

SAVE THE LAST DANCE

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REWRITE -- FIRST SET OF REVISIONS

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FADE IN:

1 EXT. PENNSYLVANIA COUNTRYSIDE - LONG SHOT - DAY 1

of an empty stretch of land parted down the middle by
railroad tracks. An Amtrak Commuter crests the horizon,
heads TOWARD us. As it gets CLOSER, we GO IN TIGHTER to
see --

2 FACE OF SARA JOHNSON 2

17, pressed at one of its windows.

**3 REVERSE ANGLE - REFLECTION IN TRAIN'S WINDOW -
SARA'S FACE 3**

distant and lovely and sad. SUPERIMPOSED against an
endless stream of sky and trees. The train speeds up and
SARA's face flies by, disappearing FROM FRAME.

A zaftig BLACK WOMAN clumsily negotiates the aisle. Stops at the first of a few empty seats left in the car.

WOMAN

This seat taken?

ANGLE ON SARA

looking up, around. She shakes her head, clears her backpack and magazines from the seat beside her. The Woman drops down, settles in. A long silence. The Woman glances at the American Ballet magazine on Sara's lap. Tries to make conversation.

WOMAN

I love ballet. Never had the body for it. Do you dance?

Sara folds her arms, turns away mumbling under breath.

SARA

Used to.

Sara gazes out the window. The world outside begins to dissolve melting into images from another time, another place. Her eyes stare blankly OUT AT us, blinded by her memories.

2.

5 FLASHBACK - INT. AUDITORIUM - KINDERGARTEN RECITAL - DAY 5

A stage full of five-year-olds in tights and tutus. A little girl performs center stage. She's remarkably poised, remarkably good. CAMERA PANS TO the audience. A woman in an Irish clover necklace springs to her feet clapping loudly. The little girl's eyes catch the glint of the necklace's gold. Mommy. She flashes a megawatt smile, ends the dance with an unscripted bow, as we...

DISSOLVE TO:

6 INT. BALLET CLASS - EVENING (FIVE YEARS LATER)

6

Young Sara, lithe and earnest, dances. A budding beauty blessed with long limbs and natural grace, she makes it look easy. Gliding past the envious stares of classmates, she scans the hall for a glint of gold.

Finds it in the back of the room where her mother, Glynn, stands watching her. Their eyes connect with mutual smiles and those smiles CARRY us TO:

7 INT. SARA'S EXETER HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

7

A pair of flexing feet in ballet slippers on a hardwood floor. PAN UP and PULL BACK to reveal Sara at 17, dancing in the space opened up by cornered furniture and rolled up rugs. As Glynn looks on, Sara completes the routine with a pirouette. She spins out of it with a preoccupied frown on her face.

GLYNN

What's the matter? It was good.

SARA

(checks her
stance in mirror)
Everybody there's going to be
good, Mom. I have to be better.
(then, beginning
again)
My knees still knock when I do my
free form. Did you notice that?

GLYNN

I noticed that it was fine.

SARA

(escalating
frustration)
It's not supposed to be fine.
It's supposed to be special.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

3.

7 CONTINUED:

7

SARA (CONT'D)

And it just lays there, it doesn't
do anything. I bet they notice
that. That it doesn't do
anything. That I don't do
anything special enough to get in.

GLYNN

Sara. You'll get in.

SARA

Don't lie because you love me. My
free form sucks.

GLYNN

(giving up that
battle)
I've got something for you. Come
on. Sit. Mouth closed, eyes
shut. No pouting. No peeking.

Sara flops down on the sofa beside her. Closes her eyes.
Glynn removes the clover chain from her neck, fastens it
around Sara's.

GLYNN

For luck tomorrow. Not that
you'll need it. You dance like an
angel.

The necklace is Glynn's talisman. Sara knows what it
means to her. She throws her arms around Glynn, holds
onto her tightly.

SARA

I love the necklace but you're
still the best luck I'll ever
have.

Glynn, not one to choke up, chokes up. They cling to
each other.

8 INT. AMTRAK TRAIN (MOVING) - ON SARA - DUSK (PRESENT) 8

In the blink of her eyes, the memory fades. She pulls
the window shade, shifts in her seat. Her fingers travel
to the clover necklace at her throat. Linger. The Woman
regards her.

WOMAN

Nice... the necklace.

(CONTINUED)

4.

8 CONTINUED: 8

SARA

Oh. It's a good luck charm.

Doesn't always work.

The Woman's wearing a crucifix. She indicates it.
Smiles.

WOMAN

Mine either.

9 FLASHBACK - INT./EXT. BUS/RURAL ROAD - MORNING

9

A sea of young white faces. A jock entertains the troops with two straws up his nose. Sara sits next to her best friend, LINDSAY, 17. Lindsay, chomping on a wad of gum, turns from the jock to Sara with a bubble in bloom, bursts it with her teeth.

LINDSAY

Wanna pray? You're leaving for Philly after first period. I won't see you. We should pray.

SARA

(stupefied)

Lindsay... no. Not here.

Lindsay grabs Sara's hand and bows her head. Sara, embarrassed, aligns her head with Lindsay's. She's praying nobody sees them.

LINDSAY

'Awesome, Father, S.J. auditions today. She's ready for them. Please make them ready for her. Even if she screws up. Thanks. Amen.'

(sure shrug; another bubble)

God's gotten me outta all kinds of shit. He oughta be able to get you into Juilliard.

10 EXT. EXETER SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL - LATER THAT MORNING

10

Sara exits with a bouquet of roses, takes the steps two and three at a time. Glynn's waiting in a flower van at the curb.

5.

11 INT./EXT. FLOWER VAN (DRIVING)/RESIDENTIAL STREETS

11

Sara and Glynn. The back of the van is filled with flower arrangements. Glynn takes note of the roses in Sara's hand.

GLYNN

Where'd you get those, traitor?

SARA

Ellison -- Mr. Ellison. He actually told me to break a leg.

GLYNN

Roses from the principal, even droopy, out-of-season yellow ones, is beyond cool, kiddo. You're definitely movin' up in the world.

Sara looks through the windshield. It's starting to drizzle.

SARA

Know what would be great? If you didn't drop me off at the bus station. If we just kept going until we get to Philly.

GLYNN

Ruin everyone's Valentine's Day and not have a shop when I get back. That's your definition of great? I can see the headline now: 'Starving Artist Kills Unfit Mother.'

(gently)

Sweetheart, we talked about this. I'll get there as soon as I can.

Sara looks at her and Glynn instantly feels guilty.

SARA

Right. This is the hardest, most important day of my life and all you can do is get there as soon as you can. Thanks, Mom.

12 **EXT. GREYHOUND BUS STATION (READING, PA) -**
CONTINUOUS ACTION

12

Glynn pulls the van into the parking lot. Smiles at Sara. Sara doesn't smile back. She's too angry. Too

scared.

(CONTINUED)

6.

12 CONTINUED:

12

SARA

So I guess I'll see you later.

GLYNN

I won't miss your audition, Sara.
I'll be there, okay? If I have to
swim the Susquehanna, I'll be
there.

SARA

Swim? You can't swim, Mom.

GLYNN

I'll float then.

A moment. They look at each other. Sara finally smiles.
They embrace and she hops out the van. Glynn calls after
her.

GLYNN

Hey... Happy Valentine's Day.

13 INT. AMTRAK TRAIN (MOVING) - ON SARA - NIGHT (PRESENT)

13

Feigning sleep. From the corner of her eye, she watches
the Woman beside her flip through the American Ballet
Magazine. We move back in time through their pages.

14 FLASHBACK - INT. UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA - WAITING
ROOM - DAY

14

Sara, in costume, flips through a magazine. She taps her
toes, checks her watch. A phalanx of parents and dancers
are clustered around a sign posted on the door:
JUILLIARD SCHOOL OF DANCE AUDITIONS. Sara stares at it.
Re-checks her watch. An official with a clipboard walks
toward her. Where's her mother?

15 INT. UNIV. OF PENNSYLVANIA - STAGE/AUDITORIUM -
MOMENTS LATER

15

Sara on stage. She looks past a row of Juilliard JUDGES into the audience. No glint of gold. MOZART'S "Elvira Madigan" (Andante) CUES UP. Sara begins her technical. She transforms her nervousness into a notable, powerful performance. The Judges are mutely but clearly impressed. One of them looks directly at her.

(CONTINUED)

7.

15 CONTINUED:

15

JUDGE

Is there anything you'd like to share about your free form before you begin? A motif... a theme?

Sara's stomach drops to her feet. Her mother's not there and her free form sucks and she doesn't have a theme. Shit!

SARA

Well, it's um, pretty self-explanatory. The theme.

The Judges exchange a look. New MUSIC CUES UP. Some driving, CLASSICAL NUMBER. Sara tries to elevate her body above the music, but she's nervous, unsure on her feet. She keeps glancing in the back of the auditorium for Glynn. Searching for her port in the storm. Wondering where her mother is and knowing how badly she's dancing. Knowing but somehow continuing, stumbling, recovering, and finally finishing with those damned knocking knees. The Judges, eyes like stones, perfunctorily nod. Their equivalent of maybe next year. Sara chokes two words out...

SARA

Thank you.

16 INT. AUDITORIUM - BACKSTAGE

... Rushes backstage. Fighting tears, she hurries past waiting dancers angrily unhooking the clover leaf chain from her neck.

17 INT. DRESSING ROOM - DAY

17

Sara in street clothes. Cramming her ballet gear into a

duffle bag when the official (of the clipboard) approaches her. She touches Sara's shoulder gently. Says something we do not hear.

18 INT. OFFICE (UNIV. OF PA) - CONTINUOUS ACTION 18

SHOOTING THROUGH office window. A state trooper in a rain slicker offers Sara a chair. She sits. The trooper talks. As he does, dread and disbelief spread over Sara's face. She shakes her head, attempts to stand. Her legs buckle beneath her. The trooper and the official catch her as she falls.

8.

19 EXT. AMTRAK TRAIN - NIGHT (PRESENT) 19

A glowing moon in a clear, star-specked sky.

20 TRAIN 20

CHUGS toward Baltimore's Penn Station, which is visible in the f.g.

21 EXT. PENNSYLVANIA TURNPIKE - INTERCUT - MORNING 21

A torrential rain. A flower van -- Glynn's van -- caught in it. SHOOTING THROUGH the driver's side window, we can see Glynn's face, intense and determined, squinting through the downpour.

22 TRAIN'S WHEELS 22

GRINDING.

23 VAN'S WHEELS 23

Hydro-planing, slip-sliding.

24 TRAIN 24

It's SQUEAL OF BRAKES as it maneuvers into the station.

25 VAN 25

The SQUEAL of its BRAKES as Glynn loses control and smashes into the back of the eighteen wheeler in front of her.

26 TRAIN 26

across space and time, the SOUND OF SQUEALING BRAKES commingle as the Amtrak Commuter pulls into Penn Station.

27 INT. AMTRAK TRAIN - NIGHT 27

Sara. Holding her breath, clenching her fists. Waiting for the sound to stop, oblivious to the stare of the Woman beside her.

9.

28 EXT. PENN STATION (BALTIMORE) - PLATFORM - NIGHT 28

ROY JOHNSON, 37, a handsome, laconic man of uncertain style, takes a last drag from his cigarette, drops and stomps it. Passengers disembark from the train. Roy searches their faces. They all look like strangers.

29 EXT. AMTRAK TRAIN - SAME TIME 29

A conductor helps Sara to the platform. Steam from the train's engine is sucked into the fog. She walks through it. Sees him. They see each other. Roy weakly waves. Walks toward her. Sara watches his bow legs stiffly advance. She wants to run. Can't.

ROY

Hi.

SARA

Hi.

ROY

Have a good ride?

Sara self-consciously tucks her hair behind an ear.

SARA

Slept through most of it.

A beat. Roy looks at her.

ROY

bolt of lightning. You don't have to pretend this is easy.

(off nothing)

Everything's upside down right now but don't worry. We'll work this bachelor-father thing out. Hell, it ain't like we're movin' in with strangers. We got a pretty good idea about each other, right?

Sara looks askance at him, her expression indicating otherwise. A moment. Roy's too new at this to hold up both ends of the conversation. The silence deepens. Roy switches on the radio.

31 EXT. BOND STREET (SOUTH BALTIMORE) - NIGHT

31

Roy's truck pulls up to a string of disrepaired rowhouses with pristine white marble steps. He and Sara each lug a suitcase from the truck. Her eyes wander up and down the street. They're on the fringes of a ghetto. A few people roost on their stoops, hang on the corners. All of them have black faces.

SARA

Thought you were moving to Fells Point.

ROY

Fell through.

11.

32 INT. ROY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

32

The second floor of a two-story house has been turned into a one-bedroom studio. A partition separates the living area from the bedroom. Sara walks past a collection of saxophones and several framed pictures of herself. Aside from the saxophones and the pictures, there's hardly any furniture. Roy lights a cigarette.

ROY

Not much of what you're used to. But the water's hot and the fridge is full. And I made room in the closets for you. Girl's gotta have closets, right? You even get your own bed. I'll crash on the couch.

SARA

You bought a bed?

ROY

(slight bow)

Pardon me. Your own futon. Check
it out. On the other side.

Suitcase in hand, Sara walks around the partition. Her "room" is an old futon, an ancient set of drawers. She stands in the middle of nothing, wanting something to do. She removes framed photos of Glynn from her backpack, places them around the room.

33 INT. ROY'S APARTMENT - LIVING AREA - MINUTES LATER

33

Sara walks in. Doesn't see Roy. Calls out.

SARA

Do you have a phone?

Roy emerges from the bathroom drying his hands, walks past her.

ROY

Of course I have a phone.

SARA

You didn't at the last place. The
last place I saw anyway.

ROY

Things change. You've changed.
You grew up on me. Overnight.

(CONTINUED)

12.

33 CONTINUED:

33

SARA

Over the summer. You blew me off
for some gig on the road,
remember?

(before he can
respond)

Can I call Lindsay? Let her know
I got here alright.

ROY

Are you alright, Sara?
(off the scowl
in her eyes)
I just wanna know how you feel.

SARA

I feel fine. I feel like calling
Lindsay.

She's a wall. A brick wall. Roy's head aches from
knocking into it. He goes to the couch. Drops down.
Mutters at her.

ROY

Phone's in the kitchen. Knock
yourself out.

34 INT. SARA'S ROOM/BATHROOM - LATE THAT NIGHT 34

Sara lying in bed... wide awake... her stiff upper lip
quivering. She slips out of bed, creeps on tiptoes into
the bathroom. Closes the door oh-so-quietly behind her.
She flips on the light, crosses to the sink, turns on
both faucets. As the water flows and the PIPES RATTLE,
the brick wall shatters. Sara crumbles to the floor.
Buries her head in her arms. Cries like a baby.

35 INT./EXT. ROY'S PICKUP (SOUTH BALTIMORE) - 35
NEXT MORNING

Roy and Sara. Barreling through the south end, tongues
stuck in gear. A Pop-Tart grows cold on Sara's lap.
Then, finally.

SARA

I can take the school bus.
Tomorrow.

ROY

School bus? That's the other Oz,
Dorothy. Patterson kids ride the
city Metro. Or walk.

(CONTINUED)

13.

35 CONTINUED: 35

SARA

Well, I know how to do both.

ROY

Not around here you don't. Not
until you get the hang of things.

Sara looks out the window at a full-fledged ghetto. It's
all too obvious, the hang of things. Roy glances over at
her.

ROY

I called about your transcripts.
You're all set. Patterson's got a
pretty good Humanities program.
No ballet, but we can find a
studio someplace close for after
school --

SARA

-- I don't think I'll have time.
I have to study, I'll be busy.

Roy can hear the lie behind her words. The pain too. He
lights a cigarette, cracks the window. He wants to say
the right thing.

ROY

Good idea. Take a break. Not too
long a break though. You're a
dancer. You should dance. Stay
on top of your art.

SARA

Like you stay on top of yours?

ROY

Maybe I ain't playin' no grand
ballrooms or fancy jazz festivals,
but I'm playing.

SARA

(unconvincingly)
I didn't mean it like that.

ROY

S'alright. Hell, I wish I had
half the time I wasted gettin'
wasted. But those days are over.
You'll see. I got my life on
track.

the middle of your senior year.
We realize that and we'll do what
we can to help with the
transition.

(CONTINUED)

15.

39 CONTINUED:
39

There's a KNOCK at door. MRS. GWYNN, the Guidance
Counselor, steps in. The Administrator introduces her to
Sara. Sara regards Mrs. Gwynn with polite petulance.

MRS. GWYNN

Any questions? Concerns?

SARA

About school? No. Not really.

MRS. GWYNN

Not even about Baltimore?

SARA

I'm not gonna be here that long.
Besides, it's just a city, right?

Mrs. Gwynn looks at her squarely. But the brick wall
doesn't move an inch. Sara feels too safe behind it.

40 INT. HALLWAY - MORNING
40

Clutching new textbooks, Sara starts down the hallway.
She's hoping nothing in her face reveals the rising panic
in her heart. She's surrounded. Alone. Every inch of
her feels afraid.

SARA'S POV

as she MOVES FORWARD. A crush of KIDS -- mostly black
with a sprinkling of white and Latino faces thrown in.
Kids like her. Only they don't dress like her. They
dress like commercials for Tommy Hilfiger and Calvin
Klein. And they definitely don't sound like her...

TEENAGER #1

Yo, man, check it, the

muthafuckers wasn't playin', they was jackin'. Ten rides in five days. For real.

TEENAGER #2

Fools got caught for real too. Ten years in five days. Stall that shit!

Sara walks on, taking this netherworld in, eavesdropping on other conversations. It's not just the words. It's how they say them: Loud. Matter-of-fact. Cool. A cooler cool. Like they breathe static electricity.

(CONTINUED)

16.

40 CONTINUED:

40

That's it! The entire student body is energized. Sara's thoughts are jolted by two black girls squeezing by. One clips Sara's elbow as she passes, knocking it against a locker. They keep going as if they don't see her. No one seems to see her. Welcome to mass avoidance at Patterson High.

41 AT SARA'S LOCKER - LATER

41

Sara's back is to a black girl striding purposefully toward her. CHENILLE -- tall, pretty, with about a million braids in her hair -- swoops Sara's backpack from the floor. Thrusts it at her.

CHENILLE

That's how easy it is to give to charity around here. Don't put your shit on the floor.

SARA

(cautions a smile)

Thanks.

She closes her locker, starts to say something else. She's eager to make a friend. One friend. But Chenille's gone.

42 ANOTHER CORRIDOR
42

Sara memorizes the schedule of classes in her hand. She passes a clutch of students who surround a kid in the middle like a horseshoe. Sara gets a fleeting glimpse of him.

SARA'S POV - PATRICK REYNOLDS

Eye candy: Tall. Dark. Heartbreakingly handsome. If Patterson were a monarchy, Patrick would be king. He sure holds court like one, turning on his dazzling smile and abundant charm for the crowd. One gets the sense that the All-American Home Boy is almost as enraptured with himself as the sycophants around him.

43 INT. JURASINSKI'S CLASSROOM - MORNING
43

The room's seen better days. Probably better teachers too. MR. JURASINSKI looks out at his American Literature class and sees nothing but tenure.

(CONTINUED)

17.

43 CONTINUED:
43

JURASINSKI

In Cold Blood represents a turning
point in our country's literature.
Take the cap off and tell me why
that is, Mr. Ricard.

WIDER to include the class. FAVOR "SNOOKIE" RICARD. We recognize him from the hallway kids wrapped up in Patrick. Snookie, a flagrant Patrick wannabe, sits next to him now. He removes his baseball cap. Thoughtfully twirls it on a finger. He truly believes he's being profound.

SNOOKIE

Gay rights. That Compote dude who wrote it? Sweet tooth. Straight-up fag, Mr. J.

JURASINSKI

Thank you, Mr. Ricard. Your
genius grant is in the mail.
Anyone else?

No volunteers. Jurasinski looks for someone to put on
the spot. Sees the new girl in a back corner. Johnson.
He gets into her line of sight. The class shifts in
their seats, peeping her.

JURASINSKI

Ms... Johnson. You can catch up
later. If this is over your head.

Everyone looks at her. The way kids look at new kids.

SARA

It's a non-fiction novel. The
first of its kind. Capote mixed
true events with things he
couldn't know, so he made them up.

A small murmur goes up. Over this, the voice of a
dissenter.

PATRICK (O.S.)

White folks back then felt safe.
Capote scared 'em. He took hard
core crime out the ghetto and
dropped it in America's back yard.
That's what makes the book
special.

(CONTINUED)

18.

43 **CONTINUED:**

43

Sara cranes to see him. God. It's pretty-boy. He's
sitting on the other side of the classroom. Looking...
pretty. Looking at her. He has nice eyes. Not that she
noticed.

SARA

Yeah. That is part of it.

PATRICK

That's all of it. Capote wasn't
first. Richard Wright and James
Baldwin did the same thing.

Wasn't nobody tryin' to read them
though.

SARA

Lots of people read them.

A defensive save. Patrick sees right through it.

PATRICK

Lots of people like who? You?
Hello. Didn't think so.

SNOOKIE

Mr. J.! Girl needs to bone up.
Give her a pass to the lib'ary.

The room erupts in laughter.

ON SARA

flushed in the face. Embarrassed. Pissed.

ANGLE WIDENS as Jurasinski quiets the class. Then.

JURASINSKI

She can have your pass, Mr.
Ricard. Since you obviously never
use it.

44 INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE OF CAFETERIA - NOON

44

Lunchtime. PICK UP Sara among a cattle drive of
boisterous students.

45 CAFETERIA - FOOD LINE - LATER

45

Hundreds of voices unleashed in pure, unadulterated
teenage cacophony. Sara's in a queue of kids, working
her way down the line.

(CONTINUED)

19.

45 CONTINUED:

45

She's as invisible and anonymous as ever. CAMERA TRACKS

her FROM the line, TO the cashier, INTO the heart of the dining hall. She stands with a food tray, looking for a place to sit.

HER POV

Table cliques of the cafeteria.

SERIES OF SWEEPING SHOTS

46 JOCK TABLE 46

Two tables pushed together. Full.

47 NERD TABLE 47

Barely, pathetically populated but surprisingly diverse.

48 HIP-HOP TABLE 48

Loud, overflowing, fun. King Patrick and his loyal subjects horse around.

49 POPULAR TABLE 49

Over which a glacial beauty we will come to know as NIKKI DAVIS presides. Girls only.

50 WHITE TABLE

Notable for its glaring absence of color. A girl we will come to know as TONI sits there.

And then PUSHING IN ON --

51 CHENILLE'S TABLE 51

She's there with a group of girls who eschew pretense. They, like Chenille, are rugged and regular. They know who they are.

END OF SERIES OF SWEEPING SHOTS.

eyeing Chenille's table. Screwing up courage as she approaches it. She gets there but two black girls are faster. They sit down in the only empty seats. Sara backs off, invisible again.

ON CHENILLE

glimpsing Sara from the corner of her eye as Sara walks away.

Time has passed. The cafeteria is half as full, half as noisy. Sara sits among the NERDS, a friendly if verbose group. She's trying to eat but a snooze button is talking her to death...

WONK

... I know you're new to the table, but think about it. We're the Y2K generation and nobody takes us seriously. We don't take ourselves seriously. Just look around. Half the student body is D.O.A. -- and that's from the neck up, Clara.

SARA

Sara. It's Sara.

CHENILLE (O.S.)

Yeah. It's Sara. And you're boring her from the ears down.

Sara looks up, surprised to see Chenille standing there. She flashes a knowing smile at her, indicates Sara's tray.

CHENILLE

You finished?

Sara leaps up with a quick, grateful nod. Beats a hasty retreat from the table. As she and Chenille walk through the cafeteria, Sara shudders with relief. She feels rescued.

SARA

God! Thank you!

(CONTINUED)

21.

53 CONTINUED:
53

CHENILLE

(laughs)

Gotta watch where you sit, girl.
And it's Chenille. But you're
still welcome. Let's catch some
air before the bell rings.

54 EXT. QUAD - MOMENTS LATER
54

Sara follows Chenille into the "QUAD," four squared off sections outside the cafeteria. There are a few dry-rotted picnic tables scattered around. Other kids -- and they run the gamut -- are seen in clots, sneaking smokes... horsing around... making out.

SARA'S POV - KIDS OF QUAD

And OVER the sound of HIP-HOP MUSIC, a pair of feet. Moving. Dancing. CAMERA PANS UP to reveal Nikki. She's demonstrating some moves to the girls from the popular table. Nikki's dancing her ass off, showing off.

BACK TO SCENE

SARA

What's it called? What she's
doing?

CHENILLE

A dance.

SARA

(a look; knows that)
No, I mean... the step, the...

She trails off as she catches someone in the corner of her eye. She turns away from Chenille, gradually focusing on --

PATRICK

playing cards with Snookie at one of the picnic tables. He glances up to see Sara. Glowering at him. He grins.

Sara rolls her eyes, turns away. Mutters loudly to herself.

SARA

Asshole.

(CONTINUED)

22.

54 **CONTINUED:**

54

CHENILLE

Asshole beaucoup. In this crowd, you gotta be more specific.

SARA

(covertly indicates
Patrick)

He's in one of my classes. Thinks he's so... smart. So cute.

CHENILLE

I don't know about cute but he is smart. Real smart. Real trip, too.

SARA

So you know him?

CHENILLE

Patrick Reynolds? Hell yeah, I know him. He's my brother.

Chenille waits for Sara to swallow her tongue. Enjoys a laugh.

ANGLE SHIFTS TO PATRICK

as Nikki approaches him. Sexy, standoffish and conceited, she's the stuff of wet dreams and futile longing. She sits down next to Patrick. Close to him. Snookie watches her, much amused.

NIKKI

You comin' tonight?

Patrick keeps playing his hand. Responds very coolly.

PATRICK

Gotta work.

NIKKI

You already skipped three meetings.

(as he's ignoring her)

Is it because of me? Everybody on the committee thinks it's because of me. Us.

(infuriated by his silence)

Look, Patrick. Regardless.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

23.

54 **CONTINUED:**

54

NIKKI (CONT'D)

You're in charge of the music. I'm in charge of the prom. So show up. Don't make me fire your ass.

Fighting words. Snookie holds his breath. Patrick throws out a card, turns slowly to Nikki with a withering stare in his eyes.

PATRICK

You already fired my ass, Nikki. Once and done. Over. Out. 'Bye.

She stalks off. Snookie oogles her departure, peers at Patrick, about to say something. Patrick cuts him off, indicates cards.

PATRICK

Hit me and shut the hell up.

SNOOKIE

I'ma shut up... after I say it been real frigid 'round here since y'all broke up. 'Specially since she broke up with you. That was

harsh, way she canceled your ass like a stamp for that Howard U dude. But their shit's over. Now might be the time to forget mistakes that was made. Shoot. You been with the girl since ninth grade.

PATRICK

Why you sweatin' me, Snookie?

SNOOKIE

(pounding his heart)

'Cause I'm about you, man. I want a happy ending. Aww, shit. Tuck an' duck. Here he comes. The hood of the 'hood, up to no good.

THEIR POV

MALAKAI RHINEHART, 17, heading toward them. Powerfully built and edgy with insolence, Malakai is like a tightly-wound coil -- you never know when he's going to snap. ANGLE WIDENS and we see Patrick is happy to see him. He and Malakai grin at each other. Knock handshakes.

(CONTINUED)

24.

54 CONTINUED:

54

MALAKAI

Medicine man...

SNOOKIE

(interjecting himself)

Did I tell you, Malakai, man, how chill it is to have you back? We ain't been bad without cha.

MALAKAI

Shut the fuck up and step your lame ass off, Snookie. You heard me. Space.

Snookie haughtily, comedically obliges.

A moment.

PATRICK

What happened to you at lunch,

man?

MALAKAI

Business.

Short-hand. Patrick understands it, nods. Malakai slips the cigarette from behind his ear, openly lights and starts smoking it. CAMERA TRACKS them walking back toward Patterson.

PATRICK

So you're hangin' in, man?
Feelin' strong about being back?

MALAKAI

Not at this motherfucker. Out a week and where am I? Fucking home sweet high school. Jail away from jail. You can have it.

PATRICK

You gonna stay though. Right?

MALAKAI

Judge says it's school or JuVee and I sure as hell ain't goin' back there. Shit. I never knew a year could be such a long time.

A flash of commiseration, of guilt, crosses Patrick's face. They're at the doors now. Most of the kids have gone. Malakai puts his cigarette out on the floor as they step in.

(CONTINUED)

25.

54 CONTINUED:

54

PATRICK

You up for some hoops after school? Break your free-throw back in. Chump the chumps like we used to.

MALAKAI

Up for it? Hell-the-fuck yeah, man. Let's do it.

55 EXT. PATTERSON HIGH - THAT DAY (AFTER SCHOOL)

55

Sara exits with Chenille. A CAR HORN starts to blare. Both of them ignore it. But it goes on like a musical number. Sara gets a sinking feeling that drops like a stone when she looks across the street. Roy's parked at the curb, waiting for her. She rolls her eyes and he HONKS AGAIN. Then he waves at her. Waves! Chenille looks at Sara. Then at Roy.

CHENILLE

That's your old man? Now he's cute.

SARA

He's embarrassing.

CHENILLE

(laughs)
Yeah. He is. For you.

56 INT./EXT. ROY'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS ACTION

56

Sara climbs in, slams the door. Roy looks over at her, unaware of how annoyed she is with him. She's a clenched fist inside.

ROY

How'd it go?

SARA

Fine.
(as he pulls off)
Tomorrow I catch the bus.

57 INT. ROY'S APARTMENT - SARA'S "ROOM" - NIGHT

57

Sara's moving the partition around, trying to make her room more like a room. Trying to build another wall between her and Roy.

(CONTINUED)

26.

57 CONTINUED:

57

ROY (O.S.)

Hey, Sara. C'mere a minute.

Sara lets out a heavy sigh. What does he want?

SARA

What?

ROY (O.S.)

Just come here.

She walks into the kitchen. Roy's in front of the open freezer door. Grinning from ear to ear. He motions her over. Sara crosses to the freezer. Looks inside.

INSERT - INSIDE FREEZER

It's full of frozen dinners. They're in unruly, lopsided stacks.

BACK TO SCENE

Roy regards her expectantly.

ROY

Hungry and Healthys. I asked at the market. They're the best. So. What do you feel like?
(whimsically)
Lamb Chop Suey? Tropical Tuna? Primavera Paradise?

SARA

I had a big lunch.

Roy, deflated, closes the freezer door, trails her into the living area. Sara's clenching again. There's no escaping him.

ROY

What do you wanna do? You wanna hang out with me? Go to my gig. You can if you want.

SARA

It's a school night, Roy.

ROY

Right. School night. Got it.

27.

Roy's gone. Sara takes her first good look around. A mess. It drives home where she is. What she's lost. It's overwhelming.

59 INT. ROY'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - CLOSE ON EMPTY T.V. DINNER TRAY - NIGHT 59

An empty beer bottle, one askew kitchen chair. Vestiges of Roy's meal. ANGLE WIDENS as Sara enters. She opens the freezer to unearth a dinner and starts an avalanche of falling food. A box of Sugar Puffs cereal lands at her feet. Something else out of place. She picks it up, jams everything back into the freezer. Slams the door shut.

SHOCK CUT TO:

60 SARA 60

in a whirlwind, cleaning the apartment. Wall to wall. Scrubbing away what's churned up inside. The dervish ends in her "room," where she finishes unpacking. Several layers into a suitcase, she comes to her ballet shoes. The sight hits her like a slap in the face. Sara stares at the shoes until her eyes blur. Then she snatches them up and entombs them deep inside her closet.

61 EXT. O'DONNELL HEIGHTS PUBLIC HOUSING PROJECTS - MORNING 61

Patrick, Chenille, Snookie straggle through the dreary jungle of concrete lawns and blighted high rises on the way to school. It's quiet now but the scars of past battles, like the bombed out police substation on one of its corners, are evident everywhere.

SNOOKIE

I need a date --

CHENILLE

Why? Your hand busy?

SNOOKIE

-- For the prom. And if it wasn't for that kinda undue attitude, you could be the lucky girl, Chenille. My personal prom queen. I can see us now.

(CONTINUED)

28.

61 CONTINUED:

61

CHENILLE

You must be lookin' in your
dreams.

Snookie glances at Patrick. He's somewhere else.

SNOOKIE

Help me, man. Defend me.

PATRICK

I got my own problems, Snook.

SNOOKIE

What problems? You goin' to
college. Doctor college after
that. You large, man.

PATRICK

I ain't gonna be doctor nothin' if
I don't get in and I'm not in 'til
I get my letter.

CHENILLE

It's in the mail, Patrick. Okay?

SNOOKIE

(wishfully thinking)
I probably coulda been a doctor
too. If I hadn't got left back
that time.

CHENILLE

That time? What? Fifth and sixth
grade don't count?

Patrick finally laughs. Then his face changes. Becomes
serious. He hops a low wall, keeps in stride above them.
They continue on like this, the ruins of their world in
the b.g. behind them.

62 INT./EXT CITY BUS/BALTIMORE STREETS - MORNING

62

The bus is crammed with kids. Sara, seated by a window,
doesn't bother looking out. Inside's more interesting.

The kids cut up. Singing, rapping, and jousting with each other. Some even manage to read. Sara watches with immunity. She's invisible to them.

63 EXT. BUS STOP (NEAR PATTERSON HIGH) - MORNING 63

Sara alights just as Patrick, Chenille, and Snookie walk past. Patrick's the only one to see her and their eyes briefly connect.

29.

64 INT. HALLWAY NEAR ENTRANCE (PATTERSON HIGH) - CONTINUOUS ACTION 64

Patrick and Chenille pass through metal detectors, watch Snookie clown his way through. The security guard shakes his head. All three begin to walk. Snookie, bobbing and jiving, doesn't see Mrs. Gwynn coming up from behind. Her voice stops him cold.

MRS. GWYNN

(as Patrick and
Chenille look on)

Light on your feet? Good. Be
sure they dance into my office
next week.

She moseys on. Snookie regards Patrick's smile, shakes his head.

65 INT. CHEMISTRY LAB - LATER THAT MORNING 65

The class has donned lab coats and is ready to begin when Sarah rushes in. She tries to slink into a seat. The teacher, MR. HILL, gives her a disapproving look, points at one of several formulas (C₂H₆O₂) on the blackboard. Sara just looks at him

MR. HILL

We're cooking today, Ms. Johnson.
This is your first lab. You'll
need a partner. Mr. Reynolds --
Patrick -- will show you the
ropes.

Patrick bounces a smile off unsettled Sara. This should be fun.

The class, in safety goggles and gloves, has partnered up.

ANGLE ON SARA AND PATRICK

He's holding two vials. Sara picks up a beaker. Stares at the blackboard. She has no idea -- and no intention of admitting it.

PATRICK

(very casually)

That's too big.

She glints at him, grits through her teeth.

(CONTINUED)

30.

66 CONTINUED:

66

SARA

I know it's too big.

She puts the beaker down. Picks up a vial. Flips through her textbook. Her eyes shift from it to the blackboard, trying to make a connection. She settles on one. Picks up a vial of powder. Patrick grabs her hand, leans over and whispers.

PATRICK

I wouldn't do that if I were you.

SARA

(yanks her hand back)

Who died and made you teacher?

Patrick pulls back, looks at her. He can't believe she dissed him. A small smile forms on his face. Sara turns away from it, goes back to her vials. Patrick slides to the farthest end of the table. Watches her consternation with bemusement.

PATRICK

Know the difference between ethyl glycol and methyl acetate? Both got three elements, two parts the same. It's that first part, C2

versus C3. C3 could blow a vial
right out a person's hand.

Sara thinks he's messing with her. But then the contents of the beaker begin to ominously bubble. Panicked, she drops the vial into their sink. It instantly goes up in smoke. Some of the liquid splashes on Sara's lab coat. Patrick grabs a wet towel, quickly wipes it off. The class stops cold. Hill rushes up to them. Once he's sure Sara's fine, he looks sternly at Patrick.

MR. HILL

What happened? Everybody back in
your seats!

Patrick stares at Sara. Her face is red. She's biting
her lip.

PATRICK

I misread the component.

MR. HILL

(even more angry now)
You? You misread a component.
Don't give me that, Patrick. You
were screwin' around!

(CONTINUED)

31.

66 CONTINUED:

66

Hill's tone is searing. He turns to Sara. She's trying to say something but the words won't come out. Hill regards her wearily, then walks off pushing the curious class back to their stations. Sara looks at Patrick, weakly mouths "thanks."

67 INT. GYMNASIUM - NIGHT

67

Over the sound of GRUNTING... OPEN CLOSE ON a girl's plump ass. Squirming in too-tight gym shorts that hug the cheeks. ANGLE WIDENS to reveal a stout white girl on a balance beam. Trying to get her legs to stand up on it. Hanging on for dear life. From somewhere around her, a WHISTLE BLOWS.

TEACHER (O.S.)

Alright, Ms. Diggs. Time!

WIDEN to see the teacher and her class (FAVOR Sara, Chenille, and Nikki). Amid snickers, the stout girl ("DIGGY") slides off the beam, walks past the teacher with her head demurely cast down. Clearing the teacher, Diggy pivots around, both middle fingers in the air. Gives up the double bird with much attitude. The class loves it. Cheers it. Until the teacher swerves around.

67 SERIES OF CLOSE CUTS
67

Chenille on balance beam. competent but average.

Nikki on balance beam. Agile. Self-assured. Good.

... And then TIGHTER STILL on Sara. Tentatively approaching the balance beam. Mindful of all the eyes on her, all the bated breaths. All waiting to see the new girl fall on her ass. Sara swings herself onto the beam with aplomb. Her legs and body are strong, supple, pliable rubber bands. She flounces across it on her tiptoes. Does a flawless split. Hops off. Looks out.

SARA'S POV - TEACHER AND CLASS

Reacting with shock and surprise. Awed. Except for Nikki. She stands there with her arms folded. Simmering. Envious.

68 PATTERSON HIGH - END OF SCHOOL THAT DAY
68

Sara. Heading down the steps with other students. Chenille and Diggy break through the logjam, catch up to her.

(CONTINUED)

32.

68 CONTINUED:
68

CHENILLE

Girl, how you get your legs to twist like that?

DIGGY

(wildly gesticulating)
Yeah. What was all that double-
jointed cheerleader shit?

CHENILLE

This is Diggy. Thinks she's down.

DIGGY

Egg-cuse me? I am down.

CHENILLE

So, Sara. What's up with that?

SARA

(awkwardly)
Nothing's up with it. I used to
kind of dance. Ballet. Mostly.

Chenille makes an impressed face. Regards Sara
curiously.

CHENILLE

You should hit Feetz with us
tomorrow night. It's a club.
Sorta members only.

DIGGY

Un-der-ground.

SARA

I don't know...

CHENILLE

Come on and hang out. Snook dee's
sometime. He can get you in.
(yelling)
Yo, Snook

Sara sees Snookie... then Patrick... loping her way. She
steels herself. He's going to say something, crack some
joke about her nearly blowing him up. But Patrick just
stares at her with a twinkle in his eyes. A nice
twinkle. Sara's not entirely immune to it. Chenille
breaks their eye play, pushes Patrick aside. She grabs
Snookie's arm, indicates Sara.

(CONTINUED)

33.

CHENILLE

She needs to get hooked up for Feetz. All the way up. Sara, give Snook twenty dollars.

SARA

For what?

SNOOKIE

I.D. Eye-dee. How you think you gettin' in? On your looks?

(rolling his eyes)

Chenille, your girl is weak. Shit. I got my rep to watch. I can't just be gettin' any green in.

Sara glares. Regards Snookie with a sweeping scowl.

SARA

Look closer. And if I still look green, I think maybe you should wipe the crust from your eyes.

Snookie's jaw drops. Patrick cracks up. Diggy too. Chenille's stays on point. She's about solving the problem.

CHENILLE

You gonna pay the man or what?

SNOOKIE

She ain't got it. Look at her. Loud-talkin' me and broke as a damn promise.

Sara, put on the spot, pulls out the money. Snookie snatches it.

SARA

I don't even know where it is.

CHENILLE

So we'll hook up at my house. Go together. I will have your I.D.

Snookie shrugs affirmatively. Patrick looks directly at Sara. The twinkle in his eye is gone, replaced by fair warning.

PATRICK

Feetz ain't no square dance.

SARA

That's okay. I dance in circles.
Probably around you.

34.

69 INT. ROY'S APARTMENT - SARA'S ROOM - NIGHT

69

Roy walks in to see Sara on the futon in her pajamas reading a book. She's got a head full of rollers.

ROY

I'm splittin'.
(as she barely looks up)
Whatcha readin'?

SARA

Chemistry.

ROY

You're takin' chemistry?

SARA

Right now it's taking me.

ROY

Give yourself some time. Well.
See ya in the mornin'. Maybe I'll
call between sets.

Sara really looks up. Gives him an angelic, sluggish shrug.

SARA

I'll be asleep.

He leaves. As soon as Sara hears the front DOOR CLOSE, she jumps up, strips down to bra and panties, races to the closet. One hand rips the rollers from her hair, the other rips through outfits. She's frantic and unsure about choosing the right one.

70 EXT. "BLACK" STREET (SOUTH BALTIMORE) - NIGHT

70

Sara. In a skin-tight miniskirt and a bolero jacket. Looking more eighties than nineties, more cute than cool. She walks with tentative, jittery purpose down this poverty stricken street. Doesn't meet anyone's eye. But can feel the eyes on her. She keeps going. She's walked

too far to turn back.

71 EXT. O'DONNELL HEIGHTS PROJECTS - SARA - NIGHT

71

Approaching the malignant edifices as the Heights begin to come to life... or death, depending how luck's running. Sara walks into this world of shadows and despite a trepidation, finds something fascinating about the possibility of real danger.

35.

72 EXT./INT. REYNOLDS APARTMENT/HALLWAY - NIGHT

72

Chenille triple unlocks the door, lets Sara in. Sara's surprised -- the apartment is surprisingly quaint and extremely neat. It looks a helluva lot better than Roy's place. Chenille is dressed in hugely baggy military-style pants and a tube top with a form-fitting, short-cut leather coat over it. Sara takes it in.

SARA

Cool outfit.

CHENILLE

Slammin'. Slammin' outfit.

SARA

... I look okay?

Chenille gives her the once over. Decides to lie.

CHENILLE

Yeah. You look okay.

(then)

Moma Dean. I'm leavin'.

FROM ANOTHER ANGLE

GRANDMOMMA DEAN enters with a toddler ("CHRISTOPHER") in her arms. She sports snow white, waist-length dreads and she's wearing a dashiki lounge. Despite her white locks, she doesn't look old enough to be a grandmother. She hands Christopher to Chenille. Inspects Sara. Her eyes are open, kind.

CHENILLE

(fussing over

Christopher)

Grandmom, Sara. Sara, Grandmom.

Also known as Momma Dean. And handsome here is Christopher.

SARA

Hi.

MOMMA DEAN

Hello. Now don't get him all riled up, Chenille. I want to get some sleep tonight.

Chenille kisses Christopher, hands him off to Momma Dean. They exit. Sara looks tentatively at Chenille.

SARA

Is that... is he... yours?

CHENILLE

He sure ain't Momma Dean's.

36.

**73 INT./EXT. CAB/STREET (MOVING) - SARA AND CHENILLE
- NIGHT**

73

They've been talking. Well, Chenille has. Sara's been listening. Intently. Liking this confidence they're sharing.

CHENILLE

... He'll be one in July. Best mistake I ever made. Kenny -- Christopher's father -- he's the worst. Triflin'. Okay?

74 EXT. 6TH AND BROADWAY (EAST BALTIMORE) - NIGHT

74

A curbed cab. Sara and Chenille get out. Chenille digs into her pocketbook, hands Sara her I.D. PUSH IN ON photo of obese white girl with an untamed trailer trash perm. Sara's eyes go wide.

SARA

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

CHENILLE

She's twenty-one too. I ain't got all night. Let's hop.

SARA

Wait. I have to ask you

something.
(hard for her)
Do I really look alright?

An unspoken thing passes between them. Chenille suddenly whips off her coat. Gestures at Sara with her head.

CHENILLE

Gimme that '89 Madonna shit. Your jacket. Give it here.

Sara takes off the bolero. Chenille ties it around her own neck, then yanks Sara's miniskirt down around her hips. Sara's torso is clad in a long-sleeved cotton tee. Chenille frowns at it.

SARA

It's from the GAP.

CHENILLE

It's country. You look country in it. Take it off.

SARA

I'm not walking in there in my bra.

(CONTINUED)

37.

74 **CONTINUED:**

74

Chenille thrusts her leather coat at her. Sara can't believe what she's doing, getting (un)dressed on a public street! She pulls off the tee, slips on Chenille's coat. Buttons it as far as the buttons go. Looks down. Half her chest is exposed.

75 **EXT. ALLEY (EAST BALTIMORE) - SARA AND CHENILLE - NIGHT**

75

Gaining on what looks like an abandoned warehouse. Chenille snorts at the roped off queue of kids waiting to get inside.

CHENILLE

Rope dopes. C'mon.

She leads Sara to the door of FEETZ. The Sumo-sized MAN guarding it knows Chenille, digs her. His grin exposes gold-capped teeth.

DOORMAN

Chenille. Lookin' fine. As
always.

CHENILLE

Too fine to stand in line?

The Man grins, opens the rope, lets them in -- "in" being just inside the front door. A BOUNCER there collects the \$10.00 cover charge. Checks their I.D. He hands Sara's back with a smirk.

BOUNCER

Changed your hair.

He waves a metal detector over their bodies, nods to yet another bouncer who escorts Sara and Chenille through yet another door.

76 ANOTHER ANGLE

76

They march a short distance to an old elevator where a group of kids wait. Bouncer #2 engages the elevator. Everyone piles in.

77 INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS ACTION

77

Sara holds onto her stomach as the CREAKY ELEVATOR descends and the MUSIC below rises. The elevator's vibrating with music.

(CONTINUED)

38.

77 CONTINUED:

77

SARA

(an inside to Chenille)
Can't get much more underground
than this.

78 INT. FEETZ CLUB - CONTINUOUS ACTION

78

A smoky hole in the wall, filled to the brim with kids. Mostly black kids with a few whites and Latinos melting in. They share a common goal: To clog the dance floor, flaunt their outfits and get nasty with the music of the

masters: Tupac Shakur, NAS, Lauryn Hill, Puff Daddy, etc. Here, the boundaries of dirty dancing are pushed, from erotic to vulgar; loving to lascivious.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Sara and Chenille. Sara's excited. She loves that she has to shout to be head over the music.

CHENILLE

Let's get our table 'fore it gets
crashed and I hafta hurt somebody.

Sara's bewildered. She doesn't see any tables. She follows Chenille to the back of FEETZ. Sees six or seven tables. All of them have reserved signs. Most of them are filled.

SARA

What are you, some kind of V.I.P.?

Chenille indicates the deejay booth. Snookie's in it.

CHENILLE

Snook hooks me up whenever he
dees.

They walk past a SLACKER in lycra pants and a big Army shirt. He licks his tongue at Chenille, grabs at her protruding butt. She swirls around, grabs his crotch hard enough to get his attention. The Slacker is squirming in her clutch.

SLACKER

Aw'right, aw'right. You got it.

CHENILLE

Got what?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

39.

78 CONTINUED:
78

CHENILLE (CONT'D)

(as he can't think of
anything but the
squeeze on his balls)

The right to walk past your
greasy, tickle dick self without
your paws on my ass? 'S'that how
I got it?

Chenille bobs her head right in his face. Sara can't believe it. A few people have stopped and are looking. The Slacker nods hastily. Chenille releases him, gently smooths out his shirt.

CHENILLE

That's how I thought I had it.
(a fly wave)
See ya.

She and Sara continue on to back-of-the-club tables. Stop at a reserved one. An adjacent table sports Nikki, her three girl crew... and Diggy. All nurse drinks. Nikki snake-eyes Sara.

NIKKI

What is up with this place? Seems
like they're lettin' anybody in.

CHENILLE

Yeah. And they started with you.

The three girls and Diggy snicker. Nikki gives Chenille a look. Turns back to Sara with a snide smirk. Points out her crew.

NIKKI

I'm Nikki. Alyssa. Jasmin.
Tiff'nee. You know Diggy, right,
Marsha?

SARA

Sara. It's Sara. And I know you.
We have a class together.

NIKKI

That don't mean you know me.

CHENILLE

Quit it, Nikki.

NIKKI

Quit what? I ain't walkin' on
eggshells just 'cause you brought
the Brady Bunch to the Negro Club.

(CONTINUED)

78 CONTINUED:
78

SARA

(kiss-my-ass polite)
Maybe you came to the wrong spot,
Nikki. I'm pretty sure this one
doesn't have any Negroes.

Chenille cracks up mainly to back Sara up.
at her.

Nikki glowers

NIKKI

I'm pretty sure you came with one.

CHENILLE

Oh, no. Uh-uh, wench. You did
not just call me a Negro.

As Chenille bucks, Diggy springs up from her seat, runs
her arm in the space between Chenille and Nikki like a
referee.

DIGGY

Alright, y'all. Chill.

NIKKI

Tell her to chill. She always got
somethin' to say.

CHENILLE

I can say a lot more. Keep
runnin' your mouth, Nikki. I'll
lay all your shit bare.

Whatever shit it is, Nikki's not taking any
ejects herself from the table, walks off.
girls scoot loyally after her. Diggy gets
at Sara's and Chenille's table. Diggy goes
flow. That's why she always fits in.

chances. She
The three
up. Sits down
with the

DIGGY

Why you burn her like that?

CHENILLE

'Cause I can't stand her ass and
the way she played my brother. I
need a drink, Sara. Let's walk.

79 INT. FEETZ - ENTRANCE - SAME TIME
79

Patrick and Malakai enter with two high school dropouts we will learn are ARVEL and LIP. Females flock to flirt with Patrick and Malakai, who both swell like sponges, soaking up the attention.

41.

80 INT. FEETZ - BAR - SAME TIME
80

Chenille pushes her way to the bar, tugging Sara along. A tall, angular twenty-something MAN on the far side of the bar sees her. She sees him. Sucks her teeth, nudges Sara.

CHENILLE

That's him. Comin' over. Kenny?
Don't look.

So of course Sara does. She makes a silly face at Chenille as Kenny sidles up to her. Chenille rolls her eyes half-heartedly.

KENNY (MAN)

What's up?

CHENILLE

Where's my money, Kenny?

KENNY

I'm a little short this week.
Don't jump off. It's comin'.

CHENILLE

It's comin'? No. You lyin'.

KENNY

Lemme rap to you about the
situation on the dance floor.

She shakes her head firmly but her eyes do tell. She's in love with him. Enough to let him whisper in her ear, sweet-talk her away from the bar. Before she's swallowed up by the crowd, Chenille turns back to Sara, shouts:

CHENILLE

Rum and Coke. No ice. Hook me
up.

ON PATRICK

splitting off from Malakai and a girl clinging to him. He's walking through when Nikki appears from nowhere, grabs his arm.

NIKKI

Let's dance.

PATRICK

(pulling away)

Let's not.

(CONTINUED)

42.

80 CONTINUED:

80

NIKKI

Oh? It's gonna be like that.

PATRICK

How'd you think it was gonna be?
That you was gonna drop me and
pick me up whenever you felt like
it?

NIKKI

It ain't all that serious,
Patrick.

PATRICK

It ain't anymore, Nikki. Not to
me.

He walks off. CAMERA TRACKS him going deep inside the club. He wants a drink. He's almost at the bar when he sees Chenille on the dance floor with Kenny. She shrugs a smile, then cocks her head over at the bar. Toward Sara. The look is like, help me out. Don't let me leave her hangin'. Patrick rolls his eyes as he glances at Sara, before he really sees her. She looks fly. Hugely fly. He ambles up as she shouts into the bartender's ear.

SARA

Rum and Coke, straight up. And a
beer. I don't care. Anything.

PATRICK (O.S.)

Bad choice. 'Anything.'

The closeness of his voice startles her. She turns into his smile. That cocksure, leave'em-weak-in-the-knees smile.

SARA

It's just a beer.

PATRICK

Then it should be the best beer. You'd know that if you really drank.

Sara's knees straighten, her spine stiffens. The asshole's back.

SARA

Whatever.

PATRICK

What's that mean? Whatever.

(CONTINUED)

43.

80 CONTINUED:

80

SARA

Whatever you want it to mean. You're the whiz kid, right? You know everything.

PATRICK

(chuckles at this, at her)

Not everything. Like I don't know why we're standin' still.

(closer with a teasing whisper)

I'm supposed to be dizzy by now. Remember? From all those circles you danced around me.

Sara leans against the bar. The knees are going again.

SARA

I don't feel like dancing.

PATRICK

But you do know how...?

SARA

Would I be here if I didn't?

PATRICK

... Let's do it then. C'mon.

He coaxes her onto the dance floor. PARLIAMENT'S funk classic "Flashlight" is playing. The dance crowd is robustly singing the refrain to the song. There's a party on the floor. FAVOR Sara and Patrick, facing each other. He's moving already. She starts to dance, stiffly, tentatively. Patrick smiles at her. Shakes his head. He grabs her hands, swings them in time to the music.

PATRICK

Now move your hips. Not so fast.

(as Sara looks lost)

Sara! Just like our hands.

(singing, in sync with
the crowd)

'Flashlight! Neon light! Stop
light! Everybody got a little
light under the sun.'

The music's beginning to feel good to Sara. Patrick lets go of her hands. Starts to dance. Sara watches him intensely, her body follows his stiffly. Patrick's a good teacher. He leads without leaving her. Whenever she misses a complicated move, he smoothly segues into another less-complicated one.

(CONTINUED)

44.

80 CONTINUED:

80

Sara begins to pick-up on Patrick's rhythm. Her eyes never wander from his. And then she starts to feel something else. They both do. A rising beat. A quickening heart. And not from the dancing. She smiles bashfully at him. Patrick suddenly grabs her around the waist, pulls her to him in a sexy spoon dance. All Sara can do is try to keep up and hang on.

FROM ANOTHER ANGLE

Nikki avidly watching Sara and Patrick with Jasmin and

Tiff'ny.

JASMIN

She's all up in your nut, Nikki...
Oh, that's right. It ain't your
nut anymore.

NIKKI

It is if I want it to be. He is
if I want him to be. That bitch
ain't got shit on me.

The girls regard her in conspicuous, dubious silence.
Nikki maintains her cool but inside her pride is
pricking.

81 INT. FEETZ - SAME TIME

81

Malakai and the clinging girl nuzzle in a back corner.
She licks his ear, whispers into it. Malakai laughs.
Then his expression abruptly darkens. A storm cloud
comes over it. He gets up.

MALAKAI'S POV - WALKING TOWARD

... two dealers a few feet away. They're talking to an
Asian guy with a multi-colored Mohawk. One slips Mohawk
a packet of coke, the other takes his money. WIDER as
Malakai reaches the dealers. He doesn't explain, doesn't
complain. He just starts swinging.

SARA AND PATRICK

The MUSIC changes and their dance ends. They stand there
for a moment, a little caught up in each other. A little
unsure of the moment. And then there's a scream!
Several of them actually. Patrick reacts to it
instinctively. Looking around. In a small pocket of the
club he sees Malakai.

(CONTINUED)

45.

81 CONTINUED:

81

PATRICK'S POV - MALAKAI

in full fisticuffs with the two dealers. Holding his own.

ON PATRICK

leaving Sara, slicing through a clot of looky-loos until he reaches Malakai. He jumps into the fray.

INT. FEETZ - FIGHT - PATRICK AND MALAKAI

A thick crowd around them, proceed to beat the living shit out of the two dealers.

ANGLE ON SARA AND CHENILLE

wrangling their way to the front line of the crowd, Diggy not far behind them. Sara looks on, dumbfounded and dazzled by what she sees, which is --

PATRICK

pummeling his dealer into cowering submission. Only then does he look over at Malakai who, eyes engorged with rage, is standing over his opponent, kicking and stomping him with no signs of letting up. Patrick can see Malakai's too far gone for talk. He rushes him from behind, nearly lifts Malakai off his feet to swing him away from the dealer's writhing body on the floor.

82 EXT. FEETZ - OUTSIDE VESTIBULE - CONTINUOUS ACTION
82

The exit door bursts open and Patrick and Malakai tumble out. Patrick bends over, cups his knees as he catches his breath.

PATRICK

Man, what the hell are you doin'?
Tryin' to get sent back up?

MALAKAI

They the ones tryin' shit. Comin'
here. Squarin' off in my shit.

PATRICK

You couldn't let it slide?

MALAKAI

Let it slide tonight, they come
back strong tomorrow. You know
that.

PATRICK

Malakai, you fuck up parole, you
ain't gonna back to JuVee.
Eighteen and up, that's Jessup.
Hardcore lockdown. You want that?

MALAKAI

(regards him coldly)
I want what was mine. Feetz is my
spot. I'ma do business here just
like I did before. Like we did
before. And if I gotta stomp some
niggers in my way, so be it.

An uncertain but tense moment. Patrick tries to salvage
it.

PATRICK

Well, you definitely got the
stompin' part down.

They look at each other. Share a small laugh.

MALAKAI

We fucked those fools up for sure.

PATRICK

(crossing to exit door)
For damn sure, man.

Patrick finds the door locked. He and Malakai hoist
themselves over a high, wrought iron fence. Disappear
behind it.

Distant WAIL of SIRENS as Feetz begins to empty out.
Kids converge on the sidewalks. PICK UP Sara, Chenille
and Diggy. Waiting and watching for Patrick. Diggy
looks at them.

DIGGY

It's about to get real out here.
Cops and shit. I'm gone.

She leaves. Chenille spots Patrick. Not too worse for the wear. She smiles with relief. Then Sara sees him. She smiles too.

47.

84 EXT. STREET (O'DONNELL HEIGHTS) - NIGHT

84

Sara, Patrick and Chenille. Walking home. Chenille's preaching to Patrick. He's not in the mood.

CHENILLE

... Yeah, I'ma tell you. Tell you like I keep tellin' you, Patrick. You need to let Malakai alone. Let him handle his own shit before he drags you down in it.

PATRICK

Chenille. I heard you the first five hundred times.

They round a corner bordering the Heights. Stop in front of it. Chenille, disconcerted with Patrick, looks dourly at Sara.

CHENILLE

I'll see you Monday.
(to Patrick, like an order)
He'll walk you.

As much as this makes sense, it still takes Patrick by surprise. Sara sees it in his face, regards Chenille with a false bravado.

SARA

It's just a few blocks. It's okay.

CHENILLE

No, it's not okay. Would you tell the girl it ain't okay?

PATRICK

It's not okay, okay?
(before she can

protest)
Come on, Braveheart.

85 EXT. STREET - SARA AND PATRICK - NIGHT

85

walking. Sara keeps stealing glances of him. Or so she thinks.

PATRICK

What?

SARA

(caught)

What?

(CONTINUED)

48.

85 CONTINUED:

85

PATRICK

Why you keep lookin' at me?

SARA

I have to look somewhere. The streets are deserted. Might as well look at you.

PATRICK

That's not why. You wanna know somethin'. Ask somethin'.

SARA

It's not a question. It's the way you were beating that kid up. You looked so mad.

PATRICK

I was mad and he wasn't no kid. But you're from the suburb Mars, right? Folks don't fight there.

SARA

Not like that.

(some kind of
wonder)

You were really kicking his ass.

It's not funny, the look on her face. But Patrick

laughs.

SARA

Are you laughing at me?

Dropping the smile, Patrick shakes his head.
her.

Looks at

PATRICK

My friend was in trouble.

SARA

Maybe he's my question. Your
friend. Chenille doesn't like
him.

PATRICK

She likes him. It don't stop her
from trippin' off him now and
then. But Malakai's good people.
We go back. Way back. You know,
like they say, through thick and
thin.

(beat)

So, how'd you like Feetz?

(CONTINUED)

49.

85 CONTINUED:
85

SARA

It was great.

PATRICK

Once you got used to the music.

SARA

It wasn't the music I wasn't used
to. I mean, it's not the first
time I heard hip-hop, Patrick.

PATRICK

Uh-huh. Bet you listen to it all
the time.

Patrick regards her with a sly, knowing smile. His stare
is significant, unsettling. Sara's face flushes. She
turns from him, hoping he didn't see it.

SARA

Not all the time. But a lot.

PATRICK

We gettin' any closer to your crib
or should we stop for food and
water?

Sara snaps out of it. Looks around. Shit. First the
flush and now this. She looks at him. She could kick
herself.

SARA

We passed it.

PATRICK

You passed it.

A look. They double back to her front door.
the stoop.

Pause on

SARA

Thanks for walking me.

PATRICK

No problem.

SARA

So. I'll see ya.

PATRICK

Is that 'see ya' like gee-whiz,
had a great time, can't wait to
see you again?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

50.

85 **CONTINUED:**

85

PATRICK (CONT'D)

Or is it like 'see ya,' I'll bust
a cap in your ass if you ever
darken my doorstep again?

He makes it impossible not to smile. So damned charming.

SARA

I haven't said gee-whiz since I

was six. But I really had a great time... okay?

PATRICK

Okay.

She enters the rowhouse. Patrick waits until the lights go on inside before he turns around and starts home.

86 INT. ROY'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NEXT MORNING

86

Roy's making breakfast when Sara straggles in. She peers at the stove. Scrambled eggs and bacon. Toast too! A first for him.

ROY

Figured I'd put a little marrow in your bones. Siddown, siddown.

(she slumps in chair)

You gettin' along at school?

Makin' friends...?

(as she nods robotically)

... See any of 'em last night?

He slides a plate in front of her. Stands there holding his.

ROY

I came home on my break.

SARA

Oh.

The succinct sneer in her voice gets to Roy. He snaps at her.

ROY

... Oh? Jesus! You're hard! Look. You're seventeen. If you wanna go out, go out. But don't lie to me. On top of everything else, don't make me worry like that about you.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

86 CONTINUED:
86

ROY (CONT'D)

(after long moment)
I didn't mean to yell.
(sits down; trying
like hell)
So how are the eggs? They good?

Sara takes a small, tasteless sample, nods. They eat in silence. Then Sara looks over at him with genuine if detached remorse.

SARA

You're right. I should've said something. I'm sorry.

Roy exhales. Finally, a chink in the brick wall.

ROY

What're you gonna do today?
Anything special?

SARA

Nope. Nothing special.

87 INT. RECORD STORE (EAST POINT MALL) - DAY
87

A track from TOP DOGG BLARES from invisible SPEAKERS. All of the store's many customers are teenage kids. Snookie, in sunglasses and a reversed baseball cap, clerks behind the counter. He's ringing up (and trying to rap to) a fly girl when Patrick walks in, overhears the overture.

SNOOKIE

... How you know I can't do
nothin' for you? I'm the hardest
workin' man in showbizness, girl.
C'mon. Let me be the bomb in your
shell.

The fly girl rolls her eyes. Takes her bag. Leaves. Patrick looks at Snookie, wryly shakes his head.

PATRICK

You do the shit to yourself, man.
The bomb in your shell?

SNOOKIE

That was black magic, Patrick.
It's gonna work one of these days.

He reaches behind the counter, hands Patrick a Jay-Z C.D.

(CONTINUED)

52.

87 CONTINUED:

87

SNOOKIE

Last one on the rack. I snatched
it up for you. Rang it up on my
discount.

PATRICK

(what Snookie's
waiting for)
Thank you, Snookie.

SNOOKIE

(as Patrick pays him)
You workin' or what, man?

PATRICK

On my way. Soon as I get outta
here...

As he says this, his eyes wander around the store. And
he sees her in the stacks. Sara.

88 INT. RECORD STORE - HIP-HOP SECTION - MOMENTS LATER

88

Sara with a bunch of C.D.'s. She juggles them in one
hand, flips through Hip-Hop C.D.'s with another. She
looks up to see Patrick standing beside her. He takes in
the C.D.'s. Grins at her.

PATRICK

Throwin' a party?

There's no wiggle room but Sara wiggles anyway.

SARA

Just adding to my collection. I
heard some stuff I didn't have
last night.

PATRICK

(that twinkle in his
eyes)
Well, you were fly anyway. Last
night. Dancin', I mean.

SARA

Not as fly as you.

PATRICK

(half-serious)
Nobody's as fly as me.

(CONTINUED)

53.

88 CONTINUED:
88

SARA

(dead-serious)
Not yet anyway.

Patrick laughs. Looks at her. Sara looks back at him.
They're staring at each other.

PATRICK

Maybe we could hook up later.
After school or somethin'. Work
on some of your moves. If you
want.

SARA

Okay. Sure.

Patrick nods affirmatively. Starts to leave. Turns
back, indicates her stack of C.D.'s.

PATRICK

By the way, Hammer's pretty much
played out.

SARA

(convincing lie)
Not to me.

89 INT. ROY'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT
89

Sara's on the phone, unwrapping one of those T.V.
dinners.

SARA

(into phone)

It was so... slamming, Lindsay.
The dancing! I'm going again.
What? No, I haven't seen anybody
get shot yet. God, I didn't move
to Bosnia.

90 **INT. PATTERSON HIGH - HALLWAY - MORNING**
90

A fight. Two black girls having at it. It's a ferocious
match. Hair pulling, spit flying, punches landed,
clothes torn apart.

ANGLE ON SARA

as she crowns the corner, comes to a bottleneck of
students. It's like the nose bleed section of Caesar's
Palace. The far hallway is the ring. Sara cranes her
neck to see the action.

(CONTINUED)

54.

90 **CONTINUED:**

90

ANGLE WIDENS as a security guard earns his hazard pay.
He separates the two girls who are still swinging at each
other. He throws one into a corner, hurls the other in
an opposite corner.

ON SARA

as a WHITE GIRL standing next to her shakes her head
lamentably.

SARA

What happened?

The White Girl studies Sara's suburban clothes and fresh-
scrubbed face. Thinks she found a kindred spirit.

TONY (WHITE GIRL)

We freed the slaves and didn't
teach them no manners.

(before Sara can react)

You're Sara, right?

(as Sara warily nods)
Toni. I was gonna introduce
myself before but you're always
with that crowd. You know.
Chenille, her girls, that identity
crisis Diggy.

Sara looks at Toni. Getting it. Getting her. The
expression on her face closes off. Toni, too dense to
read it, keeps talking.

TONI

(brightly)
We should hang out sometime, Sara.
The two of us. Whenever you
decide to lose the tan?

Her inference clear, Toni flashes a brilliant smile,
happily walks off. Sara shakes her head to herself.
What an idiot.

As Sara continues down the hall, a P.A. address comes on.

P.A. ADDRESS (V.O.)

Seniors, a reminder before you
rise up and change the world.
Mrs. Gwynn is holding all diplomas
hostage in her office. Her only
demand is the pleasure of your
company for career D-Day. Be
there.

Sara enters her classroom, a bunch of kids in front of
and behind her.

55.

91 **EXT./INT. STREET/ROY'S ROWHOUSE (SO. BALTIMORE) - DAY**
91

Sara walks up the street (passing many black people),
sees Roys' pickup. Shit. He's home.

92 **CAMERA TRACKS**
92

Sara as she enters their rowhouse, walks up a flight of
stairs to their apartment. There's a JAZZ INSTRUMENTAL
FAINTLY coming from it. And another NOISE. Foreign and
yet familiar. Like grunting... but not. Sara unlocks
the door. Opens it.

93 **SARA'S POV - LIVING ROOM**
93

Her father's fucking somebody! On the couch. Half on it anyway. In broad daylight! The whore underneath him is moaning. Jesus!

ANGLE WIDENS as Sara turns away from the spectacle. Reaches for Roy's sax. She blows the longest, shrillest note known to mankind.

94 **ON ROY**
94

The hair on his head stands up. His body deflates instantly.

95 **INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER**
95

Sara sits at the table. Roy enters in a wrinkled T-shirt and battered jeans. His embarrassment is naked.

ROY

I don't know what to say. I don't.

SARA

How 'bout fuck it? Or should I say fuck her? It's a fuck-fest, Roy.

ROY

Don't talk to me like that, Sara.
(beat)
I thought you were goin' to your friend's house after school. Obviously, you changed your mind. So I'm sorry. Alright?

SARA

Sorry you got caught.

(CONTINUED)

56.

95 **CONTINUED:**

95

ROY

Sorry I got... observed

The "whore" with the Hich C is RHONDA. She stands between the living area and the kitchen entrance now. Sara tries not to look at her. Can't help it. She has to see the whore. Not bad looking, in a washed out, bottle blonde barfly kind of way.

RHONDA

Don't be mad at him. It's my fault. I'm real sorry, honey.

ROY

It's nobody's 'fault.' It's over. Let it be over. We're all adults.

Sara glares at him. The disingenuous Rhonda jumps in.

RHONDA

I think he means you know about sex. That we have it and he likes it. Isn't that what you mean, Roy?

Sara looks at her. Bats her eyes. Hard.

SARA

Really? How often do you have it?

RHONDA

Things been kind of slow since you got here. Once upon a time we were real rabbits, weren't we, Roy?

Verbal quicksand. Roy can feel himself sinking.

ROY

Rhonda. Shut up. Please.

96 INT. SARA'S ROOM - NOT MUCH LATER

96

OPEN CLOSE ON a framed photo of Glynn and Sara (in full ballet costume). Embracing. Happy. PULL BACK to see Sara. Sitting on the edge of her futon, holding Glynn's clover leaf necklace and staring at her mother's face. Lost. Lonely. Missing her. She kisses the lucky charm, smiles at Glynn, slips the necklace on.

97 INT./EXT. CAR WASH - DAY

97

Patrick, in coveralls, slouches over a mechanic's station studying. A few workers mill about, waiting for the next car on a slow day. A BMW with tinted windows peels into the lot on two wheels. Patrick looks up as Malakai and a tall, wiry, nattily dressed man get out.

PATRICK

I got it.

He exits into the lot. Approaches Malakai and the man ("TUTE").

MALAKAI

Medicine Man. You know Tute.

Tute takes in Patrick. Looks around. Snickers derisively.

TUTE

You call this a job, man?

PATRICK

Actually, I call it a car wash.
The work I do, yeah, that's a job.

Malakai lets out a nervous laugh. Tute doesn't crack a smile.

TUTE

I need some sticks. Watch my
ride, Malakai.

Tute enters the cashier's office. Patrick looks at Malakai.

PATRICK

You hangin' with him now? Think
that's a good idea, 'Kai?

MALAKAI

You got a better one?

PATRICK

You could try layin' all this shit
off for awhile. Give yourself a
chance on the other side.

MALAKAI

What other side?

PATRICK

You know what I mean. It ain't like you don't have good sense.

(CONTINUED)

58.

97 CONTINUED:

97

MALAKAI

I got sense enough to know who I am, what I can do and where I can do it. I ain't like you. People don't just up and hand me shit.

Tute emerges from cashier's office lighting a cigarette from a fresh pack. He blows a plume of smoke into the air, regards Patrick.

TUTE

We ain't here for our health. You workin', then work.
(throws Patrick car keys)
And don't forget the rims.

98 INT. REYNOLDS' APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN -

98

LATE THAT NIGHT

Patrick, still in work coveralls, enters. First thing he does is pick up a stack of mail. Tracking him into kitchen as he crosses to refrigerator, takes out a plate Momma Dean's left for him. He sits down at the table, takes a breath, begins shifting through the mail. His face registers disappointment. Nothing. Again.

99 INT. GUIDANCE COUNSELOR'S OFFICE - DAY

99

Patrick sits across from Mrs. Gwynn, the reality check of Patterson High.

MRS. GWYNN

Maybe you think it's enough to have the grades, get a full

scholarship. But it isn't,
Patrick. Georgetown makes mulch
of students like you every
semester. You have to be ready to
change. Change friends.
Lifestyle. Your entire point of
view. What I'm saying is, options
won't matter if you don't keep a
clean nose to the grindstone.

PATRICK

(looks her right in
the eye)

I know that, Mrs. Gwynn.

The unflappable Patrick. He doesn't fool Mrs. Gwynn.

(CONTINUED)

59.

99 **CONTINUED:**
99

MRS. GWYNN

Knowing's easy. Doing is hard.

BEGIN MONTAGE

in which a series of STUDENTS parade in front of
Mrs. Gwynn.

100 **SNOOKIE**
100

SNOOKIE

Me? I wanna operate on cars.
Some place fly like the Kentucky
Derby. -- Ah-ha! Joke on you...

101 **SPACED-OUT STUDENT**
101

SPACED-OUT STUDENT

Career? That the same as a
job...?

102 DIGGY
102

DIGGY

A Rock-n-Rap club in L.A. I'm gonna put a tattoo parlor on the roof. Soon as I find some investors...

103 SERIOUS STUDENT
103

SERIOUS STUDENT

I want to be a lawyer, but I believe in God so I'm not sure about it...

104 TONI
104

TONI

I'm moving to Idaho. I hate it here.

105 CHENILLE
105

CHENILLE

Beauty school.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

60.

105 CONTINUED:
105

CHENILLE (CONT'D)

I'm a year behind 'cause of my baby, but I'm gonna work during the day, go to school at night. That's my plan anyway...

106 MALAKAI
106

MALAKAI

Plans? Yeah. I plan not to be poor. Next question...

107 NIKKI
107

NIKKI

I get into U.M.B.C., financial aid, everything...

MRS. GWYNN

Do I detect a 'but'?

Nikki folds her arms, regards her obdurately.

MRS. GWYNN

I know you're -- how do you put it? -- Large here, Nikki. You enjoy that and it's fine for now. I guess. But you can't live your life like a popularity contest.

108 MONTAGE ENDS WITH SARA
108

walking in. Sitting down.

SARA

I don't think it's realistic, what you're asking. Things happen. Things change. And the changes change you. What's the point of plans?

MRS. GWYNN

To have a sense of direction.

SARA

You can't direct destiny.

(CONTINUED)

61.

108 CONTINUED:
108

MRS. GWYNN

(fingering Sara's papers)

I see here that you trained for
Juilliard, that you auditioned.

SARA

That was a long time ago.

MRS. GWYNN

It was three months ago, Sara.

(the brick wall)

Well, if you're not going to
pursue dance, what are you going
to do?

SARA

(hadn't thought about
it)

I don't know. Take a year off.
Work. Go to college later on.

MRS. GWYNN

Be careful with later on, Sara.
It's a slippery slope. Sometimes
you can run right on top of it and
it never catches up with you.

109 **EXT. O'DONNELL HEIGHTS - ROOFTOP - LATE DAY**
109

A low sun over the cityscape of Baltimore. PUSH IN ON
Patrick and Sara, two dots that grow larger. He CLICKS
ON a BOOM-BOX resting on the roof's ledge. A hip-hop
track BLASTS.

PATRICK

Feel the groove. Don't let the
music mess with you.

He starts to move with the music. Sara tries to emulate
him. They dance throughout the conversation.

SARA

Did you always want to be a
doctor?

PATRICK

Who said I wanna be a doctor?

SARA

Chenille. Everybody.

He cinches her waist, pushes in her ass.

(CONTINUED)

62.

109 CONTINUED:
109

PATRICK

Keep it tight. Watch your butt.

SARA

What kind of doctor do you want to be?

PATRICK

Pediatrics. I like kids. Come on, stay with me. You're slackin'.

SARA

Do you have any? Kids.

PATRICK

No. Do you?

SARA

I wasn't being smart, Patrick.

PATRICK

Wouldn't be the first time.

She stops. Regards him. He stops. Regards her.
Stalemate.

SARA

Screw you. I'm brilliant.

He goes into a spin, a half-split, comes out of it swaggering and half-stepping around her. Sara gives him an impish look. Rises up on full pointe, turns out her legs and lifts one of them in a spiral just below his head. It happens in two blinks. So fast Patrick thinks it was a mirage. He stares at her, dumbfounded. Sara smiles. The look on his face is worth the pain in her joints. She blows some stray hair out of her face, puts her hands on her hips. Looks appropriately hapless.

SARA

I didn't get it. That thing you just did. Show me again?

PATRICK

What was that shit you just did?

He mimes the move -- badly. Sara can't help it. She laughs.

SARA

A releve. Over ice. With a twist.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

63.

109 CONTINUED:

109

SARA (CONT'D)

(succumbs to his
bewilderment)

Ballet. I used to dance, Patrick.

PATRICK

You used to dance?

SARA

Uh-huh. Used to as in don't any more. And don't ask me why.

She sounds suddenly defensive. Patrick's suddenly intrigued.

PATRICK

Why not?

SARA

Because I don't want to talk about it.

PATRICK

That's why you brought it up. Did that whole relieve thing. 'Cause you don't wanna talk about it?

SARA

Because it's not a big deal. Can we just concentrate on this?

PATRICK

Yeah, we can concentrate.

(a beat; goading her
a little)
But I think it is a big deal.
Whatever it is you don't wanna
talk about.

Sara shakes her head adamantly. He nods his head
emphatically. Another stalemate. They dance coyly,
seductively around it.

110 INT. ROY'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT
110

Sara. Doing stretching exercises as she talks on the
phone.

LINDSAY (V.O.)
(over phone)
I'm still gonna pray for you.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

64.

110 CONTINUED:
110

LINDSAY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Jesus, Sara, you're in the
freaking ghetto. Forget the
riots. How are you supposed to
meet anybody?

Sara slides down the wall, hugs her knees.

SARA
(into phone)
I have met somebody. Sort of. I
think. I mean, there's this
guy...

111 INT. REYNOLDS' APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM/CHENILLE'S
111 BEDROOM - NIGHT

Patrick enters to hear CHRISTOPHER SCREAMING his lungs
out. He passes down the hall to Chenille's room to find
Christopher squirming in Kenny's arms. Kenny doesn't
know what to do.

PATRICK

(walking in)

What y'all doin' to my nephew?

Patrick takes Christopher, holds him and consoles him until he settles down. Patrick pointedly hands the baby to Chenille, glares accusingly at her and Kenny as he quits the room. Kenny regards his son haplessly. Looks at Chenille.

KENNY

Why's he do that?

CHENILLE

He's a baby. They cry.

KENNY

He was screaming, Chenille.

CHENILLE

He don't know you, Kenny.

KENNY

I'm his father. He knows me.

(meaning now)

... What should I do?

CHENILLE

Come around more often.

(CONTINUED)

65.

111 CONTINUED:

111

KENNY

See? I can't talk to you.

CHENILLE

And I can't depend on you! Am I askin' you to do anything for him you ain't supposed to do?

KENNY

You don't ask, Chenille. You make demands. You want money, you --

CHENILLE

-- I want you to pick up some of

the slack. You always have an excuse.

KENNY

It's not like that. I get tied up.

CHENILLE

You wanna talk about tied up? Try gettin' up in the middle of the night to change diapers and give him bottles or stayin' up with him when he's sick and havin' to drag your ass to school the next day.

KENNY

Look. I'm doin' the best I can.

CHENILLE

It ain't good enough, Kenny!

112 **INT. PATTERSON HIGH - GIRLS' LAVATORY - MORNING**
112

Dripping, out-of-order faucets, graffiti-laced stalls, litter-strewn floors are underscored by the spooky flicker of fluorescent lights. Sara walks in. The bathroom appears to be empty. She's about to enter a stall when she hears the murmur of a voice. A guy's voice. Then a girl's whimper. She eases forward a bit.

GIRL (O.S.)

I don't get paid 'til next week.

MALE (O.S.)

Boo the fuck hoo. You can't put my bizness up your nose on no layaway plan. C'mon now. You know what you gotta do.

(CONTINUED)

66.

112 **CONTINUED:**
112

Sara ventures carefully forward to the edge of the stall's open door. She cranes her neck trying to see without being sen.

HER POV - STALL

A GIRL is seated on the toilet. A man straddles her, his crotch in her face. The Girl sees Sara. Something in her face gives this away. The "man" glances out past his shoulder. He looks right down our throat straight into Sara's eyes. Malakai.

ON SARA

SARA

What are you doing?

Malakai backs up. The Girl jumps up, runs out the lavatory. Malakai zips up his pants. Sara's frozen, staring at him.

MALAKAI

You didn't see nothin', you don't say nothin'. Not unless you want a taste for yourself. And that can be arranged.

He leaves. Sara waits a moment. Exits.

113 HALLWAY
113

She sees Mr. Hill, starts to move for him. Someone grabs her arm from behind. She turns, startled, a little afraid. It's the Girl from the stall. She looks Sara in the eye. Shakes her head. Don't. Mr. Hill walks by them unbeckoned.

114 EXT. INNER HARBOR (DOWNTOWN BALTIMORE) - PARK - DAY
114

A perfect day. CAMERA PANS FROM the waterfront TO the bustling crowds of the inner harbor, then to a park across from this where Sara and Patrick are practicing. HIP-HOP MUSIC softly PLAYS from Patrick's BOOM-BOX. Sara watches his face as they dance.

PATRICK

Didn't you like it when you 'used' to dance?

(CONTINUED)

114 CONTINUED :
114

SARA

Yeah I liked it. I was gonna go to Juilliard. That school fucked up my entire life. It's a long story.

PATRICK

Let me guess. You don't wanna talk about it.

Sara looks at him. A soft smile is all she offers up.

115 EXT. PARK - SARA AND PATRICK - LATER
115

They lay on their bellies in the grass. Close to each other.

PATRICK

I stole a bike here once.

SARA

Why'd you do that?

PATRICK

'Cause I didn't have one.

SARA

That's a good reason.

PATRICK

I used to do wild shit like that.

SARA

You and Malakai?

PATRICK

Yep. Most of the time.

SARA

I don't get you guys. You seem so... different.

PATRICK

We're not.

SARA

Maybe you weren't then but you are now. You said you changed.

PATRICK

Doesn't make me different from him. Not the way you think it does.

(CONTINUED)

68.

115 CONTINUED:

115

SARA

I think Malakai's scary. And I know you're not.

PATRICK

(taking mild umbrage)
What you mean by scary? 'Kai's tough. He has to be. He still got a good heart. I know.

Sara stares at the ground, struggling to tell him what she saw.

SARA

Patrick.

PATRICK

Let me finish. Me and him got into some shit awhile back. Real bad shit. We held up a gas station off 95. I bailed the ride -- jumped out the car. 'Kai kept goin', got caught.

(pauses)

I knew what he was gonna do that night. Knew the car was hot. I woulda been guilty as him if they had caught me, if Malakai had served my name up. But he didn't.

SARA

That means you owe him something?

PATRICK

He did his time plus most of mine.

I owe him that.

SARA

No matter how much he messes up?

PATRICK

We all mess up. Maybe Malakai gave up. But he's still m'boy and he still got a chance. I ain't just gonna cross him completely off and be like everybody else.

He looks at her and she doesn't have the heart -- or the nerve -- to tell him. A long moment. She plucks a dandelion from the grass, twirls it thoughtfully in her fingers.

(CONTINUED)

69.

115 CONTINUED:

115

SARA

I stole a hat once. When I was twelve. My mom found it under my mattress, made me take it back.

PATRICK

Gangsta' Sara. Stole a hat. Call the F.B.I.

She looks at him. Smiles. Twirls the dandelion under his nose.

SARA

You gonna turn me in?

PATRICK

I think I'll wait for you to surrender.

(pauses)

Were you tight with your mom, Sara? I mean, y'all get along and shit?

SARA

(guardedly)

Yeah...tight... got along and shit

PATRICK

So she meant something to you.
How come you never talk about her?

SARA

There's nothing to say.

PATRICK

(studying her face)
Know why there's nothing to say?
Because you don't talk about her.
You won't talk about her.

SARA

I'm sorry she's dead. God! What
do you want me to do? Run through
the streets screaming?

PATRICK

Why not? If it helps.

SARA

(tersely)
Well, it won't. So drop it.

PATRICK

And you call Malakai scary.

(CONTINUED)

70.

115 CONTINUED:
115

She looks at him. Patrick grins. Sara knocks her legs
against his. He knocks his legs back. A silly moment.
But it transcends the tension and creates a sweet truce
between them.

116 INT. PATRICK'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT
116

Momma Dean's fixing dinner. Patrick enters with the mail
in his teeth, a load of books in his arms. He dumps the
books on the counter, busses Momma Dean's check on the
way to the 'fridge.

MOMMA DEAN

I know you're not puttin' those
dirty hands inside my
refrigerator.

Patrick backs up to the sink. Washes his hands.
Impishly dries them on her apron. He sits, begins
sifting through the mail. Momma Dean pulls an envelope
from her pocket. Waves it at him.

MOMMA DEAN

This what you're lookin' for?

Chenille appears in the doorway. Patrick takes the
letter. He's almost afraid to open it. But he does.
And as he reads the letter, a slyly relieved smile
spreads across his face. He tosses the letter in the
air. Grabs Chenille and Momma Dean. And the three of
them jump up and down together with joy.

117 **INT./EXT. CITY BUS (MOVING) - SARA AND PATRICK - NIGHT**
117

Dressed to the nines. They look happy and relaxed, more
so than we've ever seen. They sit close to each other.
Very close.

SARA

Are you gonna tell me where we're
going?

(as he grins, shakes
his head)

Why is the surprise for me?
You're the one with something to
celebrate.

PATRICK

We can celebrate together.

(CONTINUED)

71.

117 **CONTINUED:**
117

She looks at him. Can't find any words. So she just
goes into her evening bag and pulls out a small box. She
hands it to him, a little nervous about how it will be
received.

SARA

I wanted to get you something and
I couldn't figure out what. It's
not much but I hope you like it.

Patrick opens the box. Removes a key chain. It's engraved with the medical emblem (snake & staff, etc.). He regards her, touched.

PATRICK

I like it. I love it. Thank you.

SARA

Wait. There's more.

She leans in, turns the key chain over in his hand. The back side of it is engraved with the words, "PATRICK REYNOLDS, M.D." Patrick locks eyes with Sara, lifts her hand to his lips. Kisses it softly. The gesture is succinct but alluring and, for a brief moment, they're the only two people in the world.

118 **INT./EXT. CITY BUS - SARA AND PATRICK - LATER**
118

The bus makes a stop and an older white woman gets on. Sits across from Sara and Patrick who have moved even closer to each other. Patrick's arm is around Sara's shoulder. He whispers something in Sara's ear. She laughs and looks up to see the white woman staring at them with a muted but obvious repugnance. Watching the woman from the corner of her eye, Sara drapes her arms around Patrick's neck, nuzzles at his ear. Patrick's eyes widen. Sara, playing this for all it's worth, folds one of her legs between his and whispers:

SARA

We have an audience. Work with me.

PATRICK

(nonplussed)
Work with you?

SARA

(sotto voce,
through her teeth)
Grab something.

(CONTINUED)

72.

118 **CONTINUED:**

118

He grabs her ass -- what else is there? -- runs his hand along her side. The white woman, thoroughly disgusted, gets up and moves to the back of the bus. Patrick and Sara look at each other, burst out laughing.

119 EXT. BALTIMORE HALL - NIGHT

119

The equivalent of D.C.'s Kennedy Center, the hall is awash in lights and activity. Men and women are donned in formal attire. Parking valets hover on the sidewalks waiting for cars. Into this, Sara and Patrick walk. She looks at the crowd, then sees the overhead banner -- "Boston Ballet, A Command Performance." Sara's heart stops. Her feet freeze. Patrick looks at her. She looks positively catatonic.

PATRICK

Surprise... Sara?

SARA

(quietly urgent)

I can't. I can't go in.

PATRICK

(doesn't understand)

You have to go in. This is where I'm bringing you. The ballet.

SARA

(beside herself)

I know, but --

PATRICK

(crestfallen)

But what?

Sara looks at him, feeling bad. Feeling stupid for ruining the evening. She bites her lip, shakes her head ("but nothing"). Patrick takes her and they go in.

120 INT. BALTIMORE HALL - AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

120

Sara and Patrick watch the Boston Company perform Igor Stravinsky's "Scenes De Ballet" as choreographed by Christopher Wheeldon. They're both enraptured. But while Patrick keeps sneaking excited glimpses of Sara, her eyes remain fixed on the dancers, the dance. She is utterly, totally engaged and amazed. The yearning that never really left her returns to tug at her heart and project her soul onto the stage.

121 EXT. STREET (SOMEWHERE IN BALTIMORE) - NIGHT
121

Post-ballet, Sara and Patrick walk. She's quiet, introspective. Patrick's at a loss. He can't decipher her mood and, which is more, he's disappointed by it.

PATRICK

I thought you would like it.

SARA

I did.

PATRICK

You ain't actin' like you did.

She looks over at him, tries to smile.

SARA

I'm sorry.

They come to a small, secluded bridge. Sara sits down on
the edge of it. Patrick follows suit. A long moment.

SARA

I don't want you to think I didn't have a good time tonight, Patrick. I did. But ballet isn't a part of my life anymore.

PATRICK

Why not? What happened? You just woke up one day and decided to waste your talent.

SARA

(without rancor)

How do you know I have talent? Because I did some stupid leg trick.

PATRICK

I saw the look on your face when you did it, Sara. The same look I saw tonight. Goofy happy. So if you're gonna tell me somethin' about not dancing, at least tell me somethin' real.

A long, difficult moment wherein Sara attempts to find the words, face the pain that comes with them. Finally, she looks at him.

SARA

Maybe I don't want it to be real.

(CONTINUED)

74.

121 CONTINUED:

121

She stares out at the water, the moon reflected off of it. It's hard to reconcile that beauty and the turmoil she's feeling. But she goes on.

SARA

What I want is to wake up and see my mom. For things to go back to the way they were. When they made sense. When my life made sense.

(because)

And it's all my fault. She got scraped off the highway for me, for my fucking audition. She was rushing. It was raining. It was raining...

(a torrent)

... But she promised to be there. I made her promise. And then I didn't wait for her. I should have but they called my name and I didn't say anything. I just went out and danced. I was mad. I needed her and she wasn't there.

She buries her face in her hands, breaking down, racked with tears and guilt. Patrick puts his arms around her.

SARA

(inconsolable)

She was dying while I was dancing and I was mad at her and I'm sorry. I'm sorry...

PATRICK

It's not your fault it rained or she died. Or that you danced. That's what you were there for. Your mom would've expected you to

do what you did.

Sara, choking on tears, regards him forlornly.

SARA

That's what makes it so bad. She always did what was right for me. I wanted to be a prima ballerina -- had to be. Even if it took most of our money, all of her spare time. I didn't care. It was my stupid dream and it killed her. All she wanted was for it to come true.

(CONTINUED)

75.

121 CONTINUED:

121

PATRICK

You still got whatever you had when your mom was alive, Sara. She wouldn't want you to give up.

Sara swipes at her face, looks up at him, still crying.

SARA

I know... but she... I just don't think I can do it without her.

PATRICK

(holding her)
Do you want to do it, Sara? I mean you. Do you want Juilliard?

SARA

Yeah. I do.

PATRICK

Then it's on you to make the dream come true.

SARA

Yeah. For my mom.

PATRICK

For her. For you.

122 EXT. ROY'S APARTMENT/STREET - THAT NIGHT

122

Patrick walks Sara to the front door. They pause on the stoop. Neither of them wants the night to end.

SARA

See you tomorrow?

A rhetorical question under the circumstances. Patrick regards her tenderly, moves her hair from her eyes. Stares deeply into them. Sara smiles wanly, certain she looks like shit. But it doesn't matter. The moment has named itself. And so, with more certainty than passion, they kiss.

123 INT. SARA'S ROOM - NIGHT

123

CAMERA PANS the room, PICKING UP small touches from Sara's past life, her previous bedroom -- more on display than we've seen before. HOLD ON closet door. A beat before Sara emerges from behind it, ballet slippers in hand. She takes a deep breath. Slides them on. Peers down at her feet. Wiggles them. Nothing magical or mystical but simply wonderful. Gleefully wonderful. Like the end of a long day's journey to home.

76.

124 EXT. INNER HARBOR COMPLEX (DOWNTOWN BALTIMORE) - DAY
124

Sara and Patrick negotiate the heavy pedestrian traffic, exit the complex. He leads her to a mall of trees and bike paths.

PATRICK

Lemme see that move you did. That
cute leg relieve thing.
(as she shakes
her head)
Come on, Sara.

SARA

(hates to admit this)
It hurts! I'm out of shape and it
hurts. Okay? Satisfied?

PATRICK

(admiring her)
That's what you call outta shape,
what's it take to get you in
shape?

SARA

Practice.

PATRICK

This is the perfect spot for that.
You can run around and I can sit
under the trees and watch you.

SARA

I don't get in shape like that.
But it's still a good spot.

(diffidently)

I got my application for
Juilliard. Just in time too.
They're holding auditions in
Baltimore next month.

PATRICK

That's great!

She looks at him, shakes her head. Not that great.

SARA

I'll never be ready in a month.

PATRICK

Sara, you puttin' the mojo on
yourself.

(CONTINUED)

77.

124 CONTINUED:
124

SARA

(a smile in spite of
herself)

Mojo?

PATRICK

Negative shit. White folks call
it karma. The bad kind.

SARA

You don't understand. Ballet
takes a lot of time, a lot of
preparation. I used to practice
two, three hours every day. I'm
so far behind...

... And unsure and afraid. Which Patrick can sense.
he won't let her go there or stay there. He's firm,
matter-of-fact.

But

PATRICK

Quit whinin' and catch up then.

SARA

It's not as easy as that. My free
form still sucks. It's still the
weakest part of my routine. That
hasn't changed.

PATRICK

So I'll help you with it.

SARA

You will?

PATRICK

(surprised that she's
surprised)

Yeah. I'll help you. Tell me
what you need to do and let's get
busy.

MONTAGE SEQUENCE

BEGINS OVER THEME MUSIC.

125 **INT. ROY'S APARTMENT - SARA'S ROOM - NIGHT**
125

Sara in the mirror dressed in leotards and tights. She
bends forward from the hip, extends a leg, a
corresponding arm.

(CONTINUED)

78.

125 **CONTINUED:**
125

As she tries to complete the arabesque, the backward-most
leg buckles. She steadies herself. Starts over.

SARA - IN VARIOUS STAGES OF GETTING BUSY

126 **PATTERSON FOOTBALL FIELD**
126

Hip-hop hybrid with Patrick.

127 **DANCE STUDIO**
127

In class. Struggling to keep up.

128 **STREET**
128

On way to and from bus stop. Practicing as she walks.

129 **DANCE STUDIO**
129

Alone with her instructor. Looking good.

130 **DANCE STUDIO - LATER**
130

Alone with her instructor. Looking better.

131 **ROY'S BATHROOM**
131

Soaking and tending her bleeding feet.

MONTAGE ENDS.

132 **INT. ROY'S APARTMENT - LIVING AREA**
132

OPEN CLOSE ON a black hand shaking a white one. PULL BACK to reveal Patrick and Roy. Sara enters looking striking, pretty, very down. Chenille's influence is written all over her makeup and her clothes. Overlooking Roy, she blithely tags Patrick.

SARA

Let's skip.
(cursory, to Roy)
Later.

They leave. Roy stands in the middle of the room,
dumbfounded.

(CONTINUED)

79.

132 CONTINUED:
132

ROY

Let's 'skip'?
(mumbling to
himself)
Three months and she's skipping?

133 INT. FEETZ - BAR - NIGHT
133

Usual suspects, usual music. Patrick hands Sara a call-
brand beer. Leans in with his drink, openly and
contently with her.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Nikki and her crew (Jasmin, Tiff'nee, Alyssa). Nikki
hasn't seen Patrick and Sara. She's showing her crew a
dance.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Chenille, Diggy and another black girl. Fraternizing.

ANOTHER ANGLE - DEEJAY BOOTH

A chrome-domed deejay with a Barry White baritone bellows
into his mike as he changes the music.

DEEJAY

Master P with the 'Ghetto D'.
Showmesomethin', showmesomethin',
give up that cruel. Eyes on you!

WIDER as the dance floor swells with kids. PICK UP Sara
and Patrick among them. She looks at him nervously. He
smiles.

PATRICK

Nobody's watchin' you but me.

A gallant lie. Sara tries to believe it. They dance.
Practice has made her near perfect. Their movements are
ambitious, nimble, better than anyone else on the floor.
They move so well together that Snookie, dancing nearby,
starts chanting:

SNOOKIE

Go, Patrick! Go, Patrick!

(CONTINUED)

80.

133 CONTINUED:
133

FROM ANOTHER ANGLE OF DANCE FLOOR

Diggy. Jiggling and wildly gyrating. Chiming in --

DIGGY

Go, Sara! Go, Sara!

PATRICK AND SARA

building up a sweat; confidently dancing at fever pitch.

DEEJAY (V.O.)

Everybody have funk, funk, funk!

134 INT. FEETZ - DANCE FLOOR
134

Sara and Patrick, still going at it. Snookie, Diggy and
others prance around them like backup dancers.

ANOTHER ANGLE - NIKKI

standing with her crew dourly observing Patrick and Sara.

NIKKI

Watch me squash their shit. Hard.

ON NIKKI

Shoving, pushing, and barging her way up to Patrick. Without preamble or regard for Sara, she starts dancing with him. Patrick looks at Sara but he's somehow dancing with Nikki. Sara retreats with daggers in her eyes. Pissed.

PATRICK (AND NIKKI)

unresponsive as she grinds her body into his, raw and wild.

SARA

standing where she can see but can't be seen from the dance floor. From a curtain of kids, Malakai suddenly appears at her side. Sara can't move. She's boxed in. Malakai indicates Nikki and Patrick with slick satisfaction, whispers derisively:

(CONTINUED)

81.

134 CONTINUED:
134

MALAKAI

You ain't never gonna look as good
as she does with him. That's oil.
You're milk. Ain't no point in
tryin' to mix.

He evaporates into the crowd. Sara stands there.

PATRICK AND NIKKI

as a SLOW DANCE BEGINS. Nikki starts to press herself against Patrick. Patrick holds her off with both arms. Walks away.

WIDER ANGLE - DANCE FLOOR - FAVOR PATRICK

moving toward Sara.

A stark, apologetic expression on his face. He takes her hand. Sara fiercely jerks away. Patrick grabs her hand again, more emphatically this time. But Sara won't budge from the spot where she's standing. So Patrick slides

his arms around her, holds her without moving. They remain like this for a moment or two until they slowly begin to dance. We PUSH IN ON them in this little space. Patrick's lips brush Sara's ear.

PATRICK

Sara...?

SARA

What?

PATRICK

I'm sorry.

ANGLE PAST THEM ON MALAKAI

slow dancing with his flavor of the night. Eyes on Sara and Patrick. Both underwhelmed and resentful of what he sees.

135 INT. ROY'S ROWHOUSE - HALLWAY/FRONT DOOR - THAT NIGHT
135

Sara unlocks the door. She and Patrick enter. She turns on the lights. Looks at him. Answers the unspoken question.

(CONTINUED)

82.

135 CONTINUED:
135

SARA

He's in D.C. Blues Alley. He'll be gone all night.

Patrick sits down on the sofa. Sara crosses to the STEREO, turns it ON. A SAX SOLO begins playing.

SARA

Roy's demo. The only one he ever cut. Kinda grows on you.

A beat. Somewhere between five seconds and forever. Then:

SARA

Wanna see my room?

Patrick looks at her, nods. He gets up, follows Sara behind the partition into her "room." They stand there for a moment. He cups her face with his hands. Kisses her. They begin to take off each other's clothes, alternately sure and fumbling; a bit awkward, a bit urgent. Sara unzips Patrick's pants, catches something other than his clothes. Patrick winces in pain. She looks at him with an embarrassed grimace. Says this very low.

SARA

Sorry...

They kiss again, stumble backward to her futon. Fall down upon it and begin to make love.

136 **INT. PATTERSON HIGH - HALLWAY - PATRICK AND SARA -**
136 **DAY**

CAMERA TRACKS them as they walk down the hall hand-in-hand, sometimes exchanging greetings with other students. They are officially a couple and they appear to be in love. At the door to Sara's next class, Patrick bussess her lips before she enters.

137 **INT. SARA'S CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS ACTION**
137

No teacher is present. The class files in. Toni drops down in a chair beside Sara. She leans over in a conspiratorial whisper.

TONI

Whatever you do, don't fuck him.

(CONTINUED)

83.

137 **CONTINUED:**
137

SARA

Excuse me?

TONI

'Hit it and quit it,' that's their motto.

SARA

Whose motto?

TONI

Black guys. Everybody knows that.

The teacher walks in. Sara quickly whispers back to Toni.

SARA

Don't forget, they all have big
dicks and beat their wives.
Everybody knows that too.

138 **INT. RIB JOINT (SOMEWHERE IN BALTIMORE) - NIGHT**
138

Malakai, along with Snookie and two brain donors, ARVEL and LIP, eat at a booth. Patrick strolls in gritty from work. Tired from work. He slides in next to Malakai. The mood is light, jovial.

ARVEL

You smell, boy.

PATRICK

How can a piece of shit tell?

The table cracks up.

MALAKAI

You been scarce lately, man.
Where you been?

ARVEL

Somewhere dreamin' of a White
Christmas...

LIP

... And Christmas ain't even for
'nother six months.

SNOOKIE

Lip. It's a so-to-speak thang,
you ignorant fuck.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

138 CONTINUED:
138

SNOOKIE (CONT'D)

(looks at Patrick)
So. So to speak? Whassup.

PATRICK

(snatching up one of
his ribs)
Back out my business, boy.

MALAKAI

(watching Patrick
keenly)
You tappin' that white girl, man?
(half joking)
That's why you ain't got time for
your boyz no more, you too busy
frontin'. Too busy snowflakin'.

Patrick lifts one of Malakai's ribs, responds coolly.

PATRICK

How am I frontin', 'Kai? I made
time for this bullshit, didn't I?

LIP

Aww, man. You busted. That's why
your jaws are gettin' so tight.

SNOOKIE

You the one need his jaws
tightened with your pork-ass
instigatin' self.

ARVEL

(re: Patrick's roving
fingers)
Order somethin', Patrick. This
ain't no goddamn soup line.

Patrick grabs some of Arvel's fries, chews them in his
face.

PATRICK

Y'all hangin' tonight or what?

MALAKAI

We thinkin' about slidin' through

that new rec center opened up on
the Eastside. You ridin'?

PATRICK

Eastside? That's the wrong side.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

85.

138 CONTINUED:
138

PATRICK (CONT'D)

I ain't messin' with those fools
over there. You know how they
are.

MALAKAI

I ain't pressed. I got my own
shit.

Shorthand. The table stops. Malakai glances around,
lifts his shirt to expose a gun. Patrick stares at
Malakai with disbelief.

MALAKAI

What you think? I'ma keep walkin'
around waitin' for some chump to
cap me? I'ma protect myself.

PATRICK

That ain't protection. It's an
excuse for some unnecessary
mayhem.

MALAKAI

Ain't nothin' unnecessary 'bout
it. Shit. Mayhem and madness.
That's a black man's life.

PATRICK

How you know? You ain't tried
nothing else. Now you sittin' up
here strapped for no good reason.
You askin' for trouble, Malakai.
(as Malakai laughs)
You think this shit's funny?

Snookie shifts uncomfortably. Arvel and Lip look at
Malakai. Malakai looks at Patrick, coldly drops his

smile.

MALAKAI

I think it's funny you think it ain't necessary. You act like you don't know where you are no more, Patrick, and whassup out there for anybody who ain't you. Maybe that's what happens when a white girl goes to your head.

LIP

-- Or gives you some.

(CONTINUED)

86.

138 CONTINUED:
138

PATRICK

Fuck you, Lip.

(looks at Malakai)

I know what's out there. I also know you can get past it. But that ain't gonna happen, 'Kai, long as you keep gettin' in your own way.

ARVEL

(peacemaker)

Aw'ight. Y'all said what you had to say. We back to bein' boyz. Patrick. Chill. Have some ribs.

139 INT. ROY'S ROWHOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT
139

Sara and Patrick, post-coital. She's in her robe. He's dressed but they're fooling around as they fix sandwiches. Patrick drops down in a chair. Sara drops down on his lap.

PATRICK

What's your favorite flower?

SARA

I don't have a favorite.

PATRICK

Yeah, but if you did...

SARA

I dunno. Maybe cymbidiums -- orchids. They're sort of show-boaty but they're pretty.

PATRICK

What's your favorite color?

SARA

Agua.

PATRICK

What's your second favorite color?

SARA

Mmm. Mauve.

PATRICK

You're makin' this real hard, Sara. Those ain't exactly tuxedo colors.

(CONTINUED)

87.

139 CONTINUED:
139

Sara swings her legs around, facing him, straddling him.

SARA

Nut. What are you talking about?

PATRICK

I was tryin' to get around to askin' you somethin' but since I'm some sorta nut, you probably wouldn't wanna go to prom with me...

She throws her arms around his neck, kissing him. Patrick slides his hands under her robe, cups her breasts. Sara responds to him. They are too engrossed in this intimacy to hear the FRONT DOOR OPENING, to see Roy until he walks in and sees them. Sara leaps up, closes her robe. Patrick doesn't know what to do. He's caught. Straight up. Red-handed. Roy's eyes dart between them, settle on and slice into Patrick.

ROY

Patrick -- it is Patrick, isn't it?

(a small awkward nod)

Well, I think you were just leavin'.

Patrick stands up. Sara grabs his arm defiantly, holds him back.

SARA

Why does he have to leave? We're all adults. Right?

ROY

He either leaves or I throw his ass out. Your call, Sara.

Patrick jerks his arm free from Sara, grabs his jacket off the back of his chair. He back-talks Roy as he passes him.

PATRICK

Chill, man. I'm goin'. You don't have to come off with all 'at.

ROY

Who the hell are you to tell me how to come off? You're in my house alone with my daughter.

(CONTINUED)

88.

139 CONTINUED:

139

It takes everything Patrick has to keep walking until he's out the door. It slams behind him. Sara marches up to Roy, furious.

SARA

I hate being your daughter. You ruin everything.

She tries to stomp off. Roy kicks a chair in her path. Snarls.

ROY

Siddown.
(not a request; an

order; as she sits)
It's a free country, you can hate
me. Ain't like that's exactly
news. But disrespectin' me,
that's where the road ends, Sara.
I don't want him up here again. I
mean it.

SARA

You mean it because he's black.

ROY

Don't start that bullshit!

SARA

Why's it bullshit? Because you
hang with black guys and play jazz
and have the hots for Angela
Bassett?

ROY

Because he was in my house with
his hands all over my daughter!

SARA

Keep telling yourself that. Just
don't expect me to believe it. I
saw how you looked at him. But
you didn't see him. Well, for
your information, he's a straight-
A student with more heart and guts
than you'll ever have!

ROY

Yeah? Well, when are you gonna
have the guts to say what you
really want to say to me, Sara?

(CONTINUED)

89.

139 CONTINUED:
139

SARA

(screaming at him)
Want me to say it? You were a
piece of shit husband and you're a
piece of shit father! You were
never there for Mom or for me.
You took off and never looked

back. So don't talk to me about
guts.

Not quite the truth, but near enough to sting. It quiets
Roy down. He regards her with regret and guilt.

ROY

Sounds like you have it all
figured out.

SARA

I have you figured out. You think
you can make up all the time you
missed, all the things you didn't
do? You can't! I'm here because
I have to be and it's a goddamned
nightmare.

ROY

Well, you might as well wake up
and get used to it, Sara, because
that's the way things are
sometimes, the way life is.

SARA

How the hell would you know?
You've been asleep for the past
thirty-seven years!

Now she does storm off. This time Roy lets her. He
can't find the words to deny what she's said.

140 EXT. PATTERSON HIGH - QUAD OUTSIDE CAFETERIA - DAY
140

A break between classes draws the requisite cliques and
cliques. Sara and Patrick huddle over a chemistry book,
attentive to each other. Nikki stands off watching both
of them. Malakai saunters up to her smoking a joint.
Hazily indicates Patrick and Sara.

MALAKAI

The 'Love Boat.'

NIKKI

Love shit. That bitch is tap-
dancin' on my last nerve.

(CONTINUED)

140 CONTINUED:
140

MALAKAI

Looks like she's tap-dancing on your last boyfriend. She got it like that? Naw. Never mind. Stall it. I ain't heard shit.

NIKKI

Stall what? What you hear?

MALAKAI

Some trash she's talkin'. About you.

NIKKI

About me?

MALAKAI

Yeah. How you ain't all 'at since Patrick's takin' her to the prom.

(in for the kill)

I am a little bit... chagrined though, Nikki. You lettin' some white ho' show you up like that.

He regards her with bemused pity. Nikki, with all her inner outrage, manages to salvage her pride. She sneers in his face.

NIKKI

Fuck you, Malakai. Fuck her too.

MALAKAI

(gaily, as she sails off)

Ain't no need in fuckin' me... stuck up, bitch... I'm on your side

141 INT. PATTERSON HIGH - HALLWAY - DAY
141

Patrick drinks at a water fountain. Looks up. Malakai's standing there. There's still some tension between them.

MALAKAI

Yo. Me and the boyz fixin' to shoot some hoops. Us against Druid Hill. If you interested.

PATRICK

Druid Hill? Hell yeah.

MALAKAI

Gotta skip last period.

(CONTINUED)

91.

141 CONTINUED:

141

PATRICK

I got study hall. Don't matter anyway. Not with those suckers. I'll be back before the bell rings.

They walk off together and, after a few steps, begin dribbling imaginary balls down the hall.

142 INT. GYM (PATTERSON) - DAY

142

A girls' basketball game in progress. Sara's playing defense. She's on Nikki's team. She blocks a shot but Chenille, on the opposing team, gets it on the rebound. Basket. Nikki shoots Sara a murderous look. Stupid, uncoordinated bitch.

143 EXT. DRUID HILL PLAYGROUND - BASKETBALL COURT

143

A four-on-four game in progress. Patrick, Malakai, Snookie and Arvel versus the Druid Hill Two Deuces. An unseen BOOM BOX BLASTS the music of JAY-Z throughout. Patrick has the ball. He passes it to Malakai. They AD-LIB insults to the Two Deuces. This is heaven for them. Talking shit and playing ball. The best time.

INTERCUT WITH:

144 INT. PATTERSON HIGH - GYM

144

Sara takes her defensive position against an opposing player, successfully blocks the shot, tries to slam the ball to Nikki. It clips Nikki's head, bounces out of bounds. Nikki, her dignity stunned, her patience out, walks up to Sara, shoves her to the floor. Sara looks up at her as some disembodied voice calls out:

FEMALE VOICE

Don't start nothin', won't be
nothin'! Stay down, girl!

145 EXT. DRUID HILL - BASKETBALL COURT 145

Malakai dribbles the ball around one of the Two Deuces, skies it. Misses the hoop. Patrick rebounds. Passes it back to 'Kai. He takes the shot. Makes it. Patrick and Arvel strut victoriously.

146 INT. PATTERSON HIGH - GYM 146

Sara jumps up, shoves Nikki back. And the fight is on.

92.

**147 EXT. DRUID HILL - BASKETBALL COURT
147**

As the dejected Deuces look on, Malakai high-fives Patrick and Snookie. Arvel's moving into their circle when SHOTS RING OUT. Everybody on the court instantly dives to the ground for cover.

**148 INT. PATTERSON HIGH - GYM
148**

Sara and Nikki tumble to the gym floor. The surprise is Sara. She matches Nikki blow for blow. It's a punishing fight for both of them and it only ends when the gym teacher separates them.

**149 EXT. DRUID HILL - BASKETBALL COURT
149**

A car speeds off. Patrick raises up, looks around. Malakai nods. He's okay. Snookie's crawling to the exit, snot-nosed and crying. He's okay. Then they see Arvel. Sprawled on the ground. Covered in blood. He seems lifeless.

**150 INT. MRS. GWYNN'S OFFICE - SARA AND NIKKI - DAY
150**

In adjacent chairs across from Mrs. Gwynn's empty one.

NIKKI

(a hiss, under her
breath)
It ain't over, bitch.

SARA

Over? I don't even know why it
started... bitch. And don't say
it's about Patrick because it's
not. It's not about him.

NIKKI

No. It's about you. White girls
like you. Creepin' up, takin' our
men. The whole world ain't
enough. You gotta conquer ours
too.

SARA

I like him, he likes me. And if
you don't like that, screw you.

Mrs. Gwynn walks in. Sits down. Looks reproachfully at
them.

MRS. GWYNN

Girls. I think you need to talk.

93.

151 **INT. ROY'S APARTMENT - LIVING AREA/SARA'S ROOM - DAY**
151

Roy's tuning his sax when Sara enters. Her face is a
mess. Yet she drifts by, bruised and bent over, as if
this were the norm. Roy does a double-take.

ROY

What the hell happened to you?

SARA

I got suspended. Two days.

She straggles into her room. Roy follows her to the
futon.

ROY

For what? Fighting?
(as she nods
like "no shit
Sherlock")
Why were you fighting, Sara?

SARA

(sardonically)

I'm not sure. I think it's some
kind of black female thing.

He sis down beside her, instinctively reaches out to
touch her face, assess the damage. Sara sharply flinches
away. But Roy persists and after a moment, she lets him
minister to her.

152 INT. REYNOLDS' APARTMENT - KITCHEN - EVENING
152

Patrick walks in, Arvel's dried blood stained into his
clothes. Chenille's cooking with a sound-asleep
Christopher slung over her shoulder. She and Patrick
regard each other morosely.

CHENILLE

How's Arvel?

Patrick slumps down at the kitchen table. He's barely
audible.

PATRICK

Pretty bad.
(almost to himself)
Can't even play a got-damned game
of ball no more.

Chenille comes up behind him. Squeezes, pats his
shoulder.

(CONTINUED)

94.

152 CONTINUED:
152

CHENILLE

You see Sara? She alright?
(as he looks up
with a question
mark)
You didn't hear? Nikki jumped off
at her in gym. It was fierce...

Given the day, this is the straw on Patrick's back. He
bolts from the table and on his way out nearly bumps

heads with Kenny.

153 INT. ROY'S ROWHOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT
153

Patrick RINGS the DOORBELL. Sara opens the door slightly, just enough for Patrick to see her face. It pisses him off.

PATRICK

Shit!

SARA

It's alright. I'm okay.

Roy appears in the space behind her, looking out. Sara can feel his presence. Her eyes implore Patrick.

SARA

Look. It's not a good time.
(gently shutting
the door)
I'll see you later... I'm okay.

154 INT. LAUNDROMAT (SOUTHEAST BALTIMORE) - EARLY EVENING
154

The laundromat is empty but for a few customers and Nikki. She's loading clothes from two large baskets into washers when her brother DIONDRE, 10, races in. He's grinning from ear-to-ear.

NIKKI

Diondre, what your butt doin' here?

DIONDRE

(a taunting twist)
I can go where I want. You the one on punishment.

Nikki swings a wet shirt with no intention of hitting him. She looks up. Patrick's standing in the doorway. Diondre runs up to him, holds out the palm of his hand.

(CONTINUED)

154 CONTINUED:
154

DIONDRE

There she go. Gimme my two
dollars.

Patrick pays him. Diondre darts out. Patrick walks up to Nikki. Nikki clenches, tries to dismiss him with a backhanded wave.

NIKKI

Whatever it is, I don't wanna hear
it.

Patrick leans up against a washing machine and for a long moment just looks at her. The walk there has composed his emotions.

PATRICK

I thought you had somethin' to say
to me.

NIKKI

You thought wrong.

An old black woman is avidly, openly watchin' them. Patrick indicates a bench on the other side of the laundromat. Nikki petulantly follows him there. They sit. Patrick looks at her.

PATRICK

Somethin' must be on your mind for
you to get up in Sara's face,
start all this drama. What you
tryin' to prove, Nikki?

NIKKI

You're the one tryin' to prove
something. Stuck up in her shit
like she's somethin' special.

PATRICK

What if she is? What's it to you?
You didn't see me trippin' off
that Howard dude and I could have.
I coulda tripped hard, Nikki.

NIKKI

That was different.

PATRICK

How you gonna call it different?

She stands up. Looks down at him. Raises her voice.

(CONTINUED)

96.

154 CONTINUED:

154

NIKKI

Because she's white and he ain't.
And don't sit there like you don't
know what I'm talkin' about,
Patrick.

PATRICK

(glaring at her)
You don't even know what you're
talkin' about, Nikki.

NIKKI

I don't? Y'all black men, soon as
you even think about goin'
someplace good, first thing you do
is find a white girl to take with
you.

OLD WOMAN (O.S.)

Uh-huh.

Patrick glares in the Old Woman's direction, then back at
Nikki.

PATRICK

I thought I was goin' someplace
good with you. You the one called
me off. But you ain't tryin' to
remember that. Now you mad. Why?
Because she's white and I like
her? I'm with her.

NIKKI

Please. You're with her because
she's white. That's what sets me
off.

PATRICK

(exasperated)
It ain't got no business settin'
you off! Me and her ain't got
nothin' to do with you and what

you think. So keep your hands off
her and that shit to yourself.

Nikki folds her arms across her chest, looks at him
defiantly.

NIKKI

I don't think it, I know it. But
you go ahead, deny it. That's
what y'all always do.

She turns on her heels, goes back to her machine.
Patrick rises, sees the old woman glinting at him. He
holds her hateful stare for a moment, then walks out.

97.

155 **INT. REYNOLDS' APARTMENT - CHENILLE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT**
155

Chenille and Kenny. In the middle of a contentious
moment. He tries to give her some money. She snatches
it out of his hand. Kenny looks at her. He's hurt.
Chenille's too mad to see it.

CHENILLE

What? I'm supposed to get excited
because you decided to skate by
and drop a dollar on the dresser?

KENNY

It's more than a dollar. And it's
all I got.

(beat)

I got laid off from B.W.I.,
Chenille. I been workin' part-
time. Money's tight. You know
how you are about money. That's
way I haven't been coming around.

Chenille stares at him for a long moment. Her voice is
low.

CHENILLE

Money ain't got nothin' to do with
it, Kenny. You don't come around
because you don't feel like comin'
around. You don't want the
responsibility of comin' around.
As long as you out there and I'm
in here, you know your son's being
taken care of. You ain't got no

worries when it comes to him.

KENNY

And you don't have no feelings
when it comes to me. All you do
is bitch and complain about what I
don't do. I get sick of that.

CHENILLE

Be sick of it. You ain't got to
see me to see your son.

KENNY

I'll be sure to keep that in mind.

He leaves. Chenille stands there, mad at him. Mad at
herself.

156 **INT. FREE CLINIC (SOUTH BALTIMORE) - DAY**
156

The lowest common denominator for misery.

(CONTINUED)

98.

156 **CONTINUED:**
156

The room is filled with young women, most them black, and
children of all ages. They are piled up like cars on a
freeway, waiting to be seen. The noise level is at a
peak when Chenille and Sara walk in. Chenille's carrying
a fussy Christopher, his diaper bag and her backpack.
Sara, wanting to be helpful, reaches for Christopher.

SARA

Want me to take him?

Chenille shakes her head. Walks to reception to sign
herself in. Sara takes in the faces of girls younger
than herself, the grime and gloom of the room. It's
incomprehensible that this is a place where sick children
are brought to get well. Chenille finishes at the desk.
Returns to Sara. They cross to a corner of the clinic
where they sit -- on the floor. Chenille indicates the
receptionist bitterly.

CHENILLE

That wench. You gotta stand over

her to make sure she puts your
name on the damn list. Triflin'
bitch.

Chenille starts to change Christopher's diaper. He starts to wail and flail. Chenille can't placate him. One of his kicks connects with Chenille's open backpack, sends books and papers flying. Sara can see the veins stand up on Chenille's neck.

SARA

I'll get 'em.

She does. Chenille's finally got control of Christopher but he's still crying. Chenille slips off his dirty diaper. When Sara hands her a clean one, Chenille regards her strangely, as if just remembering that she's there.

CHENILLE

So your old man flipped about the
fight.

(with some animus)

Probably thinks it's all Patrick's
fault.

SARA

No. I explained about Nikki.

CHENILLE

Right. You put it all on her.
None of it's on you.

(CONTINUED)

99.

156 CONTINUED:

156

SARA

She started it, Chenille. She
wanted to start it. I told you
what she said.

Chenille flashes a look, finishes up with Christopher. She picks him up, puts a bottle in his mouth. Cradles him.

CHENILLE

Maybe she didn't have no business
gettin' in your face. But she had

a reason to say what she said.

A reason? Sara studies her, trying to fathom the remark.

SARA

So you agree with her? You think I don't belong with Patrick.

CHENILLE

What I think don't matter. But you and him act like it don't bother people that you're together. Like it don't hurt people to see.

SARA

(her Irish up)

We like each other. What is the big fucking deal? It's him and me. Not us and other 'people.'

The white girl with the rose-colored reasoning. Chenille glares at Sara, her voice designed to snatch the blinders off.

CHENILLE

Black people, Sara. Black women.

(passionately)

Patrick's about somethin'. He's smart. He's motivated. He's for real. He ain't gonna make no babies and not take care of 'em or run the streets, fuck up his life. He's gonna do somethin' with himself. Here you come, white and right, and you take one of the few decent men left after jail, drugs and drive-bys. That's what Nikki meant about you up in our world.

Sara sits there, stupefied. Understanding. Not understanding.

(CONTINUED)

100.

156 CONTINUED:

156

SARA

There's only one world, Chenille.

(pauses)

I thought we were friends. Guess
I was wrong.

She gets up, walks out. Something in Chenille wants to
call after her, but she's too miserable, too torn up
inside to do it.

157 **INT. FEETZ - BAR - NIGHT**
157

Patrick and Malakai nurse drinks. The MUSIC fails to
move them. They have too much on their minds. Malakai
fires up a cigarette.

MALAKAI

So what you gonna do?

PATRICK

How many times you gonna ask me
that?

MALAKAI

It's payback time. Either you
down or you ain't. Either you
m'boy or you not. Simple as that.

Patrick takes a long moment. The choice is simple. It's
the decision that's complicated. He downs his drink.
Hedges.

PATRICK

Even if I did ride, you ain't got
nobody but Lip and Lip will get a
nigger's ass killed. Quick.

MALAKAI

Eastside ain't got no firepower.
I got some shit, man. AK-47. We
go in, get out with one spray
down.

Just then Snookie and Sara walk toward them from the
dance floor. Something in their faces unsettles Sara but
Snookie, oblivious, dances up to the bar, snapping his
fingers and bobbing his head.

SNOOKIE

You see us, Patrick?

(CONTINUED)

157 CONTINUED:

157

MALAKAI

(a storm warning)
You see us, man? We're rappin'.

Snookie rebuffs him, keeps talking to Patrick...

SNOOKIE

Me and Sara lit it up! Y-e-o-w!

... bumps his butt against Sarah's hip, does a very ungainly half split. Sara and Patrick exchange smiles. Malakai isn't amused. He flattens Snookie's ass with the business end of his foot. Snookie sprawls flat on his face to the floor. Now Malakai's amused. Sara looks at Patrick. Patrick scowls at Malakai.

PATRICK

That shit ain't funny.

SNOOKIE

(springing up)
Damn right it ain't funny.

MALAKAI

I thought you liked it down there.
That's your specialty, ain't it?
Crawling?

SNOOKIE

That was a reflex action, man.
And you just plain rude and wrong
to bring the shit up in mixed
company.

Sara's not quite sure what they're alluding to but she doesn't want the displeasure of Malakai's company. She taps Patrick.

SARA

I gotta get home. Ready?

Malakai's eyes slice into her. First Snookie, now this bitch. Steppin' all over his conversation with Patrick.

MALAKAI

No, he ain't ready. He's talkin'.
To me. A-B conversation. Gotta

go? C yourself the fuck home.

SARA

(a real reflex action)

Fuck you.

Malakai lunges for her. The move is so swift and sudden Patrick overturns his stool to dive between them. He sweeps Sara behind him, into the path of a startled

Snookie. Stands there nose-to-nose with Malakai, staring him down, furious with him.

PATRICK

Have you lost your motherfuckin'
MIND, man? Huh? Have you!

Sara, frightened and frozen, doesn't know what to do. Snookie's voice weakly creaks out. He's trying to rise to the occasion.

SNOOKIE

Patrick, man, c'mon.

But Malakai and Patrick stay where they stand. Too close for comfort. Both in the danger zone. Malakai regards Patrick with a combination of cruel anger and deep, genuine hurt.

MALAKAI

You take that bitch's back and
won't even cover mine?

PATRICK

'Cause you wrong, Malakai!

MALAKAI

No! You wrong. You BEEN wrong.
You ain't worth shit no more.
(venomously)
Get out my face, and take that ho
with you.

Patrick bucks up. Sara walks over to him, gently clutches his sleeve. It's no easier to turn away from Malakai than it is to walk away from a lifetime of friendship. But Patrick does. With Sara holding onto his arm, at his side, he turns and walks away.

walking. A heavy silence. Sara looks over at him. Patrick doesn't say anything. But after a moment, he reaches down and takes her hand and they walk on like this together.

OVER MUSIC (e.g. BUSTA RHYMES' "Dangerous.")

159 INT. DANCE STUDIO - SARA AND PATRICK - MORNING

159

Practice her free form, a hip-hop ballet hybrid. They're both tired, irritable, beaten down. They've been there awhile. Sara makes a misstep. Patrick stops. Cold. Sara grits on him.

(CONTINUED)

103.

159 CONTINUED:
159

SARA

We should keep going.

PATRICK

You messed up.

SARA

I know I messed up. I'll get it right the next time.

PATRICK

No. You gonna get it right now so you can do it perfect next time.

She glares at him, exasperated.
up.

So many things bottled

SARA

I can't work like this. I can't
dance like this.

PATRICK

Like what?

SARA

Like this. You dictating to me.

He crosses the room, CUTS OFF the MUSIC. Looks at her. Sara walks over to a window seat near him. Flops down.

PATRICK

What's wrong, Sara?

SARA

Nothing's wrong.
(except)
I can't figure things out.

PATRICK

What things? The audition? You ain't got nothin' to worry about. I told you. I'll be there.

SARA

Things, Patrick. Things between us. Things between us and them.

PATRICK

I didn't know there was a 'them.'

SARA

Well, open your pretty brown eyes, look the hell around.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

104.

159 CONTINUED:
159

SARA (CONT'D)

(he's so nonplussed)
Everything's screwed up. Nobody wants to see us together, not even Chenille. I don't know why they feel that way. How can I know? Maybe they have a point, Patrick.

PATRICK

They only got a point if you believe they got a point, Sara.

She looks at him... and loves him... and doesn't know what to do.

SARA

I'm just saying that we should think about this, that's all.

PATRICK

That's a fuckin' 'nough.

SARA

Why are you getting mad?

PATRICK

Because I like to think for myself, run my own life, and I thought you did too.

Sara looks at him. Now she's getting mad.

SARA

You're never gonna run your own life as long as you keep running back to Malakai every time he fucks up or fucks you over.

She's crossed the line. But Patrick responds so deliberately, so calmly prosaic, that she doesn't immediately realize it...

PATRICK

First of all, Malakai ain't never fucked me over. Second of all, you don't know him, Sara, what he been through. Matter of fact, you don't know shit about none of it. So don't come off to me like you do.

(CONTINUED)

105.

159 CONTINUED:
159

SARA

I know he's lost, Patrick!
Everybody but you can see that.
And if you keep reaching back for him, you're gonna wind up lost too.

... until he erupts.

PATRICK

Who the fuck are you to say he's lost? Malakai had my back when you were busy gee-whizzin' in the

woods with your backward-ass,
redneck friends.

SARA

They weren't rednecks!

Patrick yanks his boombox off the floor, glares at her.

PATRICK

You know what? The hell with you.

Sara yells after him. Her VOICE ECHOES in the empty studio.

SARA

The hell with you too!

160 **EXT. PATTERSON HIGH - HALLWAY OUTSIDE SARA'S CLASSROOM - 160**
DAY

Sara exits, looking pretty much like she feels. Like shit. She walks a few paces. Sees Patrick. Their eyes connect for a brief, awful moment before they continue on their respective ways.

161 **INT. PATTERSON HIGH - SARA'S LOCKER/HALLWAY -**
161

LATER THAT DAY

Sara's at her locker. Patrick walks up to her. She looks at him, tries to smile past the dour expression on his face.

SARA

Hi.

Patrick doesn't say anything at first. But then:

(CONTINUED)

106.

161 **CONTINUED:**
161

PATRICK

Thought you might need this on Saturday. I ain't gonna be able to make it.

He hands her an audio cassette of her free form music. Sara gazes at it, then up at him, understanding what this means. She won't let him see how it shatters her. He hesitates, as if he wants to say something else. But Sara turns her back on him and Patrick walks away.

ANOTHER ANGLE - TONI

approaching Sara's locker. Having seen the encounter between Patrick and Sara, she's as smug and overbearing as ever.

TONI

Lovers' quarrel? You're better off. That menace to society would've broken your heart and spent all your money in a news flash. Trust me on that, Sara.

Sara stares at her, uncomprehending at first. She resists the urge to slap the smile off Toni's face. She gets in it instead.

SARA

Toni, listen carefully. You're a simple bitch and you don't have any friends, black or white, because nobody likes a fucking asshole.

She storms off leaving Toni, for once, speechless.

162 INT. PATTERSON HIGH - HALLWAY/CAFETERIA - DAY
162

Sara. Caught up in a throng of kids and separate from them. The walls have been veritable billboards for the senior prom are everywhere. Sara continues down the aimlessly into the... somehow very transformed into -- decorations hallway almost

163 INT. CAFETERIA - CONTINUOUS ACTION
163

Sara. Carrying a food tray, eyes searching for a place to sit. She picks up Chenille and her girls at one table... Nikki and her crew at another... Patrick and Snookie... and, finally, Toni. Sara dumps her food into a trash can, walks out.

164 INT. DANCE STUDIO - DAY
164

Sara. Alone. She pushes the tape from Patrick into an ancient recorder. The MUSIC COMES ON. She takes to the floor. Her face is like a pinched nerve. She wants to cry. She tries to dance.

165 INT. SARA'S ROOM - NIGHT
165

Sara's on the futon, flipping through a photo album. Pictures of her and Glynn. Roy knocks on the partition. Waits a beat before he comes in. He looks at Sara. She keeps flipping.

ROY

I was wondering... how long you plan on hating me? Maybe I'm an optimist but I hope there's some kind of timetable.

(this raises a small smile)

Well, I don't wanna bug you. I just came in to say good luck.

Sara regards him quizzically. Roy goes to her dresser, picks up an envelope from Juilliard.

ROY

I saw the return address. Got curious. It was open. I read it. I know I shouldn't have but at least now I have an excuse to tell you how proud I am of you, Sara.

SARA

(quietly miserable)

I was gonna tell you about the audition, Roy. I meant to.

She's clutching the photo album. Roy sits down next to her.

ROY

Tomorrow's the big day?

SARA

Uh-huh. The big day.

ROY

You bummed out about it?
(as she shakes
her head)
You're a worse liar than I am
father.

(CONTINUED)

108.

165 **CONTINUED:**

165

SARA

You're not so bad.
(close to a
confession)
I didn't give you much to work
with. It's not like I've been the
perfect daughter.

ROY

Well, it ain't like I deserve a
perfect daughter. I screwed up.
Did everything in a hurry and
still thought I had all the time
in the world. To be in love with
your mother. Be a father to you.
But time flies. You look up one
day and all you got to show for
yourself is a pretty little girl
who hates your guts and won't talk
to you because too much time went
by.

Sara's eyes well up. Before she can stop herself,
she's
crying.

SARA

I don't hate you. I miss her. I
miss Mom...
(as Roy takes her
in his arms, tries
to console her)
... Patrick's pissed at me. I'm
pissed at him. He's not coming
tomorrow and I want him there and

I don't know what to do.

Sara draws back from Roy, wipes her tears.
herself.

Collects

ROY

You want him there. I understand that. But whatever he brings to the table, Patrick can't dance for you, Sara. You're the bottom line out there. This is your chance to be the dancer Juilliard came to see.

SARA

I wanted somebody there who loves me.

Roy regards her softly, significantly, the irony implicit.

(CONTINUED)

109.

165 CONTINUED:
165

ROY

I love you.

Sara looks up. For the first time in her life, she believes him.

166 INT. HOSPITAL - I.C.U. WAITING ROOM/CORRIDOR - EVENING
166

Patrick's bouncing on his knees, speaking to Arvel's parents, who are clearly stricken. Arvel's father, stoic, holds his wife's hand. Arvel's mother kneads a Kleenex, her face etched with tears. Patrick hugs her. Stands up to see Malakai frozen in the doorway, put off by the palpable grief. Patrick crosses over to him. They retreat quietly into the corridor, their concern for Arvel a shaky ground for conciliation.

MALAKAI

Why his mom's cryin' like that?
Arvel's gonna make it, right?
That what's his nurse said. She
told me herself, 'Your friend's

gonna make it.' Did that bitch
lie to me! Talk to me, Patrick!
Is he gone?

Patrick steers Malakai away from the waiting room, backs
him against a wall and, in a gentle but firm way, holds
him there.

PATRICK

They just got bad news, man. They
don't need to hear it again.

(trying to be
strong; faltering)

Arvel's fightin'. He's gonna pull
through. Thing is, when he does,
they don't think... he ain't...
shit. Arvel ain't gonna walk
again.

In that moment, whatever's left of Malakai's soul
crumbles. He looks at Patrick with aggrieved disbelief
and then a building anger. A stronger man would probably
cry.

Patrick eases his grip. Malakai straightens his body,
cocks his head slightly. Studies Patrick in this
crooked, derisive way.

MALAKAI

I got a good reason now, man?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

110.

166 CONTINUED:
166

MALAKAI (CONT'D)

(off Patrick's silence)
Aw'ight, college boy. You do what
you think is the right thing.
I'ma do what I know is the only
thing.

He starts to walk off, doesn't get far before Patrick
calls out.

PATRICK

Malakai...
(a fleeting hesitation)

... When it's on, I'll be there.

167 **EXT. PLAYGROUND (O'DONNELL HEIGHTS PARK) - DAY**
167

Groups of children scatter around worn-out playground equipment. The gleeful squeal of them is everywhere. Patrick guides Christopher down a slide; Chenille catches him at the bottom. Christopher can't get enough of this ride and Patrick and Chenille repeat the routine throughout their conversation.

CHENILLE

Why you so quiet?
(off Patrick's
brooding look)
Patrick Reynolds ain't got nothin'
to say? That's a first.
(catches her son
with a whee!; then)
You know how I go off on folks
sometimes. I mean it and then I
don't mean it. Like what I said
to Sara. Guess she told you.

PATRICK

(monotone)
I don't care what you said,
Chenille.

CHENILLE

Patrick. Your ass is on your back
and your lips are on the ground.
You care, baby brother. And not
just about what I said.
(as he looks at her)
You seriously like Sara. She got
a serious jones for you. Am I
lyin'?

(CONTINUED)

111.

167 **CONTINUED:**
167

PATRICK

It's besides the point. Whatever
point it is you tryin' to make.

CHENILLE

I'm sayin' you can't help who you love, Patrick. At least you found somebody who loves you back.

Patrick regards Chenille impassively. Hands Christopher to her.

PATRICK

I gotta go.

CHENILLE

To where? To who? Malakai?
(sucks her teeth)
You ain't through with that fool yet.

PATRICK

He's not a fool, Chenille.

CHENILLE

No. You know what? You're the fool, Patrick. You think you let Malakai down and all you did was try to pull yourself up. Ain't no blame or shame in that.

PATRICK

(very low; a broken smile)
I still gotta go. Check you later.

Holding Christopher, Chenille watches Patrick walk out of the playground. Disappear. She and Christopher move on to a seesaw. Chenille bobs him up and down on one end of it. She's snuggling in Christopher's face when the other end suddenly drops to the ground. Chenille looks up. Sees Kenny.

168 **EXT. PLAYGROUND - SWINGS - CHENILLE AND KENNY - LATER**
168

They're side by side on swings. Christopher's nestled against Kenny's chest, soundly snoozing. They slowly swing throughout.

KENNY

It cut me, what you said.

(CONTINUED)

112.

168 CONTINUED:
168

CHENILLE

(means this)
I shouldn't have... I was
trippin'.

KENNY

You always trip. I'm used to
that. Besides, you were right.
You were wrong, too. So was I. I
need to do better. Ain't no doubt
about that.

CHENILLE

I know I come down on you hard
about money, but I would rather
you spend the time. Seriously.

KENNY

(jokingly)
So you don't want any money?

CHENILLE

I didn't say all that.

He smiles. Gently rubs Christopher's brow.
her. Chenille smiles at him.

Looks at

KENNY

I love my son, Chenille. You know
that, don't you?

CHENILLE

Yeah. I always knew that.

169 EXT. BALTIMORE SCHOOL OF PERFORMING ARTS - ESTABLISHING
169

SHOT - SATURDAY EVENING

of the building, the downtown skyline, etc.

170 INT. BALTIMORE SCHOOL OF PERFORMING ARTS - AUDITORIUM -
170

SAME TIME

The house lights are on. Several seats in the front row are taken up by judges for Juilliard. Further back are the families and friends of other dancers. PUSH IN and FAVOR Roy among them.

171 INT. BACKSTAGE AREA - SARA
171

Warming up, other dancers, all in costume, around her. Her eyes wander from the clock to the stage door.

(CONTINUED)

113.

171 CONTINUED:

171

A sign on it reads: "JUILLIARD SCHOOL OF DANCE - BALTIMORE AUDITIONS." She stares at it, fingers the clover leaf necklace with an unsettling sense of deja vu.

ANGLE - WOMAN

with a PINCE-NEZ with a clipboard, navigating among the dancers with a clipboard. She calls out:

PINCE-NEZ

Johnson. Sara Johnson...

172 EXT. STREET (O'DONNELL HEIGHTS) - NIGHT

172

Patrick's waiting on the sidewalk. Malakai pulls up in Tute's BMW. Lip's in the backseat. Patrick gets into the car. It takes off down the street.

173 EXT./INT. STREET - BMW - DRIVING - NIGHT

173

RAP MUSIC blasts ON the RADIO. No one in the car is saying anything. Malakai has a "40" between his legs. He sips from it, passes it to Patrick. Patrick takes a short swig, passes it back to Lip. As he does this, a set of keys fall out of his jacket into his lap. Patrick picks them up. Looks at the key chain, his present from Sara. He looks at Malakai.

PATRICK

Pull over.

(as Malakai glances at

him, not understanding)
This ain't helpin' nobody, 'Kai.
I'm out. I mean it. Stop the
car.

LIP

Awww, shit. Here we go.

MALAKAI

(furious)

What you mean you out? You think
I'ma let your punk ass bail on me
again?

Patrick starts to open the door. Malakai speeds up. The
CAR CAREENS down the street, SQUEALS around corners.
Finally comes to a red light. Stops. Patrick starts to
open the door. Malakai grabs him by the jacket. Pulls
his gun. Patrick looks at Malakai and now he sees him.
Sees that he's lost and desperate... and dangerous.

(CONTINUED)

114.

173 CONTINUED:
173

PATRICK

What you gonna do, 'Kai? You
gonna shoot me? Go ahead! You'll
have to!

LIP

Let him out! We don't need him.

MALAKAI

Shut the fuck up.

Patrick jerks himself loose. Opens the door. Malakai
cocks the gun. Patrick's face flinches at the sound of
it. He can feel it trained on his back as he gets out
the car. But Malakai can't do it. Wouldn't do it. He
takes off like a bat out of hell.

174 EXT. STREET
174

Patrick heads down the street. As he walks, he can hear
the sound of GUNFIRE behind him, and then the sound like
an EXPLOSION. A CAR HORN goes off in a persistent drone.

Patrick stops. Stands there for a moment. Then he's walking again. Without looking back. And then he's running away from the mayhem behind him.

175 **EXT. STREET - SAME TIME**

175

The BMW's tangled around a street lamp. Inside Malakai slumps over the steering wheel, a bullet through his head.

176 **INT. BALTIMORE SCHOOL OF PERFORMING ARTS - AUDITORIUM -**

176

NIGHT

Pince-Nez leads Sara to the stage. Announces her.

Sara walks onstage.

She nods down at the judges, looks out into the audience. Her eyes anxiously search for Patrick... hoping. Her MUSIC begins.

Grieg's Peer Gynt (Morning). Sara starts to sway, moving like an angel through the soft cloud of this music. Her line, proportion and balance are impeccable.

(CONTINUED)

115.

176 **CONTINUED:**

176

Tchaikovsky's Swan Lake (Tanz der Schwane) begins and Sara slowly blossoms, opening herself up to the music like a flower. She completes every turn and twist and leap with confidence, energy and persuasion. She is doing what a dancer should do -- engaging the audience, igniting their imagination, drawing them in.

ANGLE - JUDGES

perking up, taking notes, attentive to her.

SARA

finishes with a flawless arabesque. Looks out.

REVERSE ANGLE - JUDGES

One of the more imperious-appearing JUDGES removes his glasses, speaks to her. Sara's still trying to catch her breath.

STERN JUDGE

You prepared a free-form?

SARA

Yes... sir... they have... my music.

JUDGE

Does it have a theme?

SARA

Yes. Emo...
(clears her throat)
Emotion.

The Judge turns around, shouts to someone we can't see:

STERN JUDGE

Cue Johnson's music.

MUSIC UP: A remix of hip-hop (e.g., LAURYN'S HILL'S doo wop; NAS'S "We Will Survive" and JAY Z's latest) and snatches of CLASSICAL.

SARA

stands there. Doesn't move. Can't. She finally walks up to the edge of the stage. Looks down at the judges, her eyes filled with trepidation. Her voice is a shaky whisper.

(CONTINUED)

116.

176 **CONTINUED:**
176

SARA

I'm sorry. I wasn't ready. Can
you start it over again?

REVERSE ANGLE

176 CONTINUED:
176

Patrick letting out a giant whoop...

The judges react and the audience gasps...

... as he bounds onto the stage and...

Roy jumps to his feet. Proudly and loudly clapping.
Just like Glynn.

ANGLE - SARA

overwhelmed beyond belief. Patrick's coming toward her. She flies into his arms, free and happy, overjoyed. But the triumph of her performance and the sheer bliss of the moment are transcended by something deeper and clearer, which is her love for Patrick.

JUDGES

struggling to maintain their and the proceeding's decorum, since the audience, caught up in the throes of this excitement, has begun to loudly, enthusiastically react.

STERN JUDGE

Ladies and gentlemen, please!
(to Patrick)
Young man! Get off the stage.

WIDER to reveal the room.

Patrick hugging Sara, looks down at the judges.

PATRICK

All due respect, if ya'll don't
let this girl in, you're crazy!

Sara pulls Patrick back. Walks alone to the edge of the stage, composed and professional again. She regards the judges with a beaming resolve and a ballerina's curtsy, then simply says:

SARA

Thank you. Very much.

STERN JUDGE

Ms. Johnson!

Sara stops. Turns back to him. The Judge smiles.

STERN JUDGE

I can't say this on the record --
yet. But welcome to Juilliard.

(CONTINUED)

118.

176 CONTINUED:
176

SARA'S FACE

lovely and radiant as it breaks into a cheek-to-cheek smile. WIDER as she walks slowly, deliberately back to Patrick. Stops. Looks at him. Just looks. And then she throws her arms around his neck, kissing and hugging him. Emotional. Patrick swings her into the air, twirls her around and around, as we:

DISSOLVE TO:

177 INT. HOTEL BALLROOM - SENIOR PROM - NIGHT
177

OVER SLOW MUSIC (possible theme song):

Sara (in a gown) and Patrick (in a tux). Dancing (as if they had danced from the last FRAME INTO this one). They are beautiful.

WIDER to reveal the entire dance floor...

And we see that it's the senior prom.

The room's dressed up like a dreamy, futuristic romantic illusion. The ceiling's ablaze with tiny, star-like lights; under them large poufs of cotton clouds hang. Glittering, mirrored balls dangle over the main floor.

Seniors dance in traditional and cutting edge tuxes and mouth-watering, eye-popping versions of dresses and gowns. CAMERA PANS the floor, PICKING UP:

A surprisingly dashing Snookie and the fly girl. As they dance, he bravely but rather too abruptly dips her...

Diggy (in a glitter tuxedo and spiked hair) and her date...

Nikki with whom we shall perceive to be the Howard University guy. In any event, he looks slightly bored.

Chenille with Kenny, smiles at Sara as she and Patrick dance by.

CAMERA FAVORS and PUSHES IN ON...

Sara and Patrick. Gazing at each other. The SONG ENDS
with them in each other's arms.

FADE OUT.

THE END