
you plan on doing after school?

NATALIE

I planned to dance professionally,
but that's not possible anymore.

MR. PRIMAVERA

Well, Natalie would tell you
nothing is impossible. She has a
goal and she's after it like a
runaway train.

NATALIE

Runaway train makes it sound bad.

Mr. Primavera swallows, looking at his daughter's body.
Natalie grabs her father's hand.

INT. AVA'S KITCHEN - DAY

Bean sits at the table dressed as Marie Antoinette with a
bloody neck. Natalie enters dressed as the Sugar Plum Fairy.
Ms. Ross holds up a large gray sphere costume.

MS. ROSS

Here it is! I wanted to show you
last night, but- Is that a new
costume?

NATALIE

Oh! It's Venus? Men are from Mars,
Women are from Venus! That IS a
cute couple costume.

BEAN
(jotting in her diary)
Interesting.

MS. ROSS
I spent all night on this costume.

NATALIE
Aww, that's so sweet, but we're not
a couple anymore.

MS. ROSS
You're not?! What happened?!

NATALIE
I gotta run- I need to get to the
studio before anyone else.

MS. ROSS
It's two hours before school
starts! Can we talk? Hi? Hello?

Natalie walks off.

Ms. Ross with a flustered sigh starts angrily opening mail
and gasps as she pulls out a credit card bill of \$2,670.

AVA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Ms. Ross walks into the bedroom. Bean following close behind
her. She looks underneath Ava's bed, her dresser drawers.

BEAN
What are you looking for, Mom?

MS. ROSS
Something isn't right with her.
There's drugs or she's cutting
herself or something.

BEAN
You're looking for drugs or razor
blades?

MS. ROSS
I'm looking for proof I'm not
crazy!

Bean walks over and pulls out a folder underneath her bed.
She hands it to her mom.

Ms. Ross's jaw drops seeing a chemistry test with an F on it. She flips through the folder: paper after paper with "D" "C-" "F" "DO BETTER" "NOT YOUR BEST" written in red ink.

BEAN

There's no drugs, Mom- other than the caffeine. But I have eight theories, do you want to hear them? Mom? You listening? Hello?

MS. ROSS

Bean, I need you to be quiet.

Ms. Ross' gaze is stuck on the large black and white poster over Ava's bed of Patricia McBride as the Sugar Plum Fairy. Ms. Ross peels off the corner of the poster, revealing the Harvard flag underneath.

INT. ICU ROOM 202 - DAY

POV of eyes opening. We see Mr. Primavera, Nurse Sandy, and DOCTOR PATEL all standing above.

DOCTOR PATEL

Good morning. I'm Doctor Patel. Can you tell me why you're here?

AVA

I'm in a hospital?

DOCTOR PATEL

You're at St. John's Hospital. Can you tell me your name?

AVA

... Ava Ross.

All exchange a concerned glance.

MR. PRIMAVERA

(explaining)

Ava is a friend from school. She's been visiting.

DOCTOR PATEL

What's your birthday?

AVA

May Fourteenth.

They look at Mr. Primavera. He shakes his head, "No."

AVA (CONT'D)
(to Mr. Primavera)
Who are you? Where's my mom?

Mr. Primavera's heart breaks.

DOCTOR PATEL
Uh- some confusion is to be
expected with this kind of trauma.
Sandy, would you-

The lights flicker.

AVA
What was that?

All look up at the ceiling.

Ava's eyes squint trying to make out her reflection in the TV hanging in the corner of the room. She sees the fuzzy but recognizable image of Natalie's body.

AVA SCREAMS and begins to scramble to get out of the bed.

Doctor Patel and Nurse Sandy jump into action.

DOCTOR PATEL
Two milligrams of lorazepam!

Nurse Sandy applies some medication to the IV drip while Doctor Patel secures her arms in restraints.

AVA
Mom!
(falling asleep)
... I want my mom.

Ava POV: Concerned faces blur to black.

INT. REHEARSAL STUDIO - DAY

Natalie, dressed as the Sugar Plum Fairy, walks into the dark studio and plugs Ava's phone into the speakers.

The Pas de Deux music starts and Natalie puts on her pointe shoes and starts to warm up.

GRAYSON (O.S.)
It takes two to pas de deux.

Grayson is standing at the door dressed as a Werewolf.

NATALIE

What did you say?

GRAYSON

It's kind of hard to dance without
a partner... Can I?

Natalie nods. The two join together and begin to dance.

NATALIE

I'm just making up for lost time.

GRAYSON

I can see that.

(beat)

Do you know how Natalie is doing?

NATALIE

How would I know that?

GRAYSON

Her dad said you've been stopping
by. I swung by the hospital.

NATALIE

Why? You only met her once.

GRAYSON

I don't know, I've been thinking
about her. I was there when she
fell. I feel like I should have
said something to stop her.

NATALIE

You can't stop a runaway train.

They dance. Awkward silence.

NATALIE (CONT'D)

Inspiration is a guest that does
not willingly visit the lazy.
Tchaikovsky said that.

GRAYSON

Is there a chip in your brain?

NATALIE

What?

GRAYSON

Sorry, stupid joke. I mean, are you
always this intense?

NATALIE
Yeah... Is that a bad thing?

GRAYSON
Not at all. You know exactly what you want- I mean you dressed as a ballerina for Halloween. That's next level.

Natalie blushes.

GRAYSON (CONT'D)
Okay. So, I got this offer from Houston Ballet-

NATALIE
What?! That's amazing.

GRAYSON
Yeah. Well, that's the thing. I love dancing. But I don't know if I love it enough to commit my life to it, you know?

NATALIE
All I've ever wanted to do is dance.

Grayson smiles. They dance quietly for a moment.

GRAYSON
Hey, so do you want to like, grab some food or coffee or watch a movie or whatever?

NATALIE
Or whatever?

GRAYSON
Whatever will get you to hang out with me?

NATALIE
Are we not hanging out?

GRAYSON
I meant more... Socially.

NATALIE
I don't date. I just- I don't have time, you know? I barely have time to do anything. I haven't been to the movies since I was like nine.

GRAYSON

Since you were NINE? You gotta go.
It's amazing. Popcorn, stadium
seating, 3D, 4D...

Natalie laughs. Does she like him? Grayson takes her hand to keep moving through the choreography. They look at one another and stop- Are they about to kiss? Grayson leans in, noses nearly touching when-

TREVOR (O.S.)
Ava? Who is this guy?

They turn to see Trevor: He's dressed in a nude bodysuit with a short blonde wig and bright red lipstick.

NATALIE

(Ugh)
This guy.

GRAYSON
Who are you supposed to be?

TREVOR
(choking up)
Miley Cyrus.
(to Natalie)
And you were supposed to be my
wrecking ball.

NATALIE
Oooh. The planet costume!
(laughs)
That's cute. Dated, but cute.

TREVOR
Well, I can see this isn't a pause
anymore. It's a stop button.

Trevor leaves. Natalie's sheepish smile drops.

Trevor pops back in.

TREVOR (CONT'D)
Everything hurts. Even my pinky
hurts. I don't get it.

Trevor exits. The moment is gone.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

The hallway is crowded with characters of ghouls, cartoons, and tropes. Natalie is at her locker and sees a haunting GRIM REAPER in her mirror.

KENZIE (O.S.)
I'm not the understudy! I'm Clara!

Natalie shuts her locker, revealing Kenzie dressed as Red Riding Hood and Theo as a Wizard.

NATALIE
What?!

THEO
And I'm the Russian soloist!

NATALIE
That means I'm safe, right? Jasmine
didn't take my role?! R.I.P.
Bitches! Selfie time!

Natalie lifts Ava's phone just as a call comes in: "Mr. PRIMAVERA" pops on screen.

KENZIE
Why is Natalie's dad calling you?

Down the hallway, we hear a viola playing "Wrecking Ball". It's Trevor, playing the song, with his lip quivering and he begins singing- terribly.

TREVOR
(singing)
We clawed, we chained, our hearts
in vain, we jumped, never asking
why...

NATALIE
Oh my god.

STUDENTS giggle at Trevor who keeps singing.

Ava's phone buzzes again. Natalie answers.

NATALIE (CONT'D)
Hello?

Suddenly, a STRING QUARTET pulls their instruments from their lockers and starts accompanying Trevor.

