

DANCING GIRL

Written by

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Inspired by the song "Sylvia's Mother"
by Doctor Hook and His Medicine Show
Lyrics by Shel Silverstein

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FADE IN:

INT. PHONE BOOTH - DAY - (FLASHBACK)

Torrential rain PELTS the phone booth.

BOBBY JOHN WALKER (20s), a long haired southern rocker type, sopping wet, fresh scar above his eye, and phone receiver to his ear. He nervously jams his hand in the pocket of his tight jeans and extracts some coins.

Frantically he pushes them through the coin slot, then manically, pokes the numbers on the phone.

BOBBY JOHN
Come on, come on...

WOMAN (O.S.)
Hello?

BOBBY JOHN
Mrs. Avery. Hi, it's Bobby John --

MRS. AVERY (O.S.)
Sylvia's busy. She can't talk.

The rain BEATS down loudly. Bobby John sticks a finger in his ear and strains to listen.

BOBBY JOHN
Please, I --

MRS. AVERY (O.S.)
She's happy and finally tryin' to start a new life for herself. You should leave her alone.

BOBBY JOHN
(panicked)
Mrs. Avery, I've just got to talk to her.

INT. SYLVIA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

MRS. AVERY (50s), stern and stiffly formal, receiver to her ear.

MRS. AVERY
She's packing. She's going to be leavin' today.

Mrs. Avery walks down the hallway as far as the phone cord allows and peers up the stairs.

A young woman's legs in bell bottom jeans scamper past.

INT. PHONE BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

BOBBY JOHN
I just want to tell her --

MRS. AVERY (O.S.)
(proudly)
Sylvia's marrying that fella down
Galveston way.

Bobby John, stung.

OPERATOR (O.S.)
Forty cents more for the next three
minutes.

INT. SYLVIA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Mrs. Avery strolls around the kitchen, satisfied.

MRS. AVERY
I can't let you say nothin' to make
her start crying and stay.

INT. PHONE BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

OPERATOR (O.S.)
Forty cents more for the next three
minutes.

Bobby John wildly digs through his pockets and pulls out crumpled bills.

BOBBY JOHN
(voice quavering)
Please Mrs. Avery, I just want to
tell her --

INT. SYLVIA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

MRS. AVERY
(slyly)
She's hurryin' to catch the 9 o'clock
train.

QUICK, HEAVY FOOTSTEPS down the stairs.

Mrs. Avery moves to the hall.

SYLVIA (20s), a wild-eyed stunner breezes in and drops two suitcases at the front door.

INT. PHONE BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

Bobby John shifts helplessly like a caged tiger.

MRS. AVERY (O.S.)
Take your umbrella, Sylvia, it's
starting to rain.

OPERATOR (O.S.)
Forty cents more, for the next three
minutes --

INT. SYLVIA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Sylvia darts past Mrs. Avery.

MRS. AVERY
Well, thank you for calling sir. Be
sure to call back again.

Mrs. Avery, accomplished, smiles and motions to hang up the phone.

INT. PHONE BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

BOBBY JOHN
(eyes well)
Please, Mrs. Avery. I won't keep her.
Please tell her -- Hello! Mrs.
Avery?!

Silence, then a dial tone.

Bobby John looks at the receiver with disdain, then relentlessly SLAMS the phone with it.

INT. OFFICE - DAY - (EARLY 2000S / PRESENT DAY)

A small, tired office.

AMY (early 20s), headphones on, sits behind a large boxy desktop computer, lost in her work.

A ruggedly handsome MAN (40s), tight crew cut, full beard, enters through the front door. His sweatshirt says, BJW Home Appraisals.

MAN
Mornin' Amy.

He stops at the coffee pot and fills his travel mug.

MAN (cont'd)
(louder)
Mornin' Amy.

He glances over his shoulder and notices she's wearing headphones connected to a first generation iPod.

Amy, laser focused on a spreadsheet, startles when she hears a KNOCK on her desk.

The man stands before her and reaches for a clipboard with a list affixed to it.

MAN (cont'd)
Didn't mean to scare you.

Amy takes her headphones off.

AMY
Sorry. Good morning Mr. Walker.

MR. WALKER
What's the matter, the music we play
in here's isn't good enough for you?

Amy stammers.

MR. WALKER (cont'd)
I'm kidding. The radio is all yours.
You pick the music, alright?

AMY
(relieved)
Sounds good. Thank you.

Mr. Walker routinely examines the sheet on the clipboard.

MR. WALKER
Just so long as it has a good beat.
And stop calling me Mr. Walker
already. That's how my last office
manager got fired. Makes me feel old.

He winks and smirks.

MR. WALKER (cont'd)
Where's Jason?

AMY
He called out sick. Migraine.

MR. WALKER
Boy must think I'm an idiot. I know
he was out late causin' trouble.
(beat)
I did the same thing when I was his
age. It's a wonder I survived.

Mr. Walker looks back at the list. We notice a faded scar
above his eye.

AMY
Chip off the old block, right Mr. --
Bobby John?

Mr. Walker/Bobby John (the young man from the phone booth),
distracted.

BOBBY JOHN
This one here, on Langston St. Can it
wait for Jason tomorrow?

AMY
Langston is a rush. They paid extra
for today. Is something wrong?

BOBBY JOHN
(lost in thought)
No, no. I'll do it. Just a long ways
away.

INT. COOPER'S BAR - DANCE FLOOR - NIGHT - (FLASHBACK)

A divvy honky tonk, crowded and lively with deafening upbeat
country music. Fashions of the patrons indicate late 1970s,
early 80s.

A group meticulously perform a line dance routine.

INT. COOPER'S BAR - BAR - NIGHT

Bobby John (no scar - yet), sits at the bar with his back to
the action, flanked by TJ (20s), a heavy set bumpkin and
BUCK (50s), life-long bar fly.

TJ
Then she tells me to come back to her
place and begs me to give it to her
and her mamma.

Bobby John shakes his head and swigs his beer.

BOBBY JOHN
Boy, you are so full of shit I can
smell it on your breath.

BUCK
(matter of fact)
Only mamma's pussy he's been in and
out of is his own.

Bobby John nearly spits his beer out.

TJ
Old man, it's high time someone shut
you up.

BUCK
(grinning)
It's well past due.

Bobby John raises his beer to the bartender, RICKY (40s),
indicating he needs a refill.

BOBBY JOHN
TJ, never stop being you, man. Can't
imagine this deadbeat town without
you. I swear, you're the only reason
I stick around.

Ricky rushes past and places a beer in front of Bobby John.

RICKY
Bullshit. You just got nowhere else
to go.

Buck snickers.

BUCK
And he's too chicken shit.

Truth hurts, but Bobby John shrugs it off.

BOBBY JOHN
Ricky, what's with this garbage
you're playing tonight?

RICKY
"Country Boogie." It's Thursday line dancing night.

BOBBY JOHN
 Line what? Since when?

RICKY
 Since three weeks ago. My new waitress started it up.

Ricky directs Bobby John's attention to REGGIE (20s), Black, clearing a nearby table. There's an air of confidence and radiance -- a natural magnetism.

RICKY (cont'd)
 She knows what's hip, unlike you.

Ricky shuffles off.

Bobby John curiously steals a long second glance at Reggie.

BOBBY JOHN
 What do you think TJ? You wanna dance with me?

TJ
 Dance? Hell, I need my inhaler when I take a shit.

BOBBY JOHN
 And I'm supposed to believe you could breathe long enough to survive a mother daughter three way?

Bobby John looks into the mirror behind the bar and watches the crowd of dancers go through their sequence.

BOBBY JOHN (cont'd)
 This stuff's gonna kill country music. Mark my words.
 (in the direction of
 Ricky)
 And I'm holdin' you responsible!

Something in the mirror grabs Bobby John's eye.

In the crowd we see Sylvia, the girl from earlier with the suitcases. She looks like a sultry angel and moves as if she's the only one in the room.

As she slinks about we see that her tight fitting tank top has a shiny iron-on decal that says, "HERE COMES TROUBLE."

BOBBY JOHN (cont'd)
Lord give me strength.

He swigs his beer.

INT. COOPER'S BAR - BAR - LATER

There's a lull in the music. Bobby John's back is to Sylvia.

BOBBY JOHN
What's she doing now?

TJ starts to turn around.

BOBBY JOHN (cont'd)
Don't look, dumb ass.

TJ
How am I supposed to look if I can't look?

BOBBY JOHN
(miffed)
Ricky, come here.

Ricky saunters over -- what now?

BOBBY JOHN (cont'd)
What's Sylvia doing?

A short distance behind him, Sylvia is seated at a table, a little spent after a night of dancing, laughs with her FRIENDS.

RICKY
Still? After all these years? Damn boy, you two go together like honesty and politics. Sooner you realize that, better off you'll both be.

BOBBY JOHN
I just need to know if she's looking at me. This is important.

Bobby John sneaks a look over his shoulder. He happens to catch Reggie taking an order from FOX, burly biker (40s).

FOX
Glad they finally got some dark meat
in here.

On cue, Fox's group of CRONIES laugh more than needed.

Reggie bites her tongue and keeps her eyes low.

FOX (cont'd)
You know I like when nig -- Negroes,
wait on me -- that's what you're
called now, right? Especially pretty
ones like you. This is how it's
supposed to be. Pretty ni -- there I
go again, Negroes bringing me stuff.

BOBBY JOHN
What the fuck, Ricky. You gonna do
something about that?

RICKY
(leans in; keeps his voice low)
Since when does anyone do something
about Fox? 'Less you put a bullet
between his eyes, Fox is gonna do
what Fox is gonna do.

Bobby John stares at the scene, helpless and disgusted.

Reggie knows it's best to say nothing, take the order and
walk off, so that's what she does.

RICKY (cont'd)
Just let it go. Being a hot shot gets
you nowhere. You, of all people
should know that by now.

Bobby John snaps out of it and turns back to the bar.
Through the mirror, Bobby John refocuses on Sylvia -- his
temperature lowers.

TJ
Forget Sylvia, I'm caught up on the
girl over there with the lopsided
titties. I hear she'll fart on your
chest for five dollars.

Buck busts out laughing.

BOBBY JOHN
God damn! You assholes are useless!

Bobby John pushes his stool out and stands profoundly.

He takes a healthy swig of liquid courage, forcefully plants his glass down and storms away.

BUCK
(calling after him)
Why don't you go hump your couch you
horny shit.

TJ and Ricky snicker.

INT. COOPER'S BAR - CONTINUOUS

Sylvia and her friends are absorbed in conversation over a Country song that loudly pumps through the speakers.

SYLVIA
So I told him, listen asshole, buying
us drinks isn't an open invitation to
get your dick wet, so why don't you
slink your creepy self back to your
redneck, fuckhead friends and tell
them what a miserable bitch I am, k?

Her friends laugh.

Unnoticed, Bobby John brushes her hair to the side and leans into her ear.

BOBBY JOHN
Sounds damn near like the first thing
you ever said to me when we were 16,
'cept the drink was a soda.

Sylvia's face lights up.

INT. COOPER'S BAR - DANCE FLOOR - LATER

Sylvia dances flawlessly to the beat while Bobby John fumbles awkwardly, unable to keep up.

She finds his pathetic moves adorable and can't help but smile.

Bobby John glances over at Sylvia's friends. They murmur and chuckle.

BOBBY JOHN
I can't do this no more. I look like
an ass.

SYLVIA
(laughing)
You do.

Like a petulant child, he won't budge.

BOBBY JOHN
Dancing is your thing, not mine.

SYLVIA
Just gotta put your hips into it.
Should be instinctual for you boys.

She giggles and lets out a little snort.

Bobby John can't help but laugh back. This lightens him up enough to give himself over to her.

Sylvia steps to him and pulls him close. She grabs his hands and places them on her hips and seductively leads him around the dance floor.

BOBBY JOHN
What are we doing exactly?

SYLVIA
The Texas two step, dumb dumb.

BOBBY JOHN
I mean us.

SYLVIA
We are doing the Texas two step.
That's it. Don't spoil it by trying
to read into anything beyond that.

Bobby John pulls away.

INT. COOPER'S BAR - FRONT DOOR - LATER

Bobby John and Sylvia are huddled in a corner near the entrance.

SYLVIA
Why can't things be like they were?

BOBBY JOHN
Where? When? Sophomore year of high school? 3 months ago before you ran off on me... again? Didn't even have the decency to say goodbye.

SYLVIA

Hell, you're the one always telling me not to say goodbye unless it's forever. As long as I know I'm coming back, I won't say that word.

BOBBY JOHN

Anyway, where'd you go this time?

SYLVIA

Galveston.

BOBBY JOHN

Galveston. What in hell is in Galveston? You finally gonna stay put or what?

SYLVIA

(sudden; excitedly)

No and neither are you. Come away with me.

BOBBY JOHN

What?

SYLVIA

(eager)

There's a dance competition. Be my partner.

BOBBY JOHN

You're nuts. I hate dancing and I'm awful at it. You know that.

SYLVIA

When you try, you're better than you realize, plus if you let me -- if you give yourself over to me, I can teach you.

BOBBY JOHN

I've been giving myself over to you for years upon years and it mostly brings me heartache.

Sylvia rolls her eyes at what she perceives as mellow drama.

BOBBY JOHN (cont'd)

And why me? You have your dance friends. Ask one of them and give yourself a chance.

Sylvia puts her hands on his face to focus him on her words.

SYLVIA

Each round of the competition is in a different place; First Texas, then Oklahoma, Louisiana -- you need to get out of here. I do too. This is our way --

BOBBY JOHN

Just 10 minutes ago you were telling me not to read into anything.

(mockingly)

We're just dancing, you said. Hell, now you want me to run away with you?