NATALIE (CONT'D)
 (holding her ear)
 Hello?!

MR. PRIMAVERA (O.S.)
 (staticky)
 Na-alie -oke uh-

NATALIE
 Natalie... Woke up? Is that what
 you said?

Natalie looks up and sees her mother, Mrs. Primavera, walking down the far end of the hall with an arm full of tutus. Mrs. Primavera is greeted by Jasmine with a hug.

MR. PRIMAVERA (O.S.)
 Natalie's asking for you.

NATALIE
 Why isn't Mom there?!

MR. PRIMAVERA (O.S.)
 What was that?

The CHOIR/GLEE CLUB steps out from behind Trevor and starts singing the chorus of the song.

NATALIE
 Hello?!

TREVOR
 You're my wrecking ball, Ava!

NATALIE
 I have to go.

KENZIE
 Where are you going, Ava?

The lights flicker. The row of lockers THUMP as though something were trying to escape. Natalie breathes in sharply as the GRIM REAPER appears at the end of hall behind Trevor.

NATALIE
 Did you see that?

KENZIE
 I don't think I'll ever unsee that.
 Is he naked?! Where's his penis?

The locker right next to Natalie POUNDS from the inside, with every pound, the Reaper flickers closer and CLOSER until:

Natalie SCREAMS and covers her eyes.

As her scream echoes down the hallway, everyone goes quiet, and all eyes turn to her.

Principal Waters clears his throat. Natalie uncovers her eyes and sees the principal dressed as the Grim Reaper.

INT. PRINCIPAL WATERS'S OFFICE - DAY

Principal Waters sits behind his desk with Mr. Constantine, Miss Miyako, and Miss Lana standing beside him. Across the desk, Natalie is seated with Ms. Ross.

PRINCIPAL WATERS

I'm sure you know why you're here.

Ava's phone buzzes with Mr. Primavera calling. Natalie hits ignore, shoving the phone under her thigh.

NATALIE

... I'm not sure actually.

PRINCIPAL WATERS

Your grades are dangerously low.
And Mr. Hall has had a few comments
about your attitude lately-

NATALIE

Who?

PRINCIPAL WATERS

Mr. Hall. Chemistry.

NATALIE

Oh. Well, he's a VERY brittle man.

Miss Lana nods.

MS. ROSS

Ava!

NATALIE

Not an insult! It's an observation.

PRINCIPAL WATERS

And your mother is concerned with
your behavior at home.

NATALIE

You went to the Principal to talk
about my behavior at home?

Ms. Ross pulls out credit card bill.

MS. ROSS

Now that I finally have your attention. You've spent over two thousand dollars on dance apparel.

NATALIE

Pointe shoes are expensive. Do you want me to dance with dead shoes?

MISS LANA

It is dangerous to dance on dead shoes, Mrs. Ross.

MS. ROSS

MS. Ross.

(to Natalie)

And since when did you start Uber-ing everywhere? You know we can't afford that.

PRINCIPAL WATERS

And you haven't been participating in your work-study, which is a required part of your tuition assistance.

NATALIE

I've been working my as- butt off.

MISS MIYAKO

Ava, we love your new found dedication. It's remarkable how much you've transformed yourself in such a short time. We know you're working very hard on your dancing.

Silence.

NATALIE

But?

PRINCIPAL WATERS

But we've collectively decided that Jasmine Kearn will be taking over the Sugar role and-

NATALIE

No! I've worked too hard to be just the understudy.

MR. CONSTANTINE

Actually, you won't be
participating in this year's
Nutcracker at all.

NATALIE

But this is my *last* Nutcracker!

MS. ROSS

This was just supposed to be for
fun, Ava. Extracurricular for
college applications.

NATALIE

No! This is the most important
thing to me.

PRINCIPAL WATERS

It's just a role in a high school
production, Ava. This isn't your
whole life.

NATALIE

Is this some kind of lesson you're
trying to teach me?

ALL

Yes.

NATALIE

I'm the Sugar Plum Fairy. I can do
the role, get my grades up and my
work-study. Please let me prove it
to you.

INT. REHEARSAL STUDIO - DAY

Everyone is wearing Halloween costumes.

Natalie is in the back of studio dancing with Brock and
glaring at Jasmine who is dancing the pas de deux with
Grayson up front.

Jasmine wipes a tear, missing a cue. Natalie rolls her eyes,
but continues dancing.

JASMINE

I'm sorry. It got the better of me.

The music stops.

NATALIE

We're still going here.

MR. CONSTANTINE
You four dance together.

NATALIE
Wasn't our fault she messed up.

BROCK
We had to stop every time you fell
on your ass.

Dancers chuckle.

MR. CONSTANTINE
Enough! Miss Ross, a word?

JASMINE
(sarcastically)
Don't worry. We'll wait for you.

INT. MR. CONSTANTINE'S OFFICE - DAY

Mr. Constantine closes the door.

MR. CONSTANTINE
You're being a sore loser.

NATALIE
You made me the understudy!

MR. CONSTANTINE
Principal Waters made you
understudy. If it was up to me,
you'd be off this production.

NATALIE
So you gave Jasmine the role to
make me switch back?

MR. CONSTANTINE
You promised to switch back when
Ava woke up!

NATALIE
Just one more show.

MR. CONSTANTINE
Someday we all have to find our
second dream. I had to! Have you
learned nothing from being Ava?
Instead you fail her classes, broke
up with her boyfriend-

NATALIE
He's a loser.

MR. CONSTANTINE
He dresses as a naked woman and
gets his whole class to play a song
for her. Who does that for you, eh?

Natalie is quiet- stung.

Mr. Constantine pulls out the Snow Globe from his desk- still illuminating a magnificent green- and hands it to Natalie. She takes the globe with shaky hands.

NATALIE
I did learn from being Ava. My
friends are fake, my mother doesn't
want anything to do with me if I
can't dance, and the only thing
I've been working towards my whole
life is no longer possible.
(now seething)
Why would I switch back?!

Natalie SMASHES the Globe into to the ground.

The room engulfs in green light and black smoke until they form into two SMOKEY DANCERS, papers fly everywhere like snowflakes swirling. Natalie and Mr. Constantine are frozen in fear.

MR. CONSTANTINE
What have you done?! You've let
them loose.

The Smokey Dancers shoot out of the office window- into the world. Papers fall to the floor as the room settles. Natalie, breaths uneasy, body paralyzed.

Mr. Constantine scrambles to collect pieces of the globe.

NATALIE
I'm sorry, Mr. Constan-

MR. CONSTANTINE
GET OUT!

INT. AVA'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Ms. Ross and Bean faces are illuminated by a green glow. Ms. Ross's face is awestruck.

MS. ROSS
This is magical.

BEAN
Uh oh, I've unleashed a monster.

MS. ROSS
It's like a whole new world I had
no idea existed.

BEAN
It's just Instagram, Mom.

They're seated at the breakfast bar looking at an iPad.

MS. ROSS
And where is Ava?

Bean goes to Ava's page. Ms. Ross's brow furrows as she looks at picture after picture of Ava's dance poses.

BEAN
What's wrong?

MS. ROSS
I don't recognize my own daughter.

BEAN
Theory twelve: Have you noticed her dipping into a British accent? You delivered twins, didn't you?! Are you listening to me, Mom?

INT. LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

Natalie, hands shaking, empties out her locker. Ava's phone buzzes: "Mr. Primavera." Natalie swipes to ignore. Natalie shuts her now empty locker closed, turns and SHRIEKS-

Kenzie is standing right there, arms crossed.

KENZIE
You're quitting?! Did the Karate Kid quit when he broke his leg? Did Matt Damon quit when he was stuck on Mars?

NATALIE
Why do you care? You got your role.
You're welcome, by the way.

KENZIE
For what?

NATALIE

For what? For dragging you out for
5 A.M. runs, working with you,
building up your brand. I got you
that role.

KENZIE

I didn't care that I was the
understudy! This was about us
making the best of our last
Nutcracker before you're off to
Boston. We're never going to have
time like this again.

NATALIE

You got up at 5 A.M. to spend time
with me?

Natalie softens. Then Ava's phone buzzes- Natalie jumps.

KENZIE

What's going on? I'm your best
friend. Talk to me!

Natalie exits- leaving her duffel bag behind.

Kenzie sighs defeated, picking up Natalie's bag and notices
the Royal Ballet keychain looped around the zipper.

EXT. MR. HALL'S BACKYARD - NIGHT

Mr. Hall puts an open container of cat food on a small
tombstone that reads "Catastrophe, the Best Cat Ever."

Several cats roam his yard.

MR. HALL

Things haven't been the same
without you, Catastrophe. We have a
new friend now- Rex. You'd like
him. I wish you could meet him.

Mr. Hall exits. A moment later the Smokey Dancer enters the
grave and exits. The ground pulses.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM 304 - NIGHT

Natalie enters cautiously. Her body lies asleep. Natalie
walks toward her body and Ava's EYES OPEN. Natalie SHRIEKS.

AVA

Shhhh!

NATALIE
Oh my God! What the hell?

AVA
I've been pretending to be asleep
so they won't talk to me!

Ava examines Natalie- her body standing in front of her, mascara streaked as though she's been crying.

AVA (CONT'D)
Is it- Are you...

NATALIE
Natalie Primavera.

AVA
I look different.

NATALIE
You're welcome.

Natalie and Ava stare at each other in silence.

NATALIE (CONT'D)
Where's Dad?

AVA
Cafeteria. I told him I wanted to
be alone. He told me what happened.
The fall. The Instagram picture.

NATALIE
And you told him you were Natalie?

AVA
I had to.
(leans in)
I know how to fix this. A snow
globe from Mr. Constantine's office-

NATALIE
That globe is destroyed.

AVA
What?! How?!

Natalie is silent.

AVA (CONT'D)
What does this mean? Are we stuck?!

NATALIE
...I don't know.

Ava looks at her stunned and then bursts into tears.

NATALIE (CONT'D)

Hey, it's not so bad, my dad makes a lot of money and you can study hard and go to Harvard like you wanted. And I'll stay and dance. Maybe it was supposed to happen this way?

AVA

What about Trevor? And my family?

NATALIE

Well, you can date Trevor. It's gonna be a big upgrade for him to date you as me. And Mom and Bean-

AVA

You call my mom Mom?

NATALIE

It's become a habit.

AVA

(sobs)

I miss her so much.

Natalie swallows- doesn't know what to say. She leans in to give Ava a hug. Ava takes the cue and quickly scoops both of her arms tightly around Natalie, crying into her shoulder.

AVA (CONT'D)

You seriously have the best dad. He always brings me coffee.

(sniffle)

I hate coffee.

Natalie pulls out of the hug- regretful, confused, and sad.

NATALIE

Ava, did you wish to be me?

AVA

It was stupid. Over the summer, my dad went on a work trip and never came back and I've been just tired of being me and sad all the time. I thought for a second I might be the Sugar Plum Fairy and something would go right for once and be like you. Always posting these beautiful pictures. And I know, Instagram isn't... Real.

NATALIE

I spend six hours in the studio six days a week, 45 minutes doing my hair and makeup, and I can't remember a time I had big toenails.

AVA

That still sounds glamorous.

NATALIE

I've got one thing. You've got so much going for you. You're a total brain and hotty to boot. And your mom really gives a shit about you and you have friends. Real friends. I bet they'd be in this hospital room everyday if it were you.

AVA

I miss them.

KENZIE (O.S.)

Natalie?

NATALIE

Yeah?

Natalie turns to see Kenzie and Bean standing at the door. Kenzie's mouth agape and Bean with a large smile.

NATALIE (CONT'D)

I mean... She's right here.

AVA

... Bean? Kenzie?

Bean rushes over and hugs Ava in bed. Ava groans in pain.

BEAN

I knew it!

Kenzie walks over to Ava like she's seen a ghost.

NATALIE

How did you know?

KENZIE

You've been off since the fall, the ballet and social media obsession, the Royal Ballet zipper-

BEAN

Always fighting with Mom.

AVA

... What?

NATALIE

I'm gonna figure this out, okay?

KENZIE

Damn straight we are.

MR. PRIMAVERA (O.S.)

What's going on?

Mr. Primavera enters with two cups of coffee.

NATALIE

Nothing. High school shit.

Ava nods. Natalie reaches for the coffee and Mr. Primavera pulls back.

MR. PRIMAVERA

This is for Natalie. Sorry- I
wasn't expecting you. I wasn't sure
you got my messages.

Mr. Primavera and the girls stand quietly for a moment.

MR. PRIMAVERA (CONT'D)

Do you guys mind coming back?
There's a two visitors policy and
I'd like some time with my Nat.

KENZIE

(to Ava)

We'll be back tomorrow.

Bean gives Ava one more hug before walking out with Kenzie. Natalie walks out the door, pausing to watch as Dad hands Ava a coffee. Ava takes a sip and forces a smile.

INT. AVA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Kenzie and Bean sit on Ava's bed as Natalie stands next to a white board that reads "F.A.R."

KENZIE

So by learning to be Ava, you'll
become Natalie again. It's in every
body swap movie.

BEAN

It's science.

NATALIE

That's definitely not science.

KENZIE

You're right, it's magic. You're already sounding more like Ava.

NATALIE

Okay... So first up is family. I definitely need Mom off my back.

BEAN

No. Ava is Mom's rock. Mom works two jobs and cries in the car when she thinks I can't see her.

NATALIE/KENZIE

Wow.

BEAN

And she still texts Dad that she misses him even though he left us for a 24 year old. She told us he moved to South Korea for work.

NATALIE

How do you know that?

BEAN

I read her text messages.

NATALIE

Where's my phone?

INT. AVA'S KITCHEN - DAY

Ava's Kitchen. Natalie sets the table for three. Ms. Ross walks in on the phone and Natalie hands her a cup of coffee.

MS. ROSS

(to phone)

I'm just wondering if the late fees can be waived- just this once.

(looks at Natalie)

I understand. Typically that card is only used in emergencies.

BACK TO:

INT. AVA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

NATALIE

Next up. Academics. Right now,
Ava's failing Chemistry-

BEAN

You mean YOU'RE failing Chemistry.

KENZIE

You need to end the semester with
an A. Or else Ava is definitely not
getting into Harvard.

NATALIE

How hard can Chemistry be?

INT. REHEARSAL STUDIO - DAY

Natalie is sweeping the studio floor walking en pointe. With
earbuds in she listens to Mr. Hall's lecture-

MR. HALL (V.O.)

A Happy Atom is an atomic shell
that is full. Sometimes atoms have
an extra electron or two and-

The lights flicker and a ghostly dancer swooshes by in the
mirror. Natalie pauses, pulls the earbuds out.

Mr. Constantine rushes out of his office with an arm full of
books. A note taped to the door that reads, "The End is Near.
Save Yourself." Natalie gulps.

INT. CHEMISTRY CLASS - DAY

MR. HALL

Who can tell me why water molecules
are attracted to each other?

Natalie raises her leg to her ear as "raising her hand."

MR. HALL (CONT'D)

That's different... Uh, Ava?

NATALIE

Because water molecules have both a
positive hydrogen charge and
negative oxygen charge.

MR. HALL

Correct.

Grayson flashes Natalie a smile. Natalie beams.

BACK TO:

INT. AVA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Kenzie walks up and adds "T" at the end of "F.A.R."

KENZIE

Before we talk about 'R.' We need to talk about T. For Trevor.

NATALIE

Ava can do better than him.

KENZIE

Trevor's amazing. So whatever you're doing with Grayson needs to stop until after you switch back.

NATALIE

One. Nothing is going on with Grayson. Two. Do you really want me to get back together with Trevor? They've had sex, you know. Am I supposed to have sex with Trevor?

BEAN

Yes! You do it for Ava!

KENZIE

NO! Don't do that. Just steer clear of Grayson. And be nice to Trevor.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Natalie is at Ava's locker. Trevor is at his locker across the hall. She looks over at him, he fumbles trying to pull something out of his locker. Everything falls out.

Natalie takes a deep breath and shuts Ava's locker. She helps Trevor pick up his things.

NATALIE

Look, I'm sorry I've been mean to you. I haven't been myself.

TREVOR

No, you asked for space and I got you stupid flowers-

NATALIE

(it's okay)

The flowers were sweet. I get
you're trying to get me back.

TREVOR

What? No. That was for your dad's-
uh, walking out anniversary. I just
wanted to make sure one good thing
happened to you that day.

NATALIE

Oh.

Trevor stands up to walk away. Natalie stands and bumps into Grayson. She stumbles and Grayson catches her, dipped like in a dance. They're face to face. Natalie blushes.

GRAYSON

Watch your step.

Trevor sees their moment and exits- running down the hall in half sob. Natalie watches him with a sigh.

BACK TO:

INT. AVA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Natalie circles "Role."

NATALIE

The Sugar Plum Fairy is my destiny.

KENZIE

Wrong. It's Ava's destiny. She's
the real understudy!

NATALIE

But this is my role.

Kenzie flips over the white board revealing a list of movies:
Freaky Friday, The Hot Chick, The Change Up, etc.

KENZIE

In all of these: A cosmic lesson,
magic, and ta da! What's done is
undone. Once you accept that the
role isn't yours, the natural order
will be restored.

BEAN

Hold up! Are we IN a movie?!

NATALIE

Stop being weird. Wait, natural order? Where did you hear that?

KENZIE

Mr. Constantine monologues about it all the time during rehearsal. Oh, and there's usually a wishing well or fortune cookies or some kind of wish fulfillment macguffin.

NATALIE

Right. About that...

INT. AVA'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Kenzie with the poster board under her arm, speed-walks to the front door. Natalie and Bean follow.

KENZIE

I can't believe you broke it! This is going to be impossible.

NATALIE

I'm gonna fix it, okay?

Kenzie exits with a slam of the door. Natalie looks at Bean.

NATALIE (CONT'D)

I'm gonna fix it.

END OF EPISODE 2

INT. STAGE/AUDITORIUM - DAY

Miss Miyako sitting in the center of the audience, dancers scattered throughout the seats, while Jasmine and Grayson dance the Pas de Deux on stage.

As they strike the final pose, Jasmine looks to the audience.

MISS MIYAKO

Has anyone seen Mr. Constantine?

INT. STAGE WINGS - CONTINUOUS

Miss Lana, clipboard in hand, waves Natalie over.

MISS LANA

Mrs. Primavera wants to make some adjustments on your costume.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - DAY

Zoe is seated on her phone, waiting for her turn as Mrs. Primavera fits Natalie with various costume pieces.

Natalie notices her mother's touch- moving away wisps of her hair to measure her.

MRS. PRIMAVERA

Have I told you that you dance just like Natalie?

NATALIE

All ballet looks the same when it's done right.

MRS. PRIMAVERA

No, ballet is personal. You and her, you have the same- something. It's hard to explain.

Natalie stays silent.

ZOE

Life's so unfair. Natalie can't play the Sugar Plum Fairy and I'm spending my senior year in the corps. How lame is that?

NATALIE

Kenzie worked her ass off for that role. On top of taking AP classes and college applications.

ZOE

Some of us don't want to settle for college. Do you know how much work it is to become an influencer? I just want a hundred thousand followers, marry Timothee Chalamet, and die. Is that really too much to wish for?!

A Smokey Dancer WHOOSHES by the mirror behind Natalie. She turns. There's nothing there. Lights flicker on and off.

Zoe's phone buzzes and she looks at it.

ZOE (CONT'D)

Whoa.

Zoe hurries off.

ZOE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
*TIMOTHEE CHALAMET IS FOLLOWING ME
 ON INSTAGRAM!!! I'M SERIOUSLY
 FREAKING OUT RIGHT NOW. I can't
 breathe. I can't breathe.*

Natalie checks her phone and Zoe's page is at 100K followers.

Zoe pops into the room.

MRS. PRIMAVERA
 Ava's all done.

ZOE
 I need to hug someone right now!

Zoe bear hugs Natalie. Mrs. Primavera starts taking Zoe's measurements. Zoe lets go of the hug and Natalie, dazed, exits the room.

ZOE (CONT'D)
*TIMOTHEE CHALAMET JUST GAVE MY LAST
 PIC A HEART! HE'S LOOKING AT MY
 FEED RIGHT NOW! I'm gonna post!*

MRS. PRIMAVERA (O.S.)
 Keep your shirt on, Zoe!

INT. STAGE/AUDITORIUM - DAY

Brock and Theo perform the Russian dance as a duet. Miss Miyako claps along to the Russian music. Natalie approaches, Miss Miyako lifts her fingers, still watching the dance.

NATALIE
 It looks great as a duet.

MISS MIYAKO
 It was their idea. So neither would
 miss out on the role.

Theo and Brock finish, breathing heavily.

MISS MIYAKO (CONT'D)
 Love it!
 (to Natalie)
 Can I help you?

NATALIE
 I need to talk to Mr. Constantine-
 have you seen him?

MISS MIYAKO

He's been out on a family emergency. Completely unprofessional if you ask me. But you didn't ask me. Just like I wasn't asked to be interim Artistic Director- I wasn't asked to do Mr. Constantine's job when he disappeared right before opening...

Natalie walks away regretfully as Miss Miyako continues to rant to herself.

INT. AVA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Natalie walks in. Ms. Ross is waiting, arms crossed.

MS. ROSS

I just got off the phone with Mr. Hall. You're failing Chemistry.

NATALIE

How's that's possible? I got a B plus on the last test!

MS. ROSS

One test!

Ms. Ross pulls out the Royal Ballet Audition packet.

MS. ROSS (CONT'D)

And what the hell is this?

NATALIE

You don't think I can get in?

MS. ROSS

What am I supposed to think, huh? You convince me to let you go to this school, that it'll be so easy to graduate Valedictorian and get into Harvard and today you want skip college to be a ballerina?! It's out of nowhere!

NATALIE

Mrs. Primavera is at every rehearsal, ask her how good I am!

MS. ROSS

And who is she there for, huh? Her daughter is rotting away in a hospital bed while she spends her days with other people's kids.

Natalie is gutted.

NATALIE

I'm auditioning for Royal Ballet and I'll be out of your life just like your husband. Or Dad, whatever. I won't be your problem anymore.

MS. ROSS

Who are you?

Natalie wavers- should she tell her?

BEAN (O.S.)

Natalie Primavera!

Bean's face peaks into the room.

MS. ROSS

Go to your room, Bean!

NATALIE

Will you stop blowing her off? If you can't tell, she's dying for your attention. And put a lock on your phone- she knows about Dad and the 24 year old.

Ms. Ross sits- defeated.

MS. ROSS

When your dance career ends at what- 30? 35? That's 30 or 40 more years of a career you'll need after that. You need to think about those years too, Ava.

NATALIE

I know, okay?! Every little doubt you have, I have tenfold! It's constant at every audition and every day. I'm killing myself to get my grades up, work-study, to get ready for this show- I'm seventeen and you want me to think about when I'm 40?! You want A's. You want a social life.

(MORE)

NATALIE (CONT'D)

You want me to never make a single mistake. I have the whole world to tell me I'm not good enough. And my own mom is done with me cause I can't be what she wants.

Ms. Ross envelopes Natalie in a hug. Natalie struggles to get out of it, but Ms. Ross holds on.

MS. ROSS

I'm never done with you. Never. Harvard. Ballerina. Alaskan crab fisherman. Whatever it is. I just want you to be happy and I'm on board 100 percent. Are you happy?

Natalie surrenders into Ms. Ross's hug.

EXT. MR. CONSTANTINE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Natalie rings the doorbell. A set of TRIPLETS, age 5, dressed in armor answer the door.

NATALIE

Um, is your dad home?

TRIPLETS

(Romanian)

Father!

INT. MR. CONSTANTINE'S HOUSE LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Natalie is sitting there with Fritz across from her holding wooden sword, staring solemnly. The TRIPLETS are playing with her hair. A pair of TWINS, age 11, are playing the piano. A TODDLER colors a whole piece of paper black.

Moving boxes are everywhere.

MRS. CONSTANTINE walks in, very pregnant and with a BABY in her arms. She's carrying a tray with drinks in her other arm.

NATALIE

You have really cute kids.

MRS. CONSTANTINE

Only Fritz is the beauty. Aren't you, Fritz?

FRITZ

Yes, Mama.

Natalie looks at the other children who don't flinch.

MRS. CONSTANTINE
Are you the best child?

NATALIE
My sister is definitely the best
right now. Wait, no. I don't have a
sister. It's complicated.

Mr. Constantine walks in.

MR. CONSTANTINE
What are you doing here?

NATALIE
I need your help. Weird stuff is
happening and I'm seeing those
shadow things from the globe-

MR. CONSTANTINE
The wraiths!

NATALIE
Did you say wraiths?

The Twins' song on the piano changes tone- right on cue:

MR. CONSTANTINE
Wish granting spirits from the old
world- they only grant the deepest
wish dared to be spoken out loud.
My ancestors captured them in the
globe- it kept them under control-
one wish at a time.

Mr. Constantine snaps his fingers. Fritz retrieves a SHOEBOX
and hands it to his father. Natalie looks around at the
moving boxes everywhere.

NATALIE
What's going on? Are you moving?

MR. CONSTANTINE
We'll be returning to Romania after
the last Nutcracker.

NATALIE
You mean last of the school year?

MR. CONSTANTINE
Sure.

NATALIE

Mr. Constantine, how can I fix
this?

Mr. Constantine pulls out a curved piece of the broken glass from the shoebox.

MR. CONSTANTINE

In order for the wraiths to be
recaptured, the natural order must
be restored. You need to return.

Natalie takes a deep breath, sad and nods.

NATALIE

I know I messed up Ava's life. I
need to make things right and I
have to go back.

(swallows)

What if we can't recapture them?

MR. CONSTANTINE

In all my years as a keeper, no one
has ever been as careless as you.
So, this is uncharted territory-

Mr. Constantine looks at the large mural behind him: a scene from the Rapture of wraiths disemboweling screaming people.

MR. CONSTANTINE (CONT'D)

But I've heard it's very, very bad.

INT. MR. HALL'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Mr. Hall watches *I Love Lucy*, laughing with the laugh track.

Although he is surrounded by CATS, he hears a distant MEOW that catches his attention.

MR. HALL

Sounds like someone is hungry for
some food and friendship.

(to his cats)

Come on, friends. Let's go say hi.

Mr. Hall makes his way down the narrow corridor. His house is designed to be a cat paradise. He passes cat condos and nooks built for his "friends."

INT/EXT. MR. HALL'S HOUSE/KITCHEN BACK DOOR - NIGHT

Mr. Hall opens the door... Looks down... Eyes widen.

INT. STAGE/STAGE WINGS - DAY

On stage, Kenzie and the MOUSE KING perform the Battle Scene in full costume. Bean runs on stage for her cue.

MISS MIYAKO (V.O.)
(over speakers)
C'mon Dancers! Dress rehearsal! Do
it like the real thing! Leave it
all on the stage!

Mr. Constantine watches the performance from the wings while Natalie paces behind him. Miss Lana spots Mr. Constantine.

MISS LANA
Mr. Constantine! We weren't sure
you were coming back. Are you and
the Missus in a trial separation?

MR. CONSTANTINE
(to Bean on stage)
NO! You are a MOUSE! I don't see a
mouse. I see a little girl prancing
like a bullshit princess! I want to
see you scurry!

Miss Lana jumps- scared and turned on.

Mr. Constantine glances over to Fritz who is huddled by the prop shelf next to the wing, back turned.

NATALIE
(to Fritz)
Is it almost ready?

FRITZ
Quiet, devil!

Natalie exits with a toss of her hands up in the air.

PARTY BOY
What are you doing, freak?

FRITZ
I'm saving the world! What are you
doing? Wasting your childhood
making fart sounds?

The PARTY BOY farts on Fritz and The PARTY CHILDREN run off laughing. Fritz watches them and sighs.

FRITZ (CONT'D)
(Romanian)
I wish I had a friend.

The lights flicker. A Smokey Dancer passes behind Fritz and the Nutcracker Doll on the prop table seems to blink.

MR. CONSTANTINE

(to the stage)

Kenzie! You're killing me! KILLING
ME! He has seven heads! When was
the last time you saw a mouse with
seven heads? You would SHIT
yourself!

INT. STAGE/AUDITORIUM - DAY

Natalie takes a seat in the audience next to Bean.

Jasmine and Grayson in costume are performing the Pas de Deux. Mr. Constantine watches from the foot of the stage.

As Pas de Deux finishes, Mr. Constantine jumps on the stage.

MR. CONSTANTINE

Dancers! I'm obligated to make a
quick announcement that's relevant
if we manage to prevent the
apocalypse. Miss Jasmine Kearn has
been accepted as an apprentice for
next season's Royal Ballet.

Natalie sits up. DANCERS cheer and give Jasmine a hug as she smiles like a beauty queen.

Natalie watches- stiff, heart pounding, and longing. Jasmine seems to move in slow motion.

Natalie's eyes well up, unblinking.

BEAN

You okay? Your eyes are leaking.

NATALIE

I'm watching all my dreams come
true for someone else.

Jasmine is wiping away happy tears.

Fritz pops his head from the wings, waving Natalie over.

FRITZ

(pst)

Father! Devil Girl!

MR. CONSTANTINE
Yes, uh- okay, everyone keep
congratulating Jasmine.

Natalie and Mr. Constantine walks toward the stage wings
where Fritz is waiting for them.

INT. STAGE WINGS - CONTINUOUS

NATALIE/MR.CONSTANTINE
Is it ready?

Fritz reveals the Snow Globe with jagged pieces glued
together. The forest inside wilted. Natalie takes it.

NATALIE
That's it? You GLUED it? Is this
thing going to work?

Fritz cranks the knob and it plays the haunting Pas de Deux.

FRITZ
Works perfectly.

Kenzie spots the commotion and rushes over.

KENZIE
Oh my God, is this it? The
macguffin?

FRITZ
It's a perfect wraith prison, no?

KENZIE
I'm sorry, did you say wraiths?

MR. CONSTANTINE
(to Natalie)
Are you ready? You need to want
this more than anything.

NATALIE
I know. I'm ready.

Natalie hears squeals coming from the stage and glances over
to see Mrs. Primavera giving Jasmine a long hug.

JASMINE
Thanks, Ms. P.

MRS. PRIMAVERA
This is my happy place being with
all you talented girls.

Mrs. Primavera points to Jasmine and her heart mouthing "You are my heart." Jasmine reciprocates. Natalie nearly drops the snow globe from her hands. Mr. Constatine eyes her, concerned-

MR. CONSTANTINE
Miss Primavera. NOW.

Natalie swallows and shakes the snow globe, her eyes well up. The globe plays it's tingly Pas de Deux.

NATALIE
I wish I was Natalie Primavera.

The lights flicker on and off. The music abruptly stops playing from the globe.

Silence. Everyone frozen- anticipating.

KENZIE
Did it work? Ava?!... What's something only Ava would know?

BEAN
(to Natalie)
Is a hotdog a sandwich?!

Natalie rushes to the dressing room-

INT. DRESSING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Natalie looks at the mirror- sees Ava's reflection. Mr. Constatine, Bean, Kenzie, and Fritz follow her in.

NATALIE
It didn't work.

MR. CONSTANTINE
(to Fritz)
What did you do wrong?

FRITZ
Nothing! Look at it! It's better than ever! It's her. She messed up!

The sad glued-together snow globe springs a leak.

Unnoticed by the bickering group, Jasmine stops at the edge of the dressing room, listening.

KENZIE
What does this mean?!

BEAN

I want my sister back! I've been
telling everyone something is wrong
and nobody listens to me! I wish I
was grown up so people would hear
me already!

The lights flicker and a Smokey Dancer WHOOSHES by.

Natalie slumps down by herself as the group argues. Mr. Constantine puts his hand on Natalie's shoulder.

MR. CONSTANTINE
It was worth a try, yes?

NATALIE
... What do we do now?

MR. CONSTANTINE
(composes himself)
Everybody upstairs. This is a
sinking ship and we go down doing
what we love. Let's make it a great
last Nutcracker before our demise,
what do you say?

KENZIE
Did you say demise?

MR. CONSTANTINE
My apologies. I meant to say that
part in Romanian.

The group solemnly filters out, leaving Natalie alone.

INT. STAGE/AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Everyone is gone. The stage is lit with a ghost light.
Natalie steps out onto the stage and hums the Pas de Deux.

A noise- Natalie pauses and looks into the dark audience.
Jasmine steps toward the stage.

JASMINE
Natalie and I used to do this:
dance the whole show the night
before opening night. We'd sneak
out and dance until two A.M.

Jasmine starts stepping through the dance with her.

JASMINE (CONT'D)

We've always been neck-and-neck. I landed my double pirouette, and she landed a clean triple. She did twelve fouettes in a row, and then I did sixteen like the next day. I've- we've- always wanted to be the Sugar Plum Fairy.

Jasmine begins doing fouette turns and Natalie joins her. They watch one another- turning and turning, until Jasmine finally stops. Natalie stops.

NATALIE

Why didn't you audition for the role if you wanted it so badly?

JASMINE

Because I was scared it might have gone to me and I didn't want to break my best friend's heart.

NATALIE

If she's your best friend why do you call her Natalie Prima Donna?

Jasmine raises her eyebrows, surprised. Then shrugs.

JASMINE

We all talk too much shit sometimes.

NATALIE

Why haven't you gone to visit her?

JASMINE

I have. I've just always waited for her dad to be gone. She's different now, you know.

Natalie is quiet- Does she know?

NATALIE

You dance this role- perfectly.

JASMINE

I'm glad you got to see it. Cause I think I hurt my toe.

NATALIE

Your toe?

JASMINE

Yeah. It hurts. I can't handle two roles. So I'm just gonna dance the Snow Queen. I already talked to Mr. Constantine.

Jasmine begins walking off.

NATALIE

Wait! Why?

JASMINE

Is your bun too tight? Because you're the understudy.

Natalie watches Jasmine disappear and she smiles.

INT. MR. HALL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mr. Hall attempts to give CATASTROPHE, a zombie cat, a saucer of milk. Catastrophe growls, one eye missing and sores oozing from its skin.

ALL the other cats are huddled away, backs arched, hissing.

MR. HALL

Now now, Friends. Get along. We're all friends. We're all friends.

Catastrophe bites a bit of Mr. Hall's fingertip.

MR. HALL (CONT'D)

Ow! Oh. Is that what you need, friend? Here. Just a little, okay?

INT. AVA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Natalie wakes up. The wall calendar reads, OPENING NIGHT.

Natalie sighs and exits the room.

Bean stirs and uncovers herself. She's a GROWN TEENAGER. She gets out of bed, her kid PJs barely fitting her.

TEENAGE BEAN looks down and notices ample breasts in her PJ shirt that now fits like a crop top.

INT. AVA'S KITCHEN - DAY

Natalie eats Fruit Loops while Ms. Ross drinks coffee.

A SQUEAL comes from the other room. Natalie stands up.

NATALIE
I'll go check on her.

INT. AVA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Natalie rushes into the room. TEENAGE BEAN stands there.

NATALIE
This is bad.

TEENAGE BEAN
My wish came true! I look so hot!

A knock on the door.

MS. ROSS (O.S.)
You girls okay?

NATALIE
Everything's fine!
(to Bean)
This is really, really bad.

EXT. THEATRE - SUNSET

The Blue Moon is high in the sky as people of all ages file into the theater.

A marquee sign reads, "WILBURN ARTS HS THE NUTCRACKER. OPENING NIGHT." with a poster of the Nutcracker with Ava as the Sugar Plum Fairy by the door.

A LIMO pulls up and we see fancy black shoes walk back to open the rear door. White Converse sneakers step out.

INT. STAGE WINGS - NIGHT

Natalie and Teenage Bean rush to Mr. Constantine.

MR. CONSTANTINE
What is it?

NATALIE
This is Bean. She made a wish to be a teenager and well-

MR. CONSTANTINE
This is bad. Very, very bad.

NATALIE

What does this mean?

MR. CONSTANTINE

It means that full worldly chaos is just around the corner. The wraiths are loose, granting every twisted desire of the heart- every whim for lost love, lottery tickets... And revenge. The heart is selfish. You of all people know this.

(shouting to the back)

Fritz! You'll be dancing with your iron sword tonight! We may have to kill something!

Party Boy halts and looks at Mr. Constantine.

PARTY BOY

Did you mean to say that in Romanian, Mr. Constantine?

INT. STAGE/AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

The orchestra warms up as the audience trickle to take their seats. Trevor looks a mess, tie on sloppy and hair unbrushed.

Mr. Hall shows up, dazed with part of his cheek nibbled off. Principal Waters takes notice.

PRINCIPAL WATERS

Mr. Hall, are you all right?!

MR. HALL

He's gone. I opened the door and he left me. My friend is gone again.

PRINCIPAL WATERS

(under his breath)

He is a brittle man.

Mr. Hall still muttering walks to his seat, climbing past Ms. Ross seated with grocery store flowers in hand.

Mr. and Mrs. Primavera enter, pushing Ava in a wheelchair down the aisle. She is given a standing ovation as they make their way to park Ava up front. Ava cranes to see Ms. Ross in her seat and Trevor in the pit, neither notice her.

INT. BACKSTAGE HALLWAY - NIGHT

Backstage is chaos of DANCERS in costume- most of them warming up, CHILDREN laughing and chasing each other. Fritz, swinging his sword.

MR. CONSTANTINE
Places!

INT. DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Jasmine is in her Snow Queen costume and wearing warm up booties. Zoe as a Snowflake is on her phone. Natalie walks in with Teenage Bean and catches Jasmine's eye. Jasmine smiles.

Mrs. Primavera scurries in to approach Teenage Bean.

MRS. PRIMAVERA
Baby mouse, huh?

Teenage Bean nods.

MRS. PRIMAVERA (CONT'D)
What happened to Bean?

TEENAGE BEAN
I'm not allowed to talk about that.

MRS. PRIMAVERA
... Okay.

Mrs. Primavera starts ripping fabric.

INT. STAGE/AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Mr. Constantine walks out on stage. The full house claps.

MR. CONSTANTINE
Greetings, parents, family, friends of Wilburn Arts High School's Christmas Ballet. The Nutcracker! I won't make a lengthy speech, but I want you all to think about this past year and all you have lost and what you may lose- soon. Christmas is the saddest season of them all. I have never felt more heartbroken than I do now.

Trevor's chin trembles and he claps enthusiastically. The rest of the audience is silent.

The lights flicker.

MR. CONSTANTINE (CONT'D)
Without further ado.

Mr. Constantine motions to the orchestra as he exits. They begin. The curtains open. The Street Scene Begins.

INT. STAGE WINGS - NIGHT

Miss Miyako half jogging, hand on her earpiece.

MISS MIYAKO
Do we have any idea where the doll
is? We need it now.

At Miss Miyako's feet is Catastrophe, crawling, unnoticed.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Teenage Bean is in a makeshift Mouse costume. Mrs. Primavera puts on finishing touches.

MRS. PRIMAVERA
There. That should do it.

TEENAGE BEAN
Is it hard to dance with big boobs?

NATALIE
No talking, remember?

MRS. PRIMAVERA
Ava, that's rude.

TEENAGE BEAN
Yeah. AVA. People want to listen to
what I have to say now. Maybe I'll
never go back to being a kid.

NATALIE
Bean! I mean, Bean's replacement!
(under her breath)
Of course you're going back.

BEAN
There's nothing good about being a
kid or teenager. Whatever I am.

MRS. PRIMAVERA

Funny how we spend our whole
childhood looking ahead and our
entire adulthood looking back.

An USHER enters with a large bouquet of flowers.

USHER

Is Zoe here?

Zoe, at her makeup station waves her hand and the Usher puts
Zoe's flowers down. Zoe looks at the card. It reads: Merde,
Zoe. Can't wait to meet you. Love, Timothee.

INT. STAGE/AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

The Party Scene March is happening.

Zoe's distant shriek echoes through the auditorium. The
dancers all look off stage, but continue.

INT. BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Miss Lana sees the Nutcracker doll standing in a walking pose
near the exit door and snatches it.

MISS LANA

(hand to earpiece)

Found it! Must have been some kid.

Miss Miyako meets Miss Lana with a box and they stick the
Nutcracker inside, it blinks once before the lid covers it.

Mr. Constantine with an eye patch dressed as DROSSELMEYER,
rushes by and grabs the box.

INT. STAGE/AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Party Scene is on stage.

Mr. Constantine pulls the Nutcracker out of the box and hands
it to Kenzie for her solo.

Kenzie begins her dance. She nails her jumps perfectly.

Ava is watching the dance from her wheelchair. She catches
Kenzie's eye and flashes her a thumbs up. Kenzie smiles.

Kenzie is looking longingly at the Nutcracker doll. It
blinks. Kenzie does a double take.

The NUTCRACKER is ALIVE. It spots Fritz on stage.

NUTCRACKER
Friend!

Kenzie SCREAMS.

The audience GASPS.

FRITZ grabs the doll, smashes it into the stage. And takes his sword- striking it over and over and over again.

The Nutcracker is face up looking at FRITZ.

NUTCRACKER (CONT'D)
I'm. Your. Friend.

Fritz takes his sword and smashes its face.

The audience silently watches horrified.

Mr. Constantine pulls Fritz off by the collar of his Victorian shirt. Mr. Constantine wrestles with the Nutcracker doll wrapping it until it looks like a mummy and hands it to Kenzie, who is breathing heavily.

MR. CONSTANTINE
(through his teeth)
The show must go on!

Kenzie grabs it gingerly. She timidly continues to dance.

INT. BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Mr. Constantine, Fritz, and Kenzie are rushing down the backstage hall together. Kenzie is shaken up.

NATALIE
What's going on?!

MR. CONSTANTINE
(to Fritz)
You made a wish?!

FRITZ
Everybody needs a friend, Papa!

Teenage Bean and the other MICE run past.

MISS LANA
Costume change, Kenzie. Quickly!

Kenzie is pulled into the dressing room by Miss Lana.

KENZIE
Is it dead? Please tell me it's
dead!

INT. STAGE/AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Teenage Bean trips over herself, a terrible dancer in her new body- her leaps are sloppy and barely make it off the ground. She trips and the other Mice fumble behind her like dominos.

TEENAGE BEAN
These boobs suck!

Ms. Ross frantically flips through the program.

MS. ROSS
Bean?

On the stage, the grandfather clock SHATTERS and Kenzie has red ribbon/fake blood coming from her arms. She "falls asleep" on the couch.

The audience murmurs in shock.

INT. STAGE WINGS - NIGHT

Jasmine enters the wings in her Snow Queen costume.

Catastrophe is at her ankles and wanders onto the stage.

INT. ON STAGE/AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Battle scene with Toy Soldiers and the MOUSE KING is on stage. Kenzie sees Catastrophe and SCREAMS. Mr. Constantine in the wings gives her a thumbs up.

Kenzie throws her shoe, hitting Catastrophe in the face and its other eyeball pops out.

Kenzie faints and hits the stage floor HARD.

Ava and the audience gasp.

MR. HALL
It's Catastrophe!

INT. STAGE/STAGE WINGS - NIGHT

The curtain closes.

Mr. Constantine rushes on stage and grabs the zombie cat.

INT. STAGE/AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

The curtain opens to the snow scene. Jasmine is on stage along with Zoe as one of the snowflakes.

Zoe spots Timothee Chalamet in the Audience and gasps.

Timothee Chalamet blows a kiss to Zoe and she catches the "kiss." Jasmine is in mid-lift, looking down at Zoe-

JASMINE
(pst!)
Cut it out!

Zoe excitedly jumps up and down as the other Snowflakes continue dancing around her.

INT. BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

MR. CONSTANTINE
Intermission! Costume changes! Get ready, dancers!

Mr. Constantine has the zombie cat in his hand.

Natalie, hair and makeup done, but not yet in costume, sees the cat and gasps.

NATALIE
What is that?

KENZIE
Oh my God! Catastrophe!

Catastrophe growls and chomps the air towards the dancers. Grayson comes out of his dressing room and pauses.

GRAYSON
Mr. Constantine, I think your cat is dying.

Mr. Hall wanders back stage. Mr. Constantine covers the cat up with his cape.

MR. HALL
Have you seen Catastrophe?

Fritz points to Mr. Hall with his sword-

FRITZ
Infiltrator!

NATALIE
Mr. Hall! Let's get you a drink.

Natalie grabs Mr. Hall by the arm.

INT. LOBBY - NIGHT

A BAR is set up with a long line. Natalie tows Mr. Hall straight to the BARTENDER, cutting off Timothee Chalamet.

NATALIE
Excuse me, can you give him some alcohol?

Bartender pours a glass of white wine.

NATALIE (CONT'D)
Don't you have anything stronger?

BARTENDER
We're at a high school production.
What do you expect?

Mr. Hall takes the glass of wine.

MR. HALL
I just want Catastrophe back. I really miss him.

NATALIE
Mr. Hall, you still have him. Atoms never die, remember? They just change into something new.
(hand to her heart)
Catastrophe is here now.

MR. HALL
That's quite right. You've always been a great student, Ava.

NATALIE
I have?
(beat)
I'm gonna follow you on Instagram after graduation.

MR. HALL
Oh, no. I'm not on Instagram.

NATALIE

Hashtag cats of Instagram? You'd take to Instagram like a free radical takes to an electron.

Mr. Hall laughs.

INT. BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Mr. Constantine wrestles with Catastrophe in his hands. He's surrounded by scared DANCERS cheering him on. Finally, Mr. Constantine tosses the cat in a supply closet and turns to the dancers, adjusting his cape.

MR. CONSTANTINE

The show must go on!

INT. DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Natalie, costume on, applies makeup at her station.

Timothee enters and gives Zoe a romantic kiss.

MISS MIYAKO

No audience members allowed here!

TIMOSEE

I can't be stopped! I'm in love!
This is exhilarating. It's like I'm under a spell!

(to Zoe)

Will you marry me? Have my children? Move to France?

ZOE

Yes! Yes! YES!

NATALIE

Wait! Fifty thousand followers, marry Timothee, and die. That's what you said Zoe.

ZOE

Stalker much?

(to Timothee)

She's totally obsessed with me.

TIMOSEE

You can't have her!

Timothee gives Zoe another romantic kiss. Zoe pulls away.

ZOE

Is it just me or am I making out
with Timothee Chalamet? Is this
real? Literally all my dreams are
coming true.

A tiny sword misses Zoe's head. The Nutcracker Doll charges
into the dressing room.

Mr. Constantine enters, snatches the doll- through the open
door children are running and crying.

MR. CONSTANTINE
Five minutes.

Natalie looks up and nods.

Mrs. Primavera enters, swiftly pulling Natalie up to stand.

MRS. PRIMAVERA
Let's give you one last look over.

Natalie watches Mrs. Primavera as she inspects the costume,
noticing her mother's hands trembling and dark circles under
her bloodshot eyes.

MRS. PRIMAVERA (CONT'D)
Is your mother here?

Natalie nods tensely.

NATALIE
(beat)
I'm sorry about Natalie.

Mrs. Primavera is silent.

NATALIE (CONT'D)
You must be sad for you that she
can't dance again... That you can't
share your happy place anymore.

MRS. PRIMAVERA
More like my hiding place.

NATALIE
... Hiding place?

MRS. PRIMAVERA
You hear a five year old say they
want to be a ballerina and you
expect it to be a phase. But not
Natalie, she had a dream and
nothing could stop her.

(MORE)

MRS. PRIMAVERA (CONT'D)
She makes the impossible possible.
(beat)
It's my fault. After her first
show, I called her a star. Got her-

NATALIE
A dog.

MRS. PRIMAVERA
Yeah, Cliche. And the rest is
history. She loved to dance and I
kept feeding it. Moving to the next
level, getting her pointe shoes,
the next role, Royal Ballet. I
should have fed other things,
signed her up for soccer, painting.
I had no idea it would hold her
prisoner. All these goals, the
social media... I didn't know it
would get cut short for her.

NATALIE
... Nobody is a ballerina forever.

MRS. PRIMAVERA
(eyes well up)
How can I tell my daughter the only
thing she loves in life she can't
do anymore?

NATALIE
I think you say to her that nothing
is impossible. Even finding
something new to love.

Natalie smiles as Mrs. Primavera pins a tiara around her bun.

MRS. PRIMAVERA
I got Natalie a Nutcracker Doll for
Christmas this year. Do you think
that's a stupid gift? She has a
million of them already.

NATALIE
It's the perfect gift. Clara's love
brought the Nutcracker to life
after he was broken.

MRS. PRIMAVERA
Natalie's not broken.

NATALIE
Right. No, I mean, her body...

MRS. PRIMAVERA

No, she's perfect. Exactly how she is. There's a million reasons to love Natalie and not a one of them has to do with ballet.

Natalie stands still as Mrs. Primavera finishes up, both women subtly wiping away tears.

Natalie wraps her arms around her mother.

NATALIE

Thank you.

INT. STAGE/AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Natalie sneaks over and grabs Ava's wheelchair, wheeling her around the side.

AVA

Hey! What are you doing?

INT. STAGE/STAGE WINGS - NIGHT

Russian duet is finishing up on stage with Mr. Constantine watching from the wings.

Natalie rolls Ava up to Mr. Constantine.

NATALIE

Mr. Constantine! Where's the globe?

MR. CONSTANTINE

(In Romanian)

Fritz! The Globe!

NATALIE

I know why the magic didn't work. Like in chemistry, an antioxidant can't shed an electron just cause-

AVA

Right! It needs a willing participant- like a free radical!

MR. CONSTANTINE

Ladies! You lost me at chemistry.

NATALIE

I made a wish on top of the bridge.

Silence.

AVA
You wished you were me?

NATALIE
No. I wished I wasn't me... It's not enough for me to *not* want to be Ava anymore, I have to *want* to be Natalie. Broken body and all. And I want to be Natalie Primavera- more than anything.

Fritz appears with the sad Snow Globe and Natalie takes it.

NATALIE (CONT'D)

AVA
But your dance! You're up next!

Brock and Theo finish onstage. Audience claps.

NATALIE
It's okay. It's not my role.

Natalie shakes the Snow Globe. Ava touches the globe.

NATALIE (CONT'D) AVA
I wish I was Natalie I wish I was Ava Ross.
Primavera.

The orchestra starts the music for the Pas de Deux and the two girls wait, anticipating.

Then, the walls RUMBLE. The snow machine over the stage rattles to a start. Lights FLICKER. Mr. Constantine smiles as the faintly falling snowflakes dust the stage. A faint green glow begins to illuminate the globe.

MR. CONSTANTINE
The globe is weak, but it's
working. Looks like you have time
for one more dance.

Natalie looks to Aya and she nods in agreement.

Natalie turns to the stage and sees Grayson on the other side, he throws his hands out as to say, "WTF, are we doing this?" Natalie takes a deep breath and nods.

Mr. Constantine takes the glinting Snow Globe from Natalie.

NATALIE
God, I'm going to miss this.

MR. CONSTANTINE
I know, Miss Primavera.

NATALIE
This song is so-

MR. CONSTANTINE
Beautiful.

NATALIE
Heartbreaking.

The music swells. Natalie takes a step onto the stage.

INT. STAGE/AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Natalie and Grayson meet center stage and begin the Pas de Deux as the orchestra swells.

Trevor plays viola with the pit orchestra, his lip trembles as he watches Natalie and Grayson on stage. The dancers' eyes are locked on each other like there's no one else as they dance- skillful and emotional.

Ms. Ross eyes glisten wide with wonder watching Natalie for the first time and leans forward in her seat.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Zoe and Timothee are lost in a messy make-out session. The Nutcracker Doll army-crawls toward them. A light is hanging precariously over Zoe's head and a curling iron is causing a rack of tutus to smoke.

RUMBLE. The room blackouts for a moment. The hanging light crashes into a rack of tutus to fall away from the iron. The Nutcracker Doll goes limp.

INT. STAGE/AUDITORIUM - CONTINUOUS

The two Smokey Dancers enter from the back of the auditorium and dance their way down the aisle toward the stage. They are invisible to all but Natalie and Mr. Constantine.

INT. BACKSTAGE HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Teenage Bean, Fritz, and the Children are huddled as Catastrophe breaks through the closet door little by little a la The Shining. Fritz clenches his sword.

Catastrophe fully breaks through the door and charges toward the Children. Fritz raises his sword just as- FLICKER- the cat goes limp- dead. Fritz nudges the cat.

FRITZ
The cat is dead!

The Children CHEER! Fritz turns to high five Bean, who is now swimming in her costume.

BEAN
I'm a kid again! No more boobs!

Bean hugs Fritz. Fritz beams.

INT. STAGE/STAGE WINGS - CONTINUOUS

The Smokey Dancers join Natalie and Grayson on stage, shadowing their dance, drawing ever closer.

Miss Lana and Miss Miyako watch the duet- eyes fixed and in awe, clutching each other's hands.

Grayson smiles at Natalie and the two kiss as though there was no audience.

Trevor lets out an audible sob.

With the final lift as the song's crescendo peaks, the Smokey Dancers enter Natalie and exit right before Ava's body drops into the final partner pose, leaving behind Natalie's "spirit" with a puff.

INT. STAGE/STAGE WINGS - CONTINUOUS

Natalie's "spirit" quickly absorbs into her own body- eyes bulge as she sits up in her wheelchair with a gasp.

INT. STAGE/AUDITORIUM - CONTINUOUS

The audience erupts in applause. Grayson sets Ava down and she gives a bewildered curtsy.

INT. STAGE/STAGE WINGS - NIGHT

Mr. Constantine has the snow globe- glow fizzles out and both dark Dancers are back inside. Frozen.

Ava runs off stage and gives Natalie a large hug.

AVA
Natalie?!

NATALIE
Yes! And you're you?!

MR. CONSTANTINE
(snapping his fingers)
Enough! Solo. Now!

AVA
What?! Nonono. I can't!

NATALIE
Ava, you're the understudy. This is
how it was always supposed to be.
You can do this.

INT. STAGE/AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Ava steps out. Begins her solo. Her lips tight with
concentration. She begins with her fouettes- she's nailing
them. Her smile spreads slowly and then wide with glee as the
audience claps.

Ava freezes as she spots Trevor in the orchestra pit.

AVA
Trevor?

Trevor turns away from Ava- angry, nostrils flaring.

AVA (CONT'D)
I love you!

TREVOR
You do? I LOVE YOU, AVA!

Ava leaps off the stage into the orchestra pit. The audience
and Ms. Ross gasps. Ava and Trevor kiss.

INT. STAGE/STAGE WINGS - NIGHT

Grayson watches the scene, confused. Miss Miyako and Miss
Lana shake their heads.

MISS MIYAKO
Worst Nutcracker ever.

MISS LANA

Next year will be better when Mr. Too-Sexy-To-Teach isn't here anymore. All semester I'm like 'just shut up and kiss me already.'

MISS MIYAKO

What? No.

Mr. Constantine walks up, throwing his arms around Miss Miyako and Miss Lana's shoulders.

MR. CONSTANTINE

How beautiful! How erotic! And devastating!

A few feet away, Natalie tugs on Grayson's shirt.

GRAYSON

Oh, hey! How are you doing? Is that stupid to ask? You look good.

NATALIE

Good. And thanks.

(beat)

So, I was wondering if you wanted to grab coffee or food or whatever?

GRAYSON

Or whatever?

NATALIE

Whatever will get you to hang out with me. Let me congratulate you on Houston Ballet.

Grayson gives her a curious look. He glances back at Ava one more time before turning back to Natalie and smiles.

GRAYSON

Yeah, definitely- but, I said no to Houston. Going to Indiana U. Did you know you can double major in ballet?

INT. STAGE/AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

The Finale. The whole cast dips into a final bow and Kenzie poses with the broken Nutcracker doll with a large smile.

Mr. Constantine steps out and plunges into a dramatic bow.

No claps. A cough.

Trevor sets down his viola and claps enthusiastically.

Timothee is walking away down the center aisle. A moment later we see Zoe, tear streaked, chasing him.

ZOE
I love you, Timothee Chalamet!
Don't unfollow me!

INT. PHYSICAL THERAPY ROOM - MORNING

Natalie is looking at Ava's Instagram page. A picture of Ava, Ms. Ross, Bean and Trevor around a Christmas Tree. Captioned: "Christmas is the Season of Magic." Natalie hearts the post.

Natalie pops in earbuds. Her eyes close and her head sways slightly with the music.

Grayson enters, knocks on the door with a Christmas present.

Mrs. Primavera smiles and waves Grayson in as Mr. Primavera sips his coffee, reading a paper.

GRAYSON
Merry Christmas.

Natalie lifts up on to the parallel bars from her wheelchair.

She takes a step.

FADE OUT.