SYLVIA

Cause we were just dancing and I don't like to do much else *when* I'm dancing.

She gently kisses his nose.

SYLVIA (cont'd)

So what do you say?

BOBBY JOHN

(considering; half
reluctantly)

You know how much time it'll take to teach me how to dance? Damn --

SYLVIA

The winners get to travel all around the country as part of a showcase.

BOBBY JOHN

This is the craziest idea you've had yet, and there's been plenty of 'em.

SYLVIA

Crazy would be me asking your work buddy over there. Bubba, or Tiny, or is it Jim Bob?

Bobby John smiles.

BOBBY JOHN

TJ. And he's allergic to burning calories, so...

SYLVIA

See, ain't no one good around here for me to sink my teeth into. Come on. Don't make me beg.

(MORE)

SYLVIA (cont'd)
 I got a good feelin'. Heck, you know
 as well as I do, if you stick around
 here too long, you're sure as shit
 going to find yourself in the damn
 clink or something.

Bobby John straightens up, bothered.

SYLVIA (cont'd)
 What?

BOBBY JOHN
 You gonna pull that card? Hang my dad
 on me?

SYLVIA
 Stop it. That's not what I --

BOBBY JOHN
 He may have been locked up half his
 sorry ass life, but you know damn
 well I've been spending half of mine
 trying to be anyone but him. Mark my
 words, my father is not *my* destiny!

SYLVIA
 Then what is your destiny?

Lost for words, Bobby John looks around. His eyes briefly
 meet Reggie's. This seems to soften him just a bit.

Sylvia reaches for his arm. Bobby John pulls away.

SYLVIA (cont'd)
 I'm sorry.

BOBBY JOHN
 Just find someone else to rescue or
 play with, or whatever the hell it is
 you want with me this time. It's only
 gonna end in flames like it always
 does.

Sylvia's taken aback.

As Bobby John marches toward the entrance, his eyes again
 find Reggie's. She offers a hint of pity.

INT. BOBBY JOHN'S HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

By the flicker of a TV screen, we see a house rundown by
 years of heartache and despair.

Bobby John's pathetic OLD MAN is passed out face down on the couch, bottle on the floor. Same shit, different day.

Bobby John makes his way through the house to a door, slightly ajar. Mom, MARY (50s), a frail lost soul, is on the bed sobbing, red mark on her face.

Bobby John gently pushes the door open wider.

Mary barely looks over.

BOBBY JOHN
 (matter of fact)
 What do you need this time? The ice
 pack or the heating pad?

Mary shakes her head.

BOBBY JOHN (cont'd)
 How about a pistol?

MARY
 (through a cracking
 voice)
 He's still your father.

Bobby John examines her welt. She turns away.

They sit in silence, as this situation has been talked to death for years.

INT. BOBBY JOHN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Bobby John is hunched over a bowl of cereal, eyes on a Rolling Stone magazine, but they shift uncomfortably across the kitchen to --

His old man, back to Bobby John, pours himself a cup of coffee.

As if he feels eyes on him --

OLD MAN
 Pay day today. If I don't have \$10 in
 my hand by 6pm, you can sleep
 elsewhere.

Bobby John, stays fixed on his magazine.

His old man turns around, smug.

OLD MAN (cont'd)
Careful, you ignore me, I just might
raise your rent.

BOBBY JOHN
You'll have your money. Ain't missed
a day yet have I?

OLD MAN
That's 'cuz I remind ya.

The old man hovers over the table.

OLD MAN (cont'd)
What'cha reading that coon loving rag
for?

Bobby John glances up, fury in his eyes.

OLD MAN (cont'd)
(snickers)
What, you gonna step to me?

Bobby John would love to, but he slowly lowers his eyes.

The old man holds his coffee mug over the magazine and pours
some coffee on it.

OLD MAN (cont'd)
I like my coffee black, just like
your choice of reading materials.

Bobby John stands abruptly, grabs his jacket off the back of
the chair and makes a bee line for the door.

His old man smiles. This is the most accomplished he'll feel
all day.

Bobby John nearly bumps into his mother as he heads for the
front door.

MARY
Running off to work a little early,
no?

BOBBY JOHN
Yeah, I'm running off. Wish you would
too.

Bobby John shoots a parting glance at his father in the
kitchen doorway.

Mary looks at him and his shit eating grin, and that's all she needs to see.

She quickly turns her head and shuffles away.

INT. POWER PLANT - PLANT FLOOR - DAY

WORKERS in hard hats and protective goggles work dutifully. The cacophony of grinding gears and humming machines fill the air. The foreman, MAC, (50s), solidly built, all business, studies them from a landing up above.

A HORN BLARES. Everyone files out.

INT. POWER PLANT - BREAK ROOM - DAY

The workers sit around tables adorned with thermoses and lunch pails.

Bobby John joins co-workers, TJ, PETE, GENE, and NICK at a table.

NICK

There's the man of the hour.

Bobby John removes a sandwich and chips from his lunch pail.

PETE

The man of the hour indeed.

Pete slow claps and the guys laugh.

BOBBY JOHN

What's going on?

GENE

Aw come on. You had that piece of ass wrapped around your finger last night at Cooper's and left her at the altar.

BOBBY JOHN

(turns to TJ)

You flappin' your fat gums again?

TJ

You made your girl look stupid. I ain't seen no such thing before. 'Course I'm gonna talk.

BOBBY JOHN

First, she ain't my girl no more, and he's making too much out of it. It was just a disagreement. I probably overreacted.

NICK

You overreact? Nah.

Bobby John shoots him a glare.

PETE

Hell, I'm just surprised he'd admit to being wrong.

GENE

Oh, he's wrong alright. That Farrah Fawcett looking thing of his was all ready to jump his skinny bones and he up and just walked away.

NICK

Maybe he's one of them homos. Come to think of it, I seen ya sneak a peek at me at the urinal once or twice. Now it all makes sense.

BOBBY JOHN

Y'all a bunch of jealous dipshits. A girl like Sylvia wouldn't talk to the likes of you if her life depended on it. She got standards.

TJ

(under his breath)

Didn't have standards when she let that bar fly in her pants a few months back.

Bobby John hangs on those words.

GENE

Maybe I'll stop by Cooper's and give myself a chance then. Sounds like she's hot to trot anyway.

BOBBY JOHN

Bunch of clowns.

Bobby John goes to the coffee machine and impatiently strums his fingers against it as the cup slowly fills.

Mac opens the door to the break room.

MAC
(urgently)
Bobby John.

INT. POWER PLANT - PLANT FLOOR - DAY

The plant floor is empty, but still roars with the sound of churning machinery.

Mac walks briskly. Bobby John scampers behind trying not to spill his coffee.

BOBBY JOHN
Jesus, where's the fire?

INT. POWER PLANT - MAC'S OFFICE - DAY

Mac barges into his office. It's stale and anonymous.

Mac tosses his hard hat on the desk. Bobby John trails a few steps behind.

MAC
Your break is up in a few, so I'll make this quick.

BOBBY JOHN
Quick is right. I damn near pulled a hamstring on the way here.

MAC
Corporate has been busting all the plant managers' chops lately about productivity. Seems nothing we do is fast enough.

BOBBY JOHN
Gotta love those ivory tower millionaires telling a working man how to work.

MAC
Well, we ain't got much, but what we do have we owe to them. No one else is paying double minimum wage round here.

BOBBY JOHN
It's called hazard pay. We risk our lives and they put a price tag on it.
(MORE)

BOBBY JOHN (cont'd)
We're all just desperate enough to pretend it's alright.

MAC
You want to bitch, or do you want to do something about it?

Mac hands Bobby John a manila envelope.

BOBBY JOHN
What's this?

MAC
I have to admit, when I hired you, it was just to keep you out of trouble. A favor to your mother... not my sorry ass brother. Honestly, I didn't think you'd work out, but I was wrong. You never miss a day, never late, bust your butt, and you got a good head on ya.

Mac motions to the envelope.

Bobby John, hesitant, reaches inside and pulls out a glossy packet with the company logo on it, HARCO ELECTRIC.

MAC (cont'd)
Management trainee program. I recommended you for it. If interested, fill all that out and get it back to me by the end of the month. Then on September 1st we'll ship you up to Oklahoma through the end of the year. All expenses paid. Pass it and they'll assign you to a plant somewhere as a management apprentice and and you'll work your way up.

Bobby John is stunned.

BOBBY JOHN
For real?

MAC
Nothing is guaranteed, but you can make a real difference at this company and carve out a good career for yourself to boot.

BOBBY JOHN

I appreciate this, I do, but I'm not used to people believing in me. Kinda hard to process when someone does.

(beat)

Can I think on it for a bit?

MAC

Listen, none of us grow up dreaming of this, I get it, but at some point, we gotta accept the hand we've been dealt. Granted there's nothing stopping you from going off and finding your own way, but I've lived here long enough to know, all dusty roads lead right back to Tyler, Texas, or some place like it.

(nodding at the packet)

That can be your way out.

BOBBY JOHN

I may have been dealt a hand, but I haven't even looked at my cards yet, Uncle Mac.

MAC

(sly grin)

Just make sure your dreams are never bigger than your balls.

Bobby John smiles.

EXT. PLANT - PARKING LOT - DAY

Bobby John and his coworkers, dispensing bullshit and laughter, stream out of the the plant with lunch pails in hand.

PLANT WORKER

Bobby John, you call a tow truck yet?

He laughs and squeezes Bobby John's shoulder.

BOBBY JOHN

Don't jinx me man. It's been startin' all week.

PLANT WORKER

Too bad she ain't as pretty on the inside as she is on the outside, or you'd really have something worth hanging onto.

Bobby John shrugs. He looks ahead and sees --

Sylvia sits shoeless, legs crossed on the hood of his cherry red, 68 Ford Falcon, reading a book. The way the sun hits, she looks like an ethereal siren; to resist her is not even an option.

He smirks and saunters over to her.

BOBBY JOHN

At least you had the decency to take your shoes off before climbing up there.

She gives him the side eye.

Bobby John smiles and opens the passenger side door.

Sylvia doesn't react.

BOBBY JOHN (cont'd)

I've got all day.

Sylvia knows she's hooked him. After a beat, she shuts her magazine, shimmies off the hood and slinks slow and deliberate past him and into the car with a devilish grin. Neither takes their eyes off the other.

INT. BOBBY JOHN'S CAR - DAY

The car speeds down the street leaving the plant in the distance. Windows down, the wind blows freely through their hair. **"Flirtin' With Disaster"** by Molly Hatchet BLARES.

EXT. BOBBY JOHN'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

MUSIC RINGS out as the car bolts down a country road past endless farm land on either side.

EXT. WHEAT FIELD - DAY

Sylvia holds one of Bobby John's hands up high, the other lower. Her posture is perfect and she stares him dead in the eyes.

SYLVIA

Hang on. No sense on a walk through,
let's just get to it.

Sylvia presses play on a boom box.

BOBBY JOHN

Plant wants to send me to a
management trainee program. Could set
me up for a comfortable lot in life.

SYLVIA

Dang, that sounds boring as shit, now
don't it?

Bobby John smiles at the prospect of yet another bad
decision, courtesy of Sylvia.

MONTAGE - BOBBY JOHN AND SYLVIA DANCING

-- They dance playfully in a wheat field. Bobby John laughs
at her attempts to get him to follow her lead.

-- They're in a line dancing class. Bobby John struggles to
keep up, but smiles wide while watching Sylvia effortlessly
nail the routine.

-- They dance eye to eye in an old barn.

-- They dance at a crowded outdoor bar under string lights
and a blanket of stars. Bobby John moves with more
confidence.

-- They bound down railroad tracks and prance from one tie
to the next in rhythmic syncopation.

-- Back at the line dancing class, this time, Bobby John
keeps up.

-- Back at the wheat field, they move in perfect unison,
eyes locked. Bobby John pulls her tight and they slow to a
sensual groove.

END MONTAGE

EXT. WHEAT FIELD - CONTINUOUS

Bobby John stares at her longingly. Heat builds between
them.

SYLVIA
What are you looking at Bobby John?

BOBBY JOHN
(playful)
My life flashing before my eyes.

SYLVIA
You gonna kiss me or --

She leans closer.

SYLVIA (cont'd)
Am I gonna kiss you?

Bobby John greets her with a passionate kiss. They embrace, yet continue to dance while Sylvia unbuttons his shirt and hastily pulls it off; he removes her shirt. Each fumble with the buttons on their jeans.

As one, they weave in and out of wheat stalks; lust overtakes them and brings them to the ground. The sun sinks behind them.

EXT. WHEAT FIELD - LATER

Basking in the afterglow, Bobby John and Sylvia are snuggled together.

BOBBY JOHN
Why do you keep runnin' off on me?

SYLVIA
It ain't about you. I'm just drifting. It's what I do.

She picks a dandelion and holds it to her lips.

SYLVIA (cont'd)
I go where the wind takes me. What's so wrong with that?

She blows on the dandelion and the fluffy particles flutter off before her mischievous smile.

BOBBY JOHN
What's wrong with it is, the wind keeps leaving me behind.

SYLVIA
Don't get all melancholy on me. You know I love you.

Bobby John contemplates that, but is he buying it?

BOBBY JOHN
You for real about taking me with you
on that dance thing?

SYLVIA
It's not a dance *thing*. It's a
competition.

BOBBY JOHN
Suit yourself. You been dancing,
seriously dancin' for years. I'm
gonna be the death of ya.

SYLVIA
Nothin' serious about the way I
dance. If so, I wouldn't do it.

BOBBY JOHN
You're real good. You got moves I
haven't even seen on TV.

SYLVIA
Dance enough with the right people
and you pick up a few things along
the way.

BOBBY JOHN
If you want any shot at winning, you
best introduce me to the right people
then.

Excitement flashes in Sylvia's eyes and she kisses him
eagerly.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Among rundown buildings in a barely there business district,
Sylvia scampers ahead, pulling Bobby John by the hand.

BOBBY JOHN
Where are you taking me? This place
is a ghost town.

She gleefully leads him down an alley.

BOBBY JOHN (cont'd)
Down here? You're going to get us
killed.

Sylvia laughs and quickens her pace.

SYLVIA

Over here!

They stop at a steel door without a knob or a handle. Sylvia, with the excitement of a kid on Christmas morning, pounds on it with a deliberate cadence.

Bobby John, fearful, looks around half expecting to get mugged.

The door opens and Sylvia quickly slips inside.

SYLVIA (cont'd)

Come on!

Bobby John briefly hesitates before following.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

They are led down a dimly lit, narrow hallway of cracked cement and peeled paint by a young Black man, RANDOLPH (20s).

BOBBY JOHN

My friends know I'm with you, so if
you're leading me into an organ
harvesting operation --

A door opens and the hallway floods with light and THUMPING soul music.

Bobby John's eyes grow wide with wonderment.

Sylvia watches him and smiles, proudly accomplished.

INT. DANCE CLUB - CONTINUOUS

The room is packed with Black 20-something DANCERS, all joyful and carefree. The energy is pure and palpable.

The song, **"You Goin' Miss Your Candyman"** by Terry Callier is at full climax; it stirs up the dancers.

BOBBY JOHN

(amazed)
What is this?

Sylvia excitedly clutches his shoulders.

SYLVIA

This, is the right people.

Realization creeps across his face.

She pulls him in with the dancers.

He soaks in the atmosphere for a beat, awed by the skill and passion all around him.

SYLVIA (cont'd)
You want to learn, don't you?

Sylvia starts dancing, and other than her skin color, she blends in perfectly.

Bobby John submits and joins in as best he can. Before long he's keeping rhythm at least, though he's more of a spectator.

Other dancers gesture to him with approving nods and glances. He gains confidence and is consumed by the energy and vibe.

SYLVIA (cont'd)
There you go. Feel it. Let the music tell you what to do.

BOBBY JOHN
What is this? Disco?

SYLVIA
Brother, this shit's too good for a category.

Bobby John smiles and spins away. He makes his way through the crowd and lets loose like never before. His eyes eagerly dart around the room until they land on a familiar face among the dancers, Reggie, the waitress from Cooper's.

Reggie grins slyly at him.

Bobby John stays locked on her, enthralled as she moves like the rhythm was composed for just her.

He slices through the crowd, closer to her. Reggie reels him in further.

Reggie... winning, as Bobby John approaches. He grooves up to her and she playfully shrugs him off and turns away.

Bobby John unbothered, enjoys the game. He continues to dance.

Reggie looks over her shoulder and makes eye contact. She wants to reel him back.

Bobby John takes the bait and moves closer.

Suddenly, Reggie spins around and shimmies her way to him. Close, she shifts her hips seductively.

Bobby John tries to dance with her, but he's over-matched. He gives up and watches, spellbound by Reggie's prowess.

Bobby John looks into the crowd and locks eyes with Sylvia. They exchange knowing smiles.

Sylvia then throws her head back like she's in a trance. Randolph steps to her and places his hand on her waist. She gives herself to him; they dance closely.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

Sylvia and Bobby John BUST through the door from the dance club, riding high.

BOBBY JOHN

That was -- wow! I get it now. Damn, that music gets right up in ya, don't it?

He slaps his hands together and does a spin move.

BOBBY JOHN (cont'd)

Woooo!

He grabs Sylvia and twirls her around.

BOBBY JOHN (cont'd)

I could dance my life away! We're gonna win that dance show of yours, mark my words.

They playfully bound around the alley like ballroom dancers on speed.

SYLVIA

Stay humble my guy. You still got a lot to learn.

Bobby John leans in to kiss her, but they are interrupted by a boisterous group that includes Reggie and Randolph, spilling out of the club. Reggie holds a glance on Bobby John.

SYLVIA (cont'd)

Her name's Reggie. You want to fuck her don't you?

BOBBY JOHN

Hell, what'd you say?

SYLVIA

Relax, I'm kidding, but I saw how you two were dancing.

BOBBY JOHN

I was just feeling the music and selling the moves, just like you taught me. And just like you and that Randolph guy.

SYLVIA

Oh you needn't worry about him. As for Reggie, I can't blame you. She's a fox. Thought about her a few times myself.

Sylvia smiles and waves at Reggie.

SYLVIA (cont'd)

She's a good little Christian girl though. What a waste.

BOBBY JOHN

She don't move like no good girl.

Sylvia pushes him up against the wall and kisses him passionately as if to proclaim, "*he's all mine.*"

Reggie locks in on them as she walks away.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Reggie, stoned face. After a long beat, she takes a deep breath, closes her eyes, opens them.

REGGIE

What's before me right now is perfection.

She smiles wide.

Five young Black GIRLS in tutus bound and twirl in unison. White bed sheets hang from a clothesline behind them and flow in the breeze as if part of the performance.

Reggie walks between the dancers with inspecting eyes and soaks in every move.

REGGIE (cont'd)
 Backs straight, eyes forward,
 confidence... very nice ladies, very
 nice.

Reggie CLAPS twice. Instantly they halt and curtsy.

REGGIE (cont'd)
 That'll be it for today. I think you
 should all feel proud of your
 progress. I know I am. Good work.

Reggie smiles and waves as the girls scamper off to their
 waiting mothers.

Reggie starts toward the backdoor of her ramshackle house,
 but stops when something catches her eye --

Two Black MEN, face to face. One man's back is to Reggie,
 the other is smiling and playing with the shirt of his
 partner.

Reggie approaches.

The smiling man straightens up and turns serious.

REGGIE (cont'd)
 Randolph.

The smiling man quickly shuffles off. The other turns
 around; it's Randolph.

RANDOLPH
 What're you doing Reggie? Why you
 interrupting me like that?

REGGIE
 Because you're stupid to be doing
 things like that out here. These
 windows are the eyes of the
 neighborhood.

RANDOLPH
 Quit being paranoid would you.

Randolph starts away.

REGGIE
 Wish I didn't have to be.

RANDOLPH
 I am who I am.

REGGIE

And I love you for that. You're my big brother -- I don't want you gettin' hurt again.

Reggie follows him to the back door and stops him.

REGGIE (cont'd)

Listen to me. Just be careful. Hate lurks around every corner.

RANDOLPH

And beauty lurks in every soul. Even the darkest ones have light.

He pats her face and heads inside. He always knows how to calm her. She smiles and follows.

INT. REGGIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

An older Black woman, BIBI (60s), strong statured, fixes lunch.

As he passes by, Randolph gives her a quick kiss on the cheek.

BIBI

Regina Bobeena, your girls are looking good out there.

REGGIE

Thanks Bibi. They've been working hard.

BIBI

So have you. Might want to think about charging a little something? We could use it.

REGGIE

I --

BIBI

Nothing wrong with a little charity at all, but you're good at what you do. Can't give that away forever.

REGGIE

Maybe someday. For now, I just enjoy paying it forward.

Bibi, smiles with pride.

BIBI

With a heart the size of the moon,
girl you're bound to light the world.

Reggie smiles. Hangs on those words.

INT. VFW HALL - RECEPTION ROOM - DAY

Smoke-filled room. More people gathered at tables than dancing. A makeshift banner hangs on the wall. It reads: "Congrats Carol and Pete, Happily Ever After."

Bobby John and Sylvia are at a table with TJ and a raucous GROUP of 20 somethings. All adorned in their Sunday best.

TJ

So I'm in the lake and I really have to, you know, go. And I say, fuck it and I take a shit right there.

MALE GUEST

In the damn lake man? The hell is wrong in your head?

TJ

I was 12 dumb ass.

MALE GUEST 2

12?! 12 is too old to be shitting in a lake!

TJ

Anyway, I shit and I'm thinkin', I'll just swim off before anyone sees a thing because it'll sink, right?

TJ looks around emphatically for agreement. No takers.

TJ (cont'd)

But no. It floated. And then --
(leaning in for
emphasis)
-- it *chased* me!

Sylvia blurts out a laugh and then that snort. With that, Bobby John loses it too. While they laugh uncontrollably, he soaks her in.

TJ (cont'd)

The more I tried to swim away, the faster it came at me. Swear to God.
(MORE)

TJ (cont'd)

It was caught in its own little rip current. So now I'm freakin' out. Like splashin' frantically, creating all kinds of a fuss. Even screeching a little. And don't you know it, the goddamn lifeguard, gorgeous girl too, jumps down from her chair and just hightails it out to me. Let me tell you, she had the biggest titties and they were knocking all around. Just a beautiful sight really.

The harder Sylvia laughs, the more drawn in is Bobby John.

TJ (cont'd)

Again, I am flailing all around and there's no way for her to tell what's really going on --

SYLVIA

(barely able to get
the words out)

That you're being attacked by your own shit.

TJ

Exactly! In all the madness, she scoops me around my chest and pulls me toward the shore with some super human strength, cuz we were moving real fast and I'm feeling good because I know the shit can't keep that kind of pace.

The whole table is in hysterics, but TJ keeps going, serious and sincere.

TJ (cont'd)

So we get to the beach and she lays me down and everyone comes rushing over. Must have been 40 people, and dammit, I knew 'em all. They're all looking down on me to see if I'm alright, then out of nowhere, a woman screams out, "oh no, oh no!" Just like that, the whole crowd goes nuts, screaming, gasping. Then laughter. They all lose it. People pointing at me. There, on my shorts was a giant shit log.

Everyone at the table groans in disgust, but Sylvia struggles to breathe through her laughter.

Bobby John soaks Sylvia in until something catches his eye and his joy fades.

A short distance away, his parents, worn and losing at life, search for their seat assignments. His mother has a faded bruise on her cheek.

SYLVIA
What's the matter?

BOBBY JOHN
Just come with me for a minute.

Bobby John stands and guides Sylvia up by the arm.

TJ
Where you goin'? I ain't even got to the best part.

SYLVIA
There's more?

BOBBY JOHN
(distracted;
dismissive)
Turns out, the shit was a different color. It wasn't even his.

Sylvia grimaces. Everyone at the table wretches.

Bobby John pulls Sylvia away.

SYLVIA
What's your deal?

Bobby John motions over to his parents.

BOBBY JOHN
Them.
(gestures to his
parents)
I wasn't thinking they'd show up.
Guess my dad must have found out it's
an open bar.

SYLVIA
What's the big deal? Let's go over,
say hello and get back to enjoying
ourselves.

BOBBY JOHN
And what good comes from that?

SYLVIA

Oh stop. You're being dramatic. Your mom and I always got along just fine and you're dad ain't gonna have nothin' to say to me. Never does.

Sylvia starts toward his parents. Bobby John abruptly grabs her arm and pulls her back.

BOBBY JOHN

It's been a long while since you've seen them. He's worse, if you can believe it. Lost another job, and he's gone off the deep end.

Sylvia is startled by the intensity in his eyes.

SYLVIA

Geez. Okay then.

Bobby John lets her arm go.

BOBBY JOHN

I'm sorry. Just trust me.

Sylvia reads into his mood and backs down. Then --

An irresistible upbeat song comes on.

SYLVIA

Hey, this is a great song. Come on.

Bobby John shakes off the concern and follows her to the dance floor.

INT. VFW HALL - RECEPTION ROOM - DANCE FLOOR - LATER

Music THUMPS through the room. Bobby John and Sylvia have their groove on. His moves are sharp and on point; a crowd of onlookers enjoy the show.

Bobby John pulls Sylvia close. They stare deeply into each others eyes as they prowl around the dance floor.

INT. VFW HALL - RECEPTION ROOM - DANCE FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Uncle Mac dances playfully with two small GIRLS. Mac glances over and locks onto Bobby John for a beat -- studies his interactions with Sylvia.

INT. VFW HALL - RECEPTION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Bobby John's parents sit at their table. His old man, a few empties before him, takes a healthy swig from a beer bottle.

MARY

Slow up. We ain't been here too long
and look what you've done.

He stares out at the dancers with disdain.

MARY (cont'd)

You hear me?

OLD MAN

You complain we never do nothin'.
Here we are doing somethin' and you
complain about that too.

(beat)

Look at your son out there, looking
darn like a fool.

MARY

He's dancin'. He's good at it.

OLD MAN

Practically sticking it to that girl
of his is what he's doin'.

MARY

Mind your business.

OLD MAN

In my day they'd call a girl like
that a trollop.

He holds his glare on Sylvia.

INT. VFW HALL - RECEPTION ROOM - DANCE FLOOR - LATER

Bobby John and Sylvia still in high spirits, though a bit worn from all the dancing.

BOBBY JOHN

Time for a drink. What can I get you?

SYLVIA

Tab with lots of ice.

Bobby John kisses her and heads to the bar.

INT. VFW HALL - RECEPTION ROOM

Bobby John waits in a short line for the bar.

FEMALE (O.S.)

The force is strong with that one,
huh?

Bobby John turns to see KIM (20s), tough, edgy.

BOBBY JOHN

What's that supposed to mean?

KIM

Just has a lot going on is all.
Where'd you find her? Another
Cooper's special?

BOBBY JOHN

She my ex. Jealousy don't look good
on you.

KIM

But this dress does, right?

Bobby John glances down at Kim's breasts nearly bursting out
of her dress.

Kim gets closer to him.

KIM (cont'd)

Would look even better on the floor
of your room.

She grabs his tie and adjusts it.

INT. VFW HALL - RECEPTION ROOM - DANCE FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Sylvia, dances freely and glances over and sees Bobby John
too close to Kim. Her expression sours.

INT. VFW HALL - RECEPTION ROOM - DANCE FLOOR

Bobby John, holds two drinks, careful not to spill as he
approaches the dance floor. He scans for Sylvia, but he
can't locate her.

He leans to a DANCER.

BOBBY JOHN

Hey, you see Sylvia?

DANCER

She took off man. Looked pissed.
What'd you do this time?

Bobby John, concerned, places his drinks on a nearby table and bolts for the door.

In the distance, Kim watches Bobby John run off and grins. Mission accomplished.

INT. VFW HALL - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Bobby John, harried, enters the lobby and looks around. Just a few people mill about.

He stands dejected.

Suddenly --

SYLVIA (O.S.)

Hey, hey. Stop it! Knock it off!

Bobby John dashes to the coat room a short distance away.

INT. VFW HALL - COAT ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sylvia, disheveled, unnerved, stands a short distance from Bobby John's father. He's drunk, disconnected from the moment.

BOBBY JOHN

What's going on?

Bobby John rushes over to Sylvia; scans her for any harm.

SYLVIA

It's fine. It's --

BOBBY JOHN

What happened? Talk to me.

Bobby John glances at his father and then back to Sylvia.

BOBBY JOHN (cont'd)

Did he do something to you?

Sylvia, frightened, looks at his father with a hint of pity.

SYLVIA

He tried.

Bobby's John's father grumbles something incoherent and starts to shuffle off.

BOBBY JOHN
You no good asshole!

Bobby John grabs his father by the arms, SLAMS him into a wall and then throws him to the floor like a rag doll.

OLD MAN
What the fuck?

Bobby John leans down and punches his father in the face -- his nose explodes.

Sylvia tries to pull Bobby John away, but she's over matched.

SYLVIA
Stop! Stop!

BOBBY JOHN
How dare you touch her!

A few MEN burst in and pull Bobby John away from his father.

His mother pushes past the crowd and straight to the father, without hesitation.

MARY
What did you do Bobby John?!

BOBBY JOHN
No! You ask HIM what HE did! And for once, ask him why he did it! He's a goddamn monster. You know this!

Mary ignores Bobby John and caters to the father.

BOBBY JOHN (cont'd)
Look at you, treating him like the victim like you do. The victim ma, is you! The victim is me! The victim is Sylvia! He is the villain and all you've ever done is enable him!

MARY
HE is your father! HE provides for us! HE deserves your respect!

Bobby John looks around the room at the stunned, small crowd of onlookers.

BOBBY JOHN
 Can you believe this shit? Can you
 FUCKING believe this shit?

He gets no support.

BOBBY JOHN (cont'd)
 I'm outta here. To hell with this!

Sylvia reaches to calm him, but Bobby John storms away. She gives chase.

EXT. COOPER'S BAR - DAY

A despondent Bobby John in his now disheveled dress clothes from the wedding, sits behind the building on a small loading dock staring out at the setting sun.

REGGIE (O.S.)
 All dressed up with nowhere to go,
 huh?

Startled, Bobby John quickly turns around.

Reggie stands before him, ear to ear grin.

Bobby John straightens up and tries to tidy himself.

BOBBY JOHN
 Where'd you come from? Nearly scared
 me half to death.

REGGIE
 Stepped out of the kitchen back there
 to take the trash out. Saw you
 sitting here. 'Fore I knew it was
 you, you nearly scared me half to
 death.

He smiles.

BOBBY JOHN
 Reggie, right? I'm --

REGGIE
 Bobby John.

BOBBY JOHN
 Yeah.
 (beat)
 So, you working? Gotta get back?

REGGIE
Just got off.

BOBBY JOHN
Cool.

He nods nervously, searching for words.

BOBBY JOHN (cont'd)
Oh hey, can I buy you a drink? Unless
you have to be somewhere, then that's
cool too. I don't want to keep ya.

REGGIE
Thanks, but I don't drink.

Dejected, he nods and turns away.

REGGIE (cont'd)
Does that mean we can't talk?

Bobby John perks back up and turns to her again.

BOBBY JOHN
I'm sorry. Not sure why I --

Reggie sits next to him, both a little hesitant with how
close they are to each other.

REGGIE
What's with the suit?

BOBBY JOHN
Friend's wedding. I really hate
dressing up like this.

REGGIE
Why? You look... alright.

Bobby John blushes.

REGGIE (cont'd)
Where's Sylvia? She was your date,
right? Was there a dust up or
something?

BOBBY JOHN
What makes you say that?

REGGIE
You two have a history and this is a
small town. People talk.

BOBBY JOHN

(resigning)

There was a dust up. My father -- I'm here to forget about that though.

REGGIE

He's the one you don't want to be like, right?

BOBBY JOHN

How do you know that?

REGGIE

You said it yourself some nights back at the bar before you ran out of here on Sylvia. And again, this is a small town. People --

BOBBY JOHN

I know, people talk.

(beat)

Why don't you tell me about yourself?

REGGIE

What do you want to know?

BOBBY JOHN

(grins)

I'll take whatever you want to give me.

Reggie's stirred. She smiles and her eyes twinkle.

REGGIE

I'll leave out the dance stuff. Suppose you know that much at least.

BOBBY JOHN

The way you move, I'm sure there's a whole lot more to that story, but how about you tell me where you're from?

REGGIE

Now, Crandall. Before that, I was living in Shreveport. Before that, Albeline. Before that, Pine Bluff, Arkansas. Before that, it was either Lawton or Norman, Oklahoma.

(beat)

Some places just aren't worth remembering, but I always blame the people for that.

BOBBY JOHN
Seems real hard to find good ones
these days.

REGGIE
And what makes a good one?

BOBBY JOHN
Purity.

REGGIE
Heck, you answered that quick.

BOBBY JOHN
Given it a lot of thought. Think
about it. Nothing bad comes from a
pure heart.
(beat)
Ever.

Reggie is warmed by that statement. She's lost in Bobby John
for a long moment.

BOBBY JOHN (cont'd)
How'd you end up 'round here though?

REGGIE
Some shit, that's how.

BOBBY JOHN
We all got some shit.

REGGIE
Few of us got more than some. I'll
spare you the finer details, but
years ago my dad got beat to death
over the color of his skin. Had no
life insurance, we lost our shack of
a house, my mom eventually worked
herself so hard trying to support us,
she cracked and ran off. My
grandmother, we call her Bibi, took
us in, we moved around, and now we're
here.

Bobby John, stung, rattled.

BOBBY JOHN
God. I, I don't --

SYLVIA (O.S.)
Hey hey, baby boy.

Sylvia marches over, eager, confident.

SYLVIA

It's ten past 6. I thought you were going to meet me round the front?

(to Reggie)

Hey girl. He bothering you? He's usually only tolerable in small doses.

Sylvia kisses him on the cheek.

Reggie sells a smile.

REGGIE

Nah. I was just getting off my shift and said a quick hello. He's alright.

"Alright." There's that word again. Bobby John forces a grin through the welling of empathy for Reggie.

Reggie gets up and touches Sylvia on the arm.

REGGIE (cont'd)

See you at the club, hey?

Reggie walks off.

REGGIE (O.S.)

You too Bobby John.

Bobby John steals a quick glance while she slinks off.

INT. SYLVIA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Bobby John and Sylvia sit at the kitchen table. Sylvia watches adoringly as he fills his face with pie.

BOBBY JOHN

(voice low)

I know you told me I don't have to mention it again, but that girl at the wedding is nothing to worry about. Just a --

SYLVIA

I know. You got the case of the lonelies one night when we were apart. It's okay. Just grossed me out is all.

(MORE)

SYLVIA (cont'd)

(beat)

Feel like you should be talking about your dad and not that girl though.

BOBBY JOHN

(with conviction)

He had it coming and it was long overdue. That's all there is to that.

Sylvia studies him and awaits an emotional response that doesn't come.

MRS. AVERY (O.S.)

Look what the cat dragged back in. Seems you're enjoying the pie.

Mrs. Avery breezes in and starts tidying up, paying no real mind to Sylvia or Bobby John.

MRS. AVERY

Glad to see it won't go to waste.

She grabs Sylvia by the waist, an obvious dig.

SYLVIA

Stop it mamma. I don't even like pie. 'Sides, I am always watching my figure.

BOBBY JOHN

I'm always watching her figure too, so...

He looks up and offers a devilish grin.

Sylvia blushes.

Mrs. Avery notices with a sharp stare. Asserting her dominance, she clears Bobby John's plate mid-bite.

MRS. AVERY

Anyway, it's getting late. Time to turn in. Sylvia, off to your room. Bobby, the couch is all made up for you.

BOBBY JOHN

Thanks Mrs. Avery for letting me stay the night. Pie was delicious too.

SYLVIA

All these years and you still can't get his name straight?

MRS. AVERY

Not like he's been the only one
you've brought around.

Bobby John, chagrined.

MRS. AVERY (cont'd)

Excuse me if I can't keep all their
names straight. Besides, he knows I'm
talking to him. Don't know what the
point is of two names anyway, unless
you're gonna assassinate a President.

SYLVIA

Mamma, really?

MRS. AVERY

Oh I'm kidding. You got no sense of
humor anymore.

Sylvia catches onto Bobby John's sullied mood.

INT. SYLVIA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The room is in darkness, save for the moonlight sneaking in
through the blinds.

Bobby John sleeps soundly on the couch.

SYLVIA (O.S.)

(singing softly)

"When I was a young girl well, I had
me a cowboy. He weren't much to look
at, just a free rambling man.
But that was a long time and no
matter how I try, those years just
flow by like a broken down dam."

Bobby John's eyes flutter open. Sylvia sits on the floor
beside him.

BOBBY JOHN

Don't stop.

SYLVIA

"Make me an angel that flies from
Montgomery. Make me a poster of an
old rodeo. Just give me one thing
that I can hold on to. To believe in
this living is just a hard way to
go."

BOBBY JOHN
That's beautiful. What was that?

SYLVIA
Don't even.

BOBBY JOHN
What?

SYLVIA
Bonnie Raitt. Gosh.

BOBBY JOHN
You know if it ain't Rock n' Roll or
Country, I probably never heard it.

SYLVIA
You have so much to learn. Come on,
come with me.

BOBBY JOHN
Where? Ain't it late?

SYLVIA
The night is young.

INT. SYLVIA'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - LATER

The hallway is empty and dark. WHISPERED GIGGLES invade the
silence.

A short distance away, another door opens and out steps Mrs.
Avery. Curiously, she follows the giggles to a closed door
with an orange glow sneaking out from underneath. She leans
in, listens intently.

SYLVIA (O.S.)
(whispering, excited)
It's good right? Tell me how it makes
you feel.

BOBBY JOHN (O.S.)
(whispering)
My heart is racing. Can't believe
what I've been missing.

Angered, Mrs. Avery pushes the door open with gusto. Sylvia
and Bobby John, startled, embarrassed, sit on the floor
sharing headphones. Albums spread out before them.

MRS. AVERY
I told you --

SYLVIA
We're listing to music is all.

MRS. AVERY
That's how it starts.

Bobby John leaps to his feet.

BOBBY JOHN
I'm sorry Mrs. Avery, really we
didn't --

MRS. AVERY
Save it. Get your stuff and get out.
I continue to trust you against my
better judgment. I'm tired of playing
the fool.

Sylvia stands.

SYLVIA
Mamma, now wait. That's not fair. I
talked him into coming up here. Only
to listen to music, I swear.

MRS. AVERY
(to Bobby John)
What are you still doing here? I said
go. Sylvia see him out.

SYLVIA
Mamma! Where's he gonna go?

MRS. AVERY
As if I care. He can go back to his
rotten to the core daddy, he can
sleep in a gutter; it's all the same
to me as long as he leaves my house.

BOBBY JOHN
It's okay. She's right, Sylvia. She
told me to stay on the couch -- I
didn't do that. I didn't respect her
rules.

SYLVIA
Don't take her side!

Bobby John shakes his head and leaves the room.

Sylvia gives Mrs. Avery a dirty look and chases after him.

INT. SYLVIA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Bobby John emphatically stuffs his belongings into a duffle bag. He zips it up and starts to fold the sheet.

MRS. AVERY
Just leave that and head on out.

Bobby John grabs his jacket and makes for the front door.

Sylvia takes his arms and kisses him hard as a show of defiance to her mother.

Bobby John pulls back, uncomfortable. He exits to the porch. Sylvia stands in the doorway.

SYLVIA
Now where you gonna go at this hour?
You can't go home.

BOBBY JOHN
I'll figure it out. Time to get my
own place anyways.

SYLVIA
I'm sorry 'bout all tis. Goodbye --

Bobby John turns and corrects her with a raised eyebrow.

SYLVIA (cont'd)
I mean, see you later.

MRS. AVERY
Don't be so sure. Eric's due to call
back tomorrow. Time you two made
right with each other.

Bobby John, locks on Sylvia, curious.

BOBBY JOHN
Eric?

SYLVIA
It's nothing. Some guy I met in
Galveston. He calls sometimes, that's
all. I pay him no mind.

Bobby John studies her hard, looks for a tell --

SYLVIA (cont'd)
I swear.

Bobby John leans into her ear.

BOBBY JOHN

Don't do this to me again, Sylvia. I need to trust you.

SYLVIA

(emphatic)

I said I swear.

He nods somewhat reluctantly and gives a quick cross-eyed glance at Mrs. Avery, then gets into his car.

Bobby John attempts to start his car, but the engine doesn't turn over. Again he tries, but nothing.

Mrs. Avery, arms crossed, relishes in the awkwardness.

He sheepishly steps from the car, pops the hood, tinkers, and the engine roars. He offers a dismissive wave and speeds off.

INT. BOBBY JOHN'S CAR - PLANT PARKING LOT - DAY

Bobby John is reclined in the front seat of his car, asleep. A KNOCK is heard and he groggily turns to the window. TJ's face is pressed to the glass.

Bobby John rolls the window down.

TJ

What are you doin'? It's time for work man.

Bobby John steps from the car and hastily tucks in his shirt. Other workers look on as they make their way toward the plant.

BOBBY JOHN

Good thing you saw me. I could've slept all day.

TJ

Thought you would've spent the night with Sylvia.

Bobby John tries in vain to make his hair presentable by running his fingers through it.

BOBBY JOHN

That was the plan, but her mom had other ideas.

TJ

You telling me her mom moved on you?

BOBBY JOHN

God, is that all you think about? No, her mother tossed me out. Long story.

They walk toward the plant.

TJ

Yesterday was not your day, was it?

BOBBY JOHN

Not by a long shot, my man.

TJ

Well, before you go in there and start hearing stuff, you should know that Willie and Steve swear they had eyes on the coat room at the VFW and say your old man never lifted a finger toward Sylvia.

BOBBY JOHN

That right? And are people believing those two? Cause they ain't the most reputable guys around you know.

TJ

I don't know who's believing what. I'm just telling you what's going round.

BOBBY JOHN

And I'm telling you my father is a damn scoundrel and Sylvia got nothing to gain by making something like that up.

TJ

What she has to gain, depends on what she wants. Doesn't it?

The words land heavy on Bobby John.

MAN (O.S.)

Bobby John.

He turns. A POLICEMAN leans out the window of his cruiser.

POLICEMAN

Bud, gonna need you to come to the station, pronto.

BOBBY JOHN

For what?

POLICEMAN

For beating the shit --

(beat)

Allegedly beating the shit outta your old man yesterday.

BOBBY JOHN

The boys at the station throwing me a party?

POLICEMAN

Careful kid, don't implicate yourself. Just need to ask you some questions and we'll go from there. As for the party, we already threw one. Even saved you some cake.

BOBBY JOHN

Am I under arrest?

POLICEMAN

Not currently. Must say, we're all rooting for you, but we still have a job to do. Get in and let's get this over with.

Bobby John looks to TJ.

BOBBY JOHN

What should I do?

TJ leans closer to Bobby John.

TJ

(whispering)

Fucking run.

Bobby John pats TJ on the shoulder and gets into the back of the cruiser. He winks at TJ as the car drives off.

INT. POLICE STATION - JAIL CELL - DAY

Bobby John anxiously paces. A SLAMMING door stops him in his tracks. He steps to the bars and peers down the hall.

POLICEMAN #2 approaches.

BOBBY JOHN

You come to your senses?

POLICEMAN #2
 (unlocking the door)
 No one wanted to put you in here, but
 you left us no choice.

BOBBY JOHN
 Because I told the truth?

POLICEMAN #2
 (smiling)
 Exactly. And you did it without a
 lawyer present. I have to say, your
 dad is way better at getting arrested
 than you. Of course, he's had a lot
 more practice.

Policeman #2 opens the door and Bobby John leaves the cell.

INT. POLICE STATION - CONTINUOUS

Mac stands in the lobby, pissed.

POLICEMAN #2
 Here's your guy, Mac.

BOBBY JOHN
 Uncle Mac, I --

Mac sternly holds up a finger and Bobby John shuts up.

MAC
 I assure you, you'll never see him in
 here again. You have my word. Good
 day fellas.

Mac yanks Bobby John by the arm and leads him out.

The police snicker as Bobby John is emasculated.

EXT. POLICE STATION - PARKING LOT - DAY

Bobby John and Mac walk briskly toward Mac's truck.

BOBBY JOHN
 What're you so mad about? He's had it
 coming for years. Was only a matter
 of time before I --

MAC
 Before you what? Acted like him? Gave
 him a taste of his own medicine?
 (MORE)

MAC (cont'd)
God damn kid, I thought you were
better than that?

BOBBY JOHN
I am. I'm nothing like him.

MAC
No?

Mac motions around, displaying the police cars and the
station.

MAC (cont'd)
You know how many times I escorted
his sorry ass out of that very
station? Every damn time he'd be
rambling on about how he wasn't to
blame. It was always someone else's
fault.

Bobby John is stung.

BOBBY JOHN
What was I supposed to do? Let him
get away with going after my girl?
What if he wasn't drunk? He'd have
had the might to force himself on
her.

MAC
So you had to beat his ass in front
of everyone? You could have pushed
him to the side, dressed him down
with some choice words and made your
point that way. You screwed up and
you're damn lucky I have some buddies
in that building behind you. The same
building you swore you'd never end
up.

BOBBY JOHN
But I --

MAC
Now I have to go settle your old man
down and make sure he doesn't press
charges. That'll probably cost me a
few dollars too in case you're
wondering.

BOBBY JOHN

(softening)

I appreciate you looking after me. Always have. And I'll pay you back whatever you pay him.

MAC

Damn straight you will, with interest. And the other thing is, I need to submit your paperwork on the management trainee program by this weekend. You good on that?

Bobby John hesitates, uncomfortable.

MAC (cont'd)

Bobby John, this is a great opportunity for you. Don't let this get away.

BOBBY JOHN

It's a great opportunity for a lot of guys, but not me. I'm sorry. I just gotta do something different. Something for me.

MAC

This is for you.

BOBBY JOHN

Is it?

MAC

What does that mean?

BOBBY JOHN

I'm not dumping on anything you done for me or nothin', but you've been crafting me in your own image ever since I can remember.

MAC

I call it looking out for my nephew. I'm sorry if that's been a painful experience for you.

BOBBY JOHN

I don't know where I'd be without you, Uncle Mac. Likely no place good, but I gotta pursue something that makes me feel alive. You know? I'm not a go with the flow kinda guy.

(MORE)

BOBBY JOHN (cont'd)
I need some adventure. I need to
travel and experience stuff.

MAC
Is this you talking or that pretty
little thing you're going home to
tonight?

BOBBY JOHN
(hesitant)
It's me talking.

Mac sizes him up; bullshit meter is high.

MAC
Can't help but wonder if she's doing
the very thing you just accused me
of. What was it, crafting you in her
own image?

Bobby John is lost for words.

MAC (cont'd)
Alright then. You go do your thing.
If it doesn't work out, maybe try the
management program next time around.

Bobby John, contemplative for a long moment, gets into the
passenger side.

BOBBY JOHN
Uncle Mac, can I ask you something?

MAC
Anything.

BOBBY JOHN
Some years back, my father did time
for manslaughter. No one ever told me
the whole story and I never cared to
ask. What do you know about it?

MAC
Your dad lost his job - surprise,
surprise, right? The shop he worked
for replaced him with a colored guy.
As fate would have it, he and your
dad found themselves in the same bar
one night. I think you can guess what
happened from there.

Terror creeps across Bobby John's face.

BOBBY JOHN
You know the guy's name?

MAC
Reginald Adams. Had a young family.
Kids about your age too.

Bobby John, breathless. Looks like he could vomit.

INT. DANCE CLUB - DAY

Bobby John and Sylvia stand eye to eye. She's confident, he's uneasy. You can hear a pin drop until a catchy dance BEAT begins to play.

SYLVIA
You got this.

He takes a deep breath and then starts to cha cha, sloppily.

Sylvia stands in front of him and watches each movement with a trained eye.

SYLVIA (cont'd)
Don't overthink it. Hit the beats.

Bobby John moves slower than the music.

RANDOLPH (O.S.)
On the 2 not the 1.

Nearby, Randolph studies Bobby John's movements intently.

Bobby John tightens up and starts to move more cleanly.

SYLVIA
There you go baby. There you go.

Sylvia mimics the moves to lead him along. More fluid, Bobby John shifts his body about.

RANDOLPH
Good, but watch the right foot on the side step.

Bobby John, confident, looks up at Sylvia and smiles. He's getting it, until he glances across the room and sees Reggie. He immediately stumbles.

SYLVIA
It's okay, keep it going.

He nods and recovers his groove briefly until, Reggie again catches his eye. Another stumble.

Randolph studies Reggie. Her investment in Bobby John's dancing is curious to him.

Bobby John struggles to recover.

SYLVIA (cont'd)
Shake it off. Feel it.

Still, he falters.

SYLVIA (cont'd)
Right foot again.

Another misstep.

SYLVIA (cont'd)
Right foot. Right foot.

More stumbles.

SYLVIA (cont'd)
Stop, stop.

Bobby John exhales and hangs his head.

SYLVIA (cont'd)
Randolph, restart the music and get over here. Bobby John, you gotta watch close, okay? We only got two months before the competition.

Bobby John nods reluctantly and stands off to the side, next to Reggie. The music starts back up.

Randolph joins Sylvia and they dance in perfect unison with sharp, quick movements.

REGGIE
You alright? Look like you saw a ghost or something.

BOBBY JOHN
I'm okay.

Reggie sizes him up, looks for an answer.

Bobby John refuses to make eye contact and stays focused on the dance.

Bobby John and Reggie steal uneasy glances at each other.

RANDOLPH (O.S.)
You paying attention, Bobby John?

Bobby John confirms with a nod.

REGGIE
Keep your eyes on 'em if you wanna
learn. They're good.

Bobby John's eyes drift back to Reggie for a beat.

BOBBY JOHN
Lot better than me. Why doesn't
Randolph compete?

REGGIE
He says dancing for the sake of other
people's opinions is the wrong reason
to dance. Too bad 'cause he'd make a
name for himself if he'd only try.

BOBBY JOHN
And what do you say?

REGGIE
I say there's never a wrong reason to
dance.

Reggie smiles coyly. Bobby John takes it in.

Sylvia notices the way he's taking in Reggie, though she
continues to hold a firm grasp on Randolph as they nail
each step of the cha cha.

MONTAGE - BOBBY JOHN AND SYLVIA AT THE DANCE COMPETITION

-- Bobby John and Sylvia, dressed to the nines, execute the
cha cha beautifully on a ballroom floor, before a table of
judges and a small audience.

-- A sign reads "Austin Round 1: Ballroom Dance Across The
USA"

-- Wearing different clothes, and in a different ballroom,
Bobby John spins Sylvia, and her dress flows round like a
perfectly spun top.

-- A sign reads "Dallas Round 2: Ballroom Dance Across The
USA"

-- Bobby John and Sylvia, in street clothes, at Reggie's dance club, execute a disco routine. They are all smiles as they energetically move about.

-- Reggie watches with a hint of envy as Bobby John slow dances with Sylvia. Bobby John's yearning eyes veer over to Reggie.

-- A sign reads "Tulsa Round 3: Ballroom Dance Across The USA"

-- Bobby John slings Sylvia between his legs, she pops up, all smiles, and caresses his face, heat in their eyes.

END MONTAGE

EXT. SYLVIA'S HOUSE - FRONT YARD - NIGHT

Bobby John in his dance attire from the prior scene, opens the passenger side door of his car and out steps Sylvia, also in her dance attire.

SYLVIA

Promise me you'll always be this much of a gentleman.

BOBBY JOHN

I promise... not to become any *more* of a gentleman. No less either.

Sylvia shimmies up to him and provides a sensuous kiss.

BOBBY JOHN (cont'd)

As any good gentleman would do, may I walk you to the door?

SYLVIA

And risk losing your life before you even leave the porch?

BOBBY JOHN

There's no way she's still that mad at me. Besides, the fact that we are now Southwest Quarter-Finalists has to validate me in some way, right? I mean, we're practically big time.

SYLVIA

I assure you, she could give two shits.

BOBBY JOHN

Let me apologize then. Like good and serious. I'll sweet talk her. I'm good at that you know.

Sylvia smirks.

SYLVIA

You sure been getting lots of practice lately.

BOBBY JOHN

What do you mean by that?

SYLVIA

You mutter a few words and little Reggie melts into a puddle. God knows what you're saying to that poor girl.

She kisses him gently then twirls away playfully.

BOBBY JOHN

You think I'm after Reggie, huh?

Sylvia smiles and backs toward the house, playing coy.

SYLVIA

Are ya?

Bobby John shrinks.

SYLVIA (cont'd)

I'm screwing with you. Shut up and kiss me.

She pulls him in.

SYLVIA (cont'd)

Go on. Kiss me good and hard. Pretend I'm Reggie.

She winks.

Bobby John, pensive for a beat, then snaps to and kisses her passionately.

BOBBY JOHN

How was that?

Sylvia takes a deep breath.

SYLVIA
I ain't never letting you near that
bitch again, that's how it was.

Bobby John chuckles and heads back to his car.

BOBBY JOHN
Not goodbye.

SYLVIA
(smiling wide)
Not goodbye.

INT. SYLVIA'S HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Sylvia enters, all aglow, and makes her way to the kitchen.
She peers inside the fridge and grabs a can of Diet Pepsi.
She turns and before her is Mrs. Avery, clearly cross.

SYLVIA
(miffed)
What?

MRS. AVERY
I pray more than you know, that the
Lord will see you straight and --

SYLVIA
Oh stop with all that will you?

MRS. AVERY
And guide you to righteousness.

SYLVIA
You act like I'm a devil worshiper or
something, mamma. He's just a boy.
Lighten up.

MRS. AVERY
Just a boy. More like, just another
boy. Each worse than the one before.

SYLVIA
What about Eric? You liked him, but
you weren't gonna let him take your
little girl down to Galveston so you
blew that up on me, so here I am,
back under your thumb. Now you're all
eager to marry me off to him.

(MORE)

SYLVIA (cont'd)
 (she rolls her eyes)
 Anyway, what's so bad about Bobby John? After all these years, you still don't even know him. Never wanted to bother.

MRS. AVERY
 He's a wild one. Comes from bad stock too. Why give him a chance? And mind you, he's never proven me wrong.

SYLVIA
 He could be a God dang alter boy and you wouldn't like him. Why? Because nothing that matters to me, ever matters to you.

MRS. AVERY
 You don't get it do you? You're so full of potential, yet you never miss your chance to find some directionless tramp no matter where you wander off to.

SYLVIA
 Directionless? Bobby John has a job at the plant and a good one at that. In fact, they wanted to send him off to a management trainee program. They see potential in him, just like I do.

MRS. AVERY
 (impressed; softening)
 Management trainee program? That plant is owned by Harco Electric, one of the largest power suppliers in the country.

SYLVIA
 And they believe in him. Yet, he's not good enough for you?

MRS. AVERY
 Me? Forget me. Now I am concerned you're not --

Mrs. Avery catches herself.

Sylvia is stunned.

SYLVIA
 Go on, say it. Go on! *I'm* not good enough for *him*?

MRS. AVERY

It's just, I've been trying so darn hard to get you squared away. You don't listen to a single thing I say. You dropped out of school full time to do what? Dance? I mean --

SYLVIA

College doesn't define someone's worth mamma. You didn't go. Are you as disappointed in yourself as you are me?

MRS. AVERY

Yes.

Sylvia's eyes well.

MRS. AVERY (cont'd)

I let some guy --

SYLVIA

My father.

MRS. AVERY

I let him hold me back. I gave into his every whim and I mean every one. He got me pregnant too young just to control me. I had aspirations, but he convinced me my place was in the home, holding things down while he traveled the country selling car parts and doing God knows what to God knows who.

(beat)

Seems like you might be working Bobby John the same way your daddy worked me.

SYLVIA

Did you ever think, maybe the boy needs someone to steer the ship for him? What harm am I doing?

MRS. AVERY

He's too young to know where he wants to do in life. Right now he's listening to that little pecker of his more than he's listening to reason.

SYLVIA

Gross mamma.

MRS. AVERY

Look, is it so wrong of me to want you to be a successful, independent woman? To get an education and carve out a nice life for yourself?

SYLVIA

Independence is what I want, but on my terms. My way.

MRS. AVERY

Stop being so idealistic. That's what gets people hurt. And what about Bobby John? You want him your way too, don't you?

(beat)

Is he going to take that opportunity at the plant?

Sylvia lowers her eyes.

MRS. AVERY (cont'd)

Is he?

SYLVIA

Maybe some day. For now though, he and I are going to travel and --

MRS. AVERY

No Sylvia, don't do that to him. He has a good thing right there in front of him. You're wrong to steer him away from that.

SYLVIA

He wants something else for himself too. He hates this town. He and I are going to figure things out together.

MRS. AVERY

The world isn't just Sylvia Avery's playground. Sometimes you got to know when it's time to leave something or *someone* be. You're a smart girl. You got ambitions. You're gorgeous. You can have it all someday, but you have to start making some good choices for a change.

SYLVIA

I'm not leaving Bobby John for you or anybody. He is a good choice.

MRS. AVERY
But for him, you're not.

Sylvia stares her down hard, tears fall.

SYLVIA
That's lots of good advice from
someone who couldn't keep her own man
satisfied.

Mrs. Avery slaps Sylvia across the face.

Shocked, Sylvia storms out of the house.

INT. BOBBY JOHN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The studio apartment is rundown and barely furnished. Bobby John is sprawled out on a beat-up couch watching a baseball game on TV.

A KNOCK is heard. He jumps up and makes for the door.

BOBBY JOHN
Who is it?

SYLVIA
Tell me who you want it to be and
I'll play along.

Bobby John's face comes to life and he whips the door open. Sylvia stands before him, stunning in a short summer dress with a mischievous twinkle in her eye.

INT. BOBBY JOHN'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Bobby John and Sylvia kiss hungrily. She's the aggressor and forces him toward the bed. She pushes him on it.

BOBBY JOHN
I ain't complaining, but what got you
going?

Sylvia seductively lowers the straps of her dress.

SYLVIA
Going? Boy, I'm just getting started.

She pushes him onto his back and slithers over him. She gently bites his bottom lip to hold him in place while she undoes his jeans.

Bobby John closes his eyes, enjoying her hand which has now found its target.

Sylvia straddles him while she kisses him deeply. She reaches under her dress to put things where they go.

BOBBY JOHN
Hang on, I don't have any rubbers.

SYLVIA
I trust you.

Sylvia settles on him and suddenly, his eyes spring open.

SYLVIA (cont'd)
Do you trust me?

Past the point of no return, he barely musters a nod.

Sylvia begins to gently rock back and forth, blissful and in complete control.

INT. BOBBY JOHN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sylvia and Bobby John lay naked and spent in his bed. She's snug in the crook of his arm, unaware as Bobby John looks at her like he's reading a calculus book.

BOBBY JOHN
What is it you want? In life.

She turns to him, eager and playful.

SYLVIA
That's a deep question. How much time you giving me to answer it?

BOBBY JOHN
As long as you need I suppose.

SYLVIA
You know. I want to experience stuff. Not be all cooped up anywhere. Same things you want.

BOBBY JOHN
Yeah, *now*. What about 5, 10 years from now? Gotta settle down some day, right?

SYLVIA

Settle. What a scary word. That is, unless I'm settling for everything they said I couldn't have.

She grins.

Bobby John forces a smile and his attention uncomfortably drifts elsewhere.

INT. DANCE CLUB - DAY

Bobby John, alone in the club. Music plays quietly as he walks through his steps.

BOBBY JOHN

Lift, step, turn.

He moves with purpose, but freezes suddenly.

BOBBY JOHN (cont'd)

No, ball...no, heel.

He tries again, but stops in a huff.

BOBBY JOHN (cont'd)

Maybe it's back?

REGGIE (O.S.)

It's heel.

Startled, he turns to see Reggie.

BOBBY JOHN

(uneasy)

What are you doing here?

REGGIE

In my cousin's club?

BOBBY JOHN

I mean, I didn't -- I wasn't expecting you. Randolph was working with me, but went home to get a record. He told me to stay behind and practice.

REGGIE

Well, you need it.

BOBBY JOHN

Gee thanks.

REGGIE

Relax, I'm kidding. You're no fun.

BOBBY JOHN

No, you're right. I do need it. Lots of it. How can there possibly be this many steps? I can't remember none of this.

REGGIE

Tell a story.

BOBBY JOHN

A story?

REGGIE

Assign a story to each dance. The steps are like a narrative. If you write your own story, it's pretty hard to forget, especially if it means something to you.

BOBBY JOHN

I don't know, it sounds even more confusing.

REGGIE

Come here.

Bobby John is pensive.

BOBBY JOHN

Isn't it a bad idea to have too many teachers? All these conflicting ideas might mess me up even more.

REGGIE

I'm well aware of what they've been showing you. I'm not going to break anything.

After a moment, he nods.

Reggie goes to the record player and flips through some albums before one catches her eye -- the perfect one. She grins and places it on the player and **"We're All Alone"** by Rita Coolidge rings out.

Reggie steps toward him.

REGGIE (cont'd)

I gotta ask, what is it about me that makes you so uncomfortable?

BOBBY JOHN
 (unsettled)
 What are you talking about?

Reggie holds his hand and grasps his waist.

Bobby John bristles.

REGGIE
 You're making my point.
 (beat)
 Argentine Tango. Ready?

She leads him slowly.

REGGIE (cont'd)
 Go back, back, slide, pivot and
 twirl. If I created a story for it,
 it might be something like, my dad
 died, that's back. We lost our house.
 That's back. Then my mom left us.
 That's slide. We moved to a new town,
 pivot. We founded this dance
 community, and twirl.

BOBBY JOHN
 I'm sorry. More than you know.

His eyes start to glisten.

REGGIE
 I don't mean to be a downer, but you
 see my point? That's a story I could
 never forget, so how could I forget
 the moves I've attached to it?

Bobby John, slightly transfixed, nods.

REGGIE (cont'd)
 You want to try?

BOBBY JOHN
 I'm no good at this kind of thing --
 storytelling.

REGGIE
 Everyone has a story. Come on.
 Back...

Bobby John stares down at their feet. She lifts his chin
 with her finger until they are eye to eye - a burning
 intensity stirs.

REGGIE (cont'd)
 (with emphasis)
 Back.

BOBBY JOHN
 I grew up with a lot of... friction
 in my house.

He steps back, taking her with him.

REGGIE
 Good. Now back again.

BOBBY JOHN
 So, I acted out as a kid.

REGGIE
 Say it.

BOBBY JOHN
 Back.

Again, he steps and she follows.

BOBBY JOHN (cont'd)
 I can't shake the feeling I'm not
 good enough for anyone, including
 myself.

Reggie urges him with her eyes.

BOBBY JOHN (cont'd)
 Slide.

They slide to the side.

BOBBY JOHN (cont'd)
 Then I found a purpose.

He stares longingly at her.

BOBBY JOHN (cont'd)
 This --
 (glances around the
 room; his eyes land
 directly on hers)
 Pivot.

She smiles and they pivot.

Drawn in by Reggie, he hesitates.

REGGIE

Go on.

He stops, but they maintain their hold.

REGGIE (cont'd)

What's your twirl?

BOBBY JOHN

I --

They inch closer to each other.

BOBBY JOHN (cont'd)

I um --

Closer.

BOBBY JOHN (cont'd)

Reggie, what do you want?

REGGIE

What's that got to do with --

BOBBY JOHN

I need an answer.

REGGIE

Want with what?

BOBBY JOHN

In general. Now. The future...

REGGIE

Okay. Well, I want to love and to be loved. But it needs to be pure and unconditional. The kind of love that just is and needs no work. I want to give more than I take... but when I do take, it's only what I need. Just enough to feed my soul... nothing extra.

Closer still.

Lost in each other's eyes, they gracefully bound around the dance floor slowly and in perfect unison.

Their heart's desire nearly too much to ignore. Faces now inches apart.

BOBBY JOHN

I think you're my twirl.

A kiss is imminent, until --

Randolph enters, panicked. Their moment abruptly ends. Guiltily they pull apart.

Randolph keys in on them with a crooked glare, but only for an instant. He has bigger concerns.

Reggie turns off the music.

REGGIE

(on the defensive)

You're welcome Rand. I worked with him on his moves and it's finally clicking for him. Two weeks before the Regionals start. Don't know what you would do without me.

She now sees that Randolph is distracted, wrought with fear.

REGGIE (cont'd)

What's wrong?

RANDOLPH

Someone tore up our house, Reggie. It was a message for me.

REGGIE

What about Bibi? Is she alright?

RANDOLPH

She wasn't home, but she's scared.

Reggie hugs Randolph.

BOBBY JOHN

Why? Why would someone do that? Is it because you're Black?

Randolph and Reggie exchange knowing looks, neither sure how to respond.

REGGIE

You can trust him.

Bobby John feels validated, maybe for the first time in his life.

RANDOLPH

Black, yeah, but mostly it's because I'm bent.

Bobby John isn't catching on.

RANDOLPH (cont'd)
Queer, a fairy, a homo, a fag, fudge
packer. Those are just a few of the
names spray painted around our house.

BOBBY JOHN
No one should care about that sort of
thing, and man I'm sorry there are
people that do. Live and let live,
you know? Why is that so hard?

Reggie feels good about that response.

RANDOLPH
I gotta find somewhere else to go
Reg. If I stay in that house, I'm
putting you both in danger.

REGGIE
Then we can all move if we have to --

BOBBY JOHN
(abruptly)
Or you can stay with me. It ain't
much, but the couch feels like a damn
cloud.

RANDOLPH
Thanks, but I can't put you in the
middle of this.

BOBBY JOHN
Don't worry about me. Besides, it's
the least I can do. You took me in,
dedicated your time to me. Let me do
something to help.
(beat)
Please?

INT. BOBBY JOHN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Bobby John and Randolph stand in the middle of his
apartment. Randolph has a duffle bag slung over his
shoulder.

BOBBY JOHN
Toss your stuff wherever. Make
yourself at home. What's mine is
yours. Just wish I had more to offer.

RANDOLPH
Reggie was right about you. You're
one of the good ones.

BOBBY JOHN
She said that?
(under his breath)
Pure of heart.

RANDOLPH
She had you pegged from the
beginning. Always been a good judge
of character that one.

BOBBY JOHN
She's alright too.

INT. BOBBY JOHN'S APARTMENT - LATER

Bobby John pulls a couple beers from the fridge and hands
one off to Randolph. They sit on the couch.

RANDOLPH
I see how you look at her, you know.

BOBBY JOHN
(uneasy)
Yea, I know.

RANDOLPH
So what's holding you back? And don't
tell me it's Sylvia.

BOBBY JOHN
That's exactly it. I'm with Sylvia.
We're in love.

RANDOLPH
Nah. You're in love with the
familiarity of Sylvia. As much of a
wild card she is, you know what you
have in her. Heck, you barely have to
try with that one.

BOBBY JOHN
That's cra --

RANDOLPH
If you really loved her, then you'd
look at her the way you look at
Reggie.

BOBBY JOHN

What are you getting at, Randolph?
Ain't Sylvia a friend of yours?

RANDOLPH

As long as I have something to offer,
sure. Hey, I don't mean to dump on
Sylvia, but she's just always looking
for the next best thing.

Bobby John gets it.

RANDOLPH (cont'd)

You know better than any of us, the
girl is a gypsy, man. And we're all
just stops along the way. She's one
who feeds off the journey, not the
destination.

(beat)

Reggie though, she's home and the
porch light is on.

Bobby John, lost in thought.

INT. COOPER'S BAR - NIGHT

Bobby John is slouched at the bar, beer in hand, and the
weight of the world all over his face.

At a table near by, Sylvia laughs it up with a small group
of friends.

His eye catches Reggie sullenly breeze past.

Bobby John contemplative for a beat, becomes determined and
scampers off.

INT. COOPER'S BAR - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Bobby John shifts nervously until the swinging door to the
kitchen opens. Out steps Reggie.

BOBBY JOHN

Hey.

REGGIE

Hey.

Bobby John abruptly kisses her uneasily.

REGGIE (cont'd)
(grateful/bothered)
What the hell was that?

BOBBY JOHN
It's what you want ain't it?

REGGIE
What's that mean?

BOBBY JOHN
You been luring me in since I first
laid eyes on you.

REGGIE
Luring you in? You're mad.

BOBBY JOHN
Am I? You don't have any feelings for
me?

REGGIE
Stop it Bobby John. You've had too
much to drink.

BOBBY JOHN
Maybe, but not enough to not make
sense of things.

REGGIE
What do you want me to say exactly?
First off, you're dating my friend
and second, I'm worth too damn much
to play the part of the other woman.

She goes to storm off, but --

BOBBY JOHN
I have feelings for you.

He's slightly surprised he blurted that out. Reggie stares
him down for a solid moment.

REGGIE
Let's not do this here.

BOBBY JOHN
Thing is, we can't do nothing
nowhere.
(defeated)
The world won't let us.

Reggie stares him down hard. Emotions well, but she fights them off.

REGGIE

And there it is. It's that simple, huh? The world is backwards, and angry, and full of hate, and you're a goddamn coward cuz our colors don't match. I got it.

Off she goes again, but turns back.

REGGIE (cont'd)

You really are your father's son.

Bobby John's obilterated.

Sylvia dances a short distance away and slows up as she notices Reggie and Bobby John in a heated exchange.

Bobby John stews.

INT. COOPER'S BAR - CONTINUOUS

An upbeat song fills the room. Bobby John distractedly dodges his way through the crowded dance floor when he bumps into Sylvia.

SYLVIA

Where you been? You gonna join me out here tonight or what?

She grabs him by the collar, pulls him close and gyrates against him.

Bobby John swiftly grabs her and kisses her passionately, with a hint of anger behind it.

A short distance away, Reggie watches, hurt, disgusted.

BOBBY JOHN

Let's get out of here.

The song ends and a Charley Pride song plays.

SYLVIA

Oh, you gotta give me this one. It's an old favorite. Please?

Bobby John gives in and they start to slow dance.

BOBBY JOHN
I thought you hated Country?

SYLVIA
Mostly, but this one reminds me of simpler times.

BOBBY JOHN
I didn't know any times were simple for you.

SYLVIA
Before my dad left.

A BELLY LAUGH rings out and catches Bobby John's attention. It belongs to Fox, the burly biker from earlier who harassed Reggie. Bobby John, looks on with disdain.

SYLVIA (cont'd)
What's with you? Your energy is off lately.

He pays her no mind.

Sylvia glances over at Reggie, surely the culprit of his unrest.

SYLVIA (cont'd)
Best clear your head before Regionals.

BOBBY JOHN
I'll be fine.

FOX (O.S.)
This is shit. Put the good stuff back on!

Bobby John looks over at Fox, bothered.

SYLVIA
So you're not fine now? Something you want to tell me?

BOBBY JOHN
Can't we just dance?

SYLVIA
We dance a lot. Talk? Not so much when you think of it.

Annoyed and irritable, he stares off.

She puts her head on his shoulder either to comfort him or to end a conversation that's going south.

Nearby --

FOX

I ain't never liked Charley Pride anyways. He's a phony. Only reason he had a career is 'cause they thought a darkie could sell records to other darkies. Well Country ain't for them!

His FRIENDS laugh.

Bobby John perks up.

BOBBY JOHN

(adamant, wild-eyed)

Here's what's gonna happen. You can either run away with me, or stay here, but I got no time for anything in between, you hear?

SYLVIA

Run away? What are you --

Bobby John grabs a bottle of whiskey from a nearby table and whips it across the room and it CRASHES against the wall just above Fox's head. Glass and whiskey spray all over him and his friends.

Bobby John hightails it toward the door.

The MUSIC STOPS and all of the patrons watch in shock.

SYLVIA (cont'd)

Shit!

She runs after him.

Reggie looks on, terrified.

EXT. COOPER'S BAR - NIGHT

Bobby John and Sylvia burst through the doors and push past a group of people out front.

BOBBY JOHN

Hurry up!

Sylvia reaches for his outstretched hand and they sprint through the parking lot.

Fox and his crew spill outside ready to attack.

Bobby John and Sylvia make it to his car and get inside. Fox and his guys rapidly approach.

Bobby John turns the ignition.

BOBBY JOHN (cont'd)
Come on, come on!

The engine ROARS to life.

BOBBY JOHN (cont'd)
Yeah!

Suddenly it stalls.

BOBBY JOHN (cont'd)
Shit! Come on!

He tries again to start it, but it won't turn over.

SYLVIA
(terrified)
Let's go!

A rock SMASHES the driver side window and then a boot kicks the damaged glass out. Next, a fist comes through and CRACKS Bobby John square in the face and busts his eye open.

He's dragged out of the car.

Sylvia, fitful, screams as she's pulled from the car and tossed on the ground. She quickly gets to her feet but is held back by Fox's minions.

Fox and his goons kick and stomp a helpless Bobby John.

A small crowd watches in horror.

SYLVIA (cont'd)
Stop it! Someone help!

GOON #1
Why don't you help him?

The goon tosses Sylvia onto Bobby John and she takes an inadvertent kick to the side. She turtles in pain and rolls away, gripping her midsection. A couple of onlookers come to her aid.

FOX
Pick this punk up.

The goons pull Bobby John to his feet and hold him up, bloodied and battered. Fox steps to him.

FOX (cont'd)

I don't know who the fuck you think you are or what the fuck you are trying to pull, but the only reason I am not sticking a knife through your fucking heart right now is because you're my kinda guy.

Fox taps him on the cheek.

FOX (cont'd)

I could see this kid working for me someday. Am I right? He's exactly the wild animal this crew needs. A lawless little shit destined to fail at life just like his old man.

Fox delivers a devastating punch to his ribs. Bobby John crumbles, but the goons keep him upright.

Blue and red police lights are spotted in the distance.

FOX (cont'd)

Dump his ass.

The goons toss Bobby John head first into the side of his car. He lays motionless on the ground.

Fox walks briskly back toward Cooper's and his men follow.

FOX (cont'd)

Y'all better get short term memory loss real goddamn quick if you know what's good for you.

The nervous crowd starts to disperse.

Sylvia is guided to her feet and tries in vain to go to Bobby John.

SYLVIA

He needs help.

Too weak to resist, she's ushered back to Cooper's as the cops cars descend on the parking lot.

INT. HOSPITAL - BOBBY JOHN'S ROOM - DAY

Bobby John sleeps soundly. His face is swollen and bruised. Stitches over his eye. Arm in a sling.

Reggie sits by his side and gently strokes his face. After a few moments, his eyes open. Once they focus, he smiles.

REGGIE

How are you feeling? Better than you look, I hope?

Reggie lightly touches Bobby John's eye and studies him with concern.

INT. HOSPITAL - BOBBY JOHN'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

In the doorway, Mac. Unnoticed, he watches Reggie comfort Bobby John for a beat. He smiles.

MAC

Hey bud. Sorry to interrupt.

BOBBY JOHN

Uncle Mac. Hey. This is my, uh friend Reggie.

Reggie shifts uncomfortably -- "friend."

MAC

Hi Reggie. Glad to see he has a good, uh friend, to look after him. It's a tall order for sure.

Reggie forces a smile.

MAC (cont'd)

I'll come back later. You're in the middle of something here. But, I got you 3 weeks paid leave from the plant. The box I checked was mental illness. You know, given that your actions clearly indicate that you're clinically insane.

Reggie snickers. Mac winks at her.

Mac moves toward the door.

MAC (cont'd)

Carry on. I'll deal with you later Bobby John.

As Mac exits, he discretely gives Bobby John a thumbs up and motions at Reggie.

REGGIE

I hope you know how lucky you are.

BOBBY JOHN

Luck is subjective.

REGGIE

What were you trying to prove, Bobby John?

BOBBY JOHN

You called me a coward. I'm no coward. I need you to know that.

REGGIE

Oh Lord. I called you a coward and *that* was your response? Boy you are all kinds of mixed up.

BOBBY JOHN

Did you only come here to stick your finger in my chest? If so --

REGGIE

First off, I came here. Period. *I* cared enough to be here with you...

BOBBY JOHN

She'll come too. Sure she's pretty pissed at me.

REGGIE

Sylvia is not coming here for you.

BOBBY JOHN

What makes you say that?

REGGIE

Because you're no use to her like this.

BOBBY JOHN

You sound like your brother. Or maybe you put that gypsy shit in his head to begin with?

REGGIE

Look, I didn't come here to argue. It's just, everything's going sideways all at once. Rand, you, us.

BOBBY JOHN
Speaking of Randolph, I want him to
replace me as Sylvia's partner.

REGGIE
He'll never.

BOBBY JOHN
He has to. At the very least, it'll
get him away from the trouble that's
after him. You said it yourself, the
dance community are open minded folk.
They accept him the way he deserves.

REGGIE
You think Sylvia is going to be
alright with this?

BOBBY JOHN
She either dances with Randolph or
she doesn't dance at all.

REGGIE
Assuming she's feeling well enough.

BOBBY JOHN
Well enough?

REGGIE
You have spoken to her, right?

BOBBY JOHN
She's not taking my calls.

Reggie, troubled, apprehensive.

BOBBY JOHN (cont'd)
What is it?

EXT. SYLVIA'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY

Bobby John, bandage above his eye, looking like a prize
fighter, RAPS on the door hard and fast.

BOBBY JOHN
Sylvia, open the damn door. I know
you're home.

He POUNDS even louder.

BOBBY JOHN (cont'd)
You owe me a conversation.

INT. SYLVIA'S HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Sylvia sits with her back to the door, weeping.

SYLVIA

Please leave. I'm not ready to talk.

EXT. SYLVIA'S HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

BOBBY JOHN

You had a miscarriage?

The door opens slowly revealing Sylvia with a tear-streaked face.

BOBBY JOHN (cont'd)

I didn't even know you were pregnant.
Why didn't you tell me?

SYLVIA

I was going to. I just needed time to
process it first.

BOBBY JOHN

This is my fault. I put you in that
situation with that fucker, Fox.

SYLVIA

I was having some issues even before
that. I knew something was off.

Bobby John hugs her and she sobs into his shoulder.

SYLVIA (cont'd)

My mother nearly had my head over it.
Didn't blame you either. She put it
all on me.

BOBBY JOHN

It takes two.

SYLVIA

Suppose so, but --

BOBBY JOHN

I'm no good for you, Sylvia.

SYLVIA

Don't talk like that.

BOBBY JOHN

It's true. Sticking with me gets you nowhere. We're two wild eyed dreamers on a collision course with whatever's in our way. Or maybe we're on a collision course with each other.

(beat)

Hell, shouldn't one of us play the part of the grounded one?

Sylvia stares at him long and hard, searching for words that just won't come.

BOBBY JOHN (cont'd)

What? Say something.

SYLVIA

I so bad want to tell you how wrong you are. That we're meant to be. That we should bust out of this town and go find a fairy tail ending somehow, but --

He hugs her and holds her close.

SYLVIA (cont'd)

Damn, the first time you've ever been right and it had to be over something like this?

She forces a smile through her tears.

BOBBY JOHN

Nothing feels right anymore.

SYLVIA

Did it ever?

Bobby John, contemplates --

Sylvia kisses him.

BOBBY JOHN

So this is goodb --

SYLVIA

There's always tomorrow. Always a someday up ahead. Never forget that, okay?

He nods.

SYLVIA (cont'd)

Not goodbye.

INT. REGGIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Bobby John, noticeable scar above his eye, sits at the table, out of sorts. Randolph is by his side.

BIBI

You sure I can't fix you something to eat? We got plenty of stuff crowding up the fridge. You'd be doing me a favor in getting rid of some of it.

RANDOLPH

He's good Bibi. He look like a guy that eats much?

BIBI

And that's why I'm trying. Boy needs some home cooking. Pancakes. I'm gonna make pancakes. No one resists those.

BOBBY JOHN

Thank you Mrs. Adams. Suppose it has been a while since I've had something made with a little TLC.

Bibi smiles.

REGGIE (O.S.)

Bibi, I'm heading to the store. Let me --

Reggie enters and stops dead in her tracks when she sees Bobby John. The tension is palpable.

Bobby John stands.

BOBBY JOHN

I could walk you there, if you don't mind.

Reggie looks at Bibi and Randolph. Bibi encourages with her eyes and Randolph makes a get going motion with his head.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Bobby John and Reggie stroll down the sidewalk of a rundown, residential neighborhood. He's clearly uneasy.

REGGIE

No one's going to mess with you. You can ease up.

BOBBY JOHN

White folk aren't usually welcome in colored neighborhoods.

REGGIE

Colored neighborhoods only exist because of the racist assholes who don't want us in theirs.

Uncomfortable, Bobby John tries to change the subject --

BOBBY JOHN

Hard to believe that Randolph is actually excited for the dance competition this weekend, huh? Top three acts get to go on to Dallas next month --

REGGIE

Yeah.

BOBBY JOHN

I'm sorry for the way things are between us.

REGGIE

Me too.

BOBBY JOHN

(hesitant)

Sylvia and I are... over.

Reggie is slightly taken aback.

REGGIE

Saying it doesn't make it true.

Bobby John stops and gently takes her by the arm.

BOBBY JOHN

You're a special person Reg, and well, I don't know how to act around the good ones. You know?

REGGIE

Should be the same way you act with anyone. Give them back what they give you.

Bobby John nods. She's never wrong.

BOBBY JOHN

'Cept I can't, cuz you're right --

REGGIE

(bitterly)

It's okay. I learned long ago, some battles just aren't worth fighting. I just wonder what scares you more, my neighborhood or the racists who put us here?

BOBBY JOHN

Reggie, don't --

Reggie take a deep breath, resets. She continues walking.

REGGIE

Randolph said you're going to leave soon for the management program.

BOBBY JOHN

My mind's not made up. I know I should jump at it, but I just don't want to work at the plant my whole life making money for someone else. I want to do something for myself someday.

REGGIE

They'll teach you how to run a business. You can use that for anything you decide to do in life. Start your own thing some day if you want. Go, Bobby John. You're crazy not to.

Bobby John's lost in his thoughts.

REGGIE (cont'd)

Personally, I just think you're afraid of failure. Always prattling on about how you're not going to end up like your father or half the bums around here, but I haven't seen a damn thing that's shown me you're on a different path.

BOBBY JOHN

Wrong. I committed to that dance competition to get the hell out of here.

REGGIE
 Until you self-sabotaged with that
 stunt at Cooper's.

BOBBY JOHN
 Sabotage?

REGGIE
 It's why you want Sylvia so bad.
 She's going to be your excuse later
 in life when things don't go your
 way.

BOBBY JOHN
 What are you coming at me like this
 for?

Reggie stops and turns to him. Fire in her eyes.

REGGIE
 Because I care about you dammit.
 Because if I see you sitting 'round
 Cooper's 10 years from now telling
 your woulda, coulda, shoulda
 stories -- it'll break my heart.

Reggie starts to rush away before he can see her cry.

BOBBY JOHN
 Wait.

She stops. Back still to Bobby John.

BOBBY JOHN (cont'd)
 (wrought with fear)
 My old man, he --

A knowing glimmer in Reggie's eyes.

BOBBY JOHN (cont'd)
 He killed your dad.

Reggie turns around, tears fall.

REGGIE
 I know.

BOBBY JOHN
 How?

REGGIE
 Sylvia. Girl was desperate to mark
 her territory.

Overcome, Bobby John sits on the curb. Stares off in disbelief.

BOBBY JOHN
And Randall, Bibi?

REGGIE
They know too.

BOBBY JOHN
If you knew, why did you keep me around? Why were you all so good to me? Why didn't you -- should have spit in my face. You should have had me beat just the same.

Reggie sits next to him.

REGGIE
For what? The sins of your father are not yours to bear.

Bobby John stares blankly at Reggie, consumed by pain, but also wonderment - how can she be so forgiving?

BOBBY JOHN
I want you Reggie. I love you. But every time I look at you, I see what my father took away. I see the hate in the world. I see the cross looks we'll get. I see how hard it'll be for us.

He stands up and looks down at her.

BOBBY JOHN (cont'd)
How do you not see the same things?

REGGIE
I have a pure heart. And like you said, nothing bad comes from a pure heart.

Bobby John stares at her helplessly. He starts to back away.

BOBBY JOHN
I'm sorry, you're right. I am a coward.

He walks off.

Reggie weeps.

INT. PROFESSIONAL BUILDING - CLASSROOM - DAY

SUPER: Three months later

Bobby John, sits among 10 other students in a sterile classroom. Before them the TEACHER writes vigorously on the chalkboard.

Bobby John dutifully jots down some notes.

TEACHER

Inventory management at its core is vital to keeping your costs in check. Be it physical inventory, or people, if you don't know what you have, it's impossible to know what you'll need.

Bobby John leans to the STUDENT next to him.

BOBBY JOHN

If you accidentally stabbed me in the side of the neck with your pencil, I'd consider it a favor.

The student glances at Bobby John and then refocuses on the teacher. Bobby John dejectedly does the same.

TEACHER

You must know your supply chain from front to back. From your vendors to your --

A bell sounds.

TEACHER (cont'd)

Alright, see you all back here at 12:30 sharp.

The class gets up and shuffles out of the room.

INT. PROFESSIONAL BUILDING - CAFETERIA - DAY

Bobby John sits at a table with a few other students and picks at a sandwich. The conversation lags.

A WOMAN walks over and hands him a small slip of paper.

WOMAN

Your friend TJ called.

She promptly walks off.

INSERT PAPER:

Sylvia is moving. Don't know much else.

BACK TO SCENE

Bobby John leaps up and follows the woman.

INT. PROFESSIONAL BUILDING - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

BOBBY JOHN

Hey, excuse me. Can I use your phone
real quick?

WOMAN

Hey, no you can't. There's a payphone
in the lobby, but it's broke. You'll
have to use the one down the road a
bit. It's at the gas station.

BOBBY JOHN

That rain is coming down real hard.
Can't I use yours?

WOMAN

If I let you, then I have to let
everyone don't I?

She walks away briskly.

EXT. PROFESSIONAL BUILDING - DAY

Bobby John exits the front door into the pouring rain. He
turns his attention down the road to a Sunoco sign. He runs
toward it like his life depends on it.

EXT. SUNOCO GAS STATION - PHONE BOOTH - DAY

Soaked and panicked, Bobby John arrives at the phone booth
and ducks inside. Just as we saw him in the opening scene,
he nervously jams his hand in the pocket of his tight jeans.

He extracts coins and frantically pushes them through the
coin slot.

Manically, he pokes the numbers on the phone.

BOBBY JOHN

Come on, come on...

WOMAN (V.O.)

Hello?

BOBBY JOHN

Mrs. Avery. Hi, it's Bobby John --

EXT. SYLVIA'S HOUSE - TRUCK - DAY - (BACK TO PRESENT DAY)

Bobby John sits in his truck and stares across the street at Sylvia's house. It looks just as he remembered it.

He takes a deep breath, grabs his clipboard, a small work bag and exits the truck.

EXT. SYLVIA'S HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Bobby John stands before the door. He hesitates and rings the bell.

The door opens revealing a well-dressed woman. Her name tag says SELENA RIVERA.

BOBBY JOHN

Hi, I'm Bobby John Walker with BJW Home Inspections. Sorry, I know I'm a little early. Hope that's alright?

SELENA

I'm Selena, the seller's agent. Do you mind starting on the outside? The seller is still inside and protocol says she can't be here during the inspection.

BOBBY JOHN

(nervous)

Don't have to tell me twice. Been at this a while. I'll get to it out here. Just come get me when she leaves.

Selena smiles and shuts the door.

Bobby John, having dodged a bullet, exhales.

EXT. SYLVIA'S HOUSE - DAY

Bobby John lurks uneasily at the side of the house, close to the front. His ear trained on nearby voices.

SELENA (O.S.)
We'll get back to you with the
inspection report in a few days.
House seems to be in great shape, so
I don't expect him to find any major
surprises.

WOMAN (O.S.)
Great. Talk soon then.

A car door SHUTS and the engine ROARS away.

SELENA (O.S.)
Bobby John? You back there.

He comes out to the front.

SELENA
Oh there you are. Feel free to come
in when you're ready.

INT. SYLVIA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Bobby John takes inventory of the room. A trip down memory
lane.

INT. SYLVIA'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY

Bobby John walks slowly down the hallway; examines every
inch. He freezes upon the doorway to Sylvia's room.

INT. SYLVIA'S HOUSE - SYLVIA'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Bobby John enters the room. It's empty, save for a bed and a
nightstand.

He stands there and takes it in.

INT. SYLVIA'S HOUSE - BASEMENT - DAY

Bobby John has a long metal poker and he stabs at the wooden
floor beams with it, looking for soft spots.

He then shines his flashlight at the beams and looks
closely. He scribbles on his clipboard.

He spies a cardboard box, with pictures frames pokes out.

Bobby John approaches the box and fingers through some of the frames until he extracts one of him and Sylvia from their senior prom. He grins.

INT. SYLVIA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Bobby John comes up from the basement. Selena is sitting at the table reading a book.

BOBBY JOHN

All set.

SELENA

Everything good?

BOBBY JOHN

I'd say so. I'll get my report to you by Friday. Few minor things, but --

The front door opens.

WOMAN (O.S.)

Made it all the way to the restaurant and realized I forgot my freakin' purse.

SYLVIA (40s), confident, well-dressed, enters the kitchen, a ball of energy. She stops dead in her tracks upon sight of Bobby John.

BOBBY JOHN

Twenty something years ago I stood out on that porch and I'd have given anything for you to let me in. Now here I am and someone actually paid me to be here. Can you believe it?

Sylvia stares at him emotionless for a beat and then laughs and lets out that snort. Just like the old days, it draws him in. He smiles wide.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Bobby John and Sylvia sit at a table. She looks at him adoringly.

SYLVIA

This is surreal. I accepted long ago that I might never see you again.

BOBBY JOHN

Funny, for all my insisting about wanting to get out of Tyler, I only moved a few towns over. With some help, I eventually realized I was never running from Tyler, I was just running from myself.

Sylvia seems to pay his personal growth no mind.

SYLVIA

After the dance competition ended and I shook the bitterness of a second place finish, I left home and lived with my aunt for a bit in Indiana. I eventually found my way to Chicago. The big city was calling and as it turns out, it suits me well. Excitement around every corner, you know?

BOBBY JOHN

Finally got to spread your wings.

Sylvia smiles.

BOBBY JOHN (cont'd)

So, what did you find for yourself?

SYLVIA

Well, I pursued dancing for a while, then realized it wasn't going to pay my bills, so I acquiesced and decided to become a paralegal; boring, I know. But, if you can believe it, I'm starting school in the Fall to become an appellate attorney. Selling my mother's house is going to pay for it, so it's bittersweet.

BOBBY JOHN

No kidding? Good for you. You always had a knack for persuasion. You'll make a great lawyer.

Sylvia's eyes twinkle. She looks at his hand and see no ring.

SYLVIA

Gotta say, I'm a bit surprised you're not hitched. What dummy would let you get away, am I right?

She grins and runs her finger where his ring would be.

BOBBY JOHN

As you can tell, I put on just a little weight since you last saw me, and well, it's supposed to be bad luck to cut your band, so --

He pulls his hand away and extracts a chain from around his neck with a wedding ring on it.

Sylvia wistfully accepts the news with a forced smile.

BOBBY JOHN (cont'd)

She changed my whole outlook on how I saw myself and how I saw the world around me. We keep each other safe and sound. Keeps me on my toes too.

SYLVIA

I've been running from safe my whole life.

As the conversation nears a downturn, Bobby John attempts to switch gears.

BOBBY JOHN

Hey, I'm sorry about your mom. Actually, come to think of it, I shouldn't assume she passed.

SYLVIA

She did. Died a few months ago. I feel bad for not seeing her more often, but her and I were like oil and water. No matter what I did, she found fault with it.

BOBBY JOHN

Regardless, you knew she loved you like crazy. She was always trying to protect you. Heck, when I found out you were leaving home, I called and she refused to let me speak to you. She told me you were getting married and moving to Galveston. Figured you connected with that old boyfriend of yours.

SYLVIA

Married? Galveston? Damn, that woman was her own brand of crazy.

BOBBY JOHN

Yeah, I eventually learned she was lying, but hats off to that woman; she was committed to keeping us a part. Damn, I ended up driving all the way down there too so I could find you.

Sylvia stares at him longingly. Bobby John shifts uncomfortably.

SYLVIA

You drove all the way to Galveston for me? Weren't you up in Oklahoma for that training thing?

BOBBY JOHN

Yup. Would have saved me a trip if she'd only put you on the phone. Went all over town looking for you and you weren't even there.

SYLVIA

(seductively)

And what would you have said if you found me?

For a beat, he debates in his head how to best utter the word --

BOBBY JOHN

Goodbye.

Sylvia, crushed.

INT. BOBBY JOHN'S CAR - DAY - (FLASHBACK)

Younger Bobby John has his hands tight on the steering wheel, sharply focused.

REGGIE (V.O.)

If I see you sitting 'round Cooper's 10 years from now telling your woulda, coulda, shoulda stories -- it'll break my heart.

RANDOLPH (V.O.)

If you really loved her, then you'd look at her the way you look at Reggie.

REGGIE (V.O.)

The world is backwards, and angry,
and full of hate, and you're a
goddamn coward cuz our colors don't
match.

He speeds past a highway sign that reads, Now Leaving Galveston. He smiles, relieved.

INT. COOPER'S BAR - NIGHT

Cooper's is packed and BUZZES with live music and chatter.

Bobby John jolts through the front door with purpose and takes stock of the room.

BOUNCER

Bobby John, who let you in? You know you ain't supposed to be here.

BOBBY JOHN

This is exactly where I'm supposed to be.

Bobby John spots Reggie as she cuts through the crowd with a tray above her head. He makes a beeline for her, but struggles to squeeze past and dodge patrons on his way.

He loses sight of her. Frustrated, he eyes the BAND on stage and forces his way over to them.

INT. COOPER'S BAR - CONTINUOUS

Reggie is at the bar. Ricky, harried, speedily adds drinks to her tray. Suddenly, a VOICE ECHOES throughout.

BOBBY JOHN (O.S.)

Can I have everyone's attention please? Especially Reggie Adams.

Reggie freezes and stares out at the stage, but is unable to see it.

BOBBY JOHN

Where is she? Where's Reggie?

Reggie props herself up on the bottom rung of a bar stool and cranes her neck. She spots Bobby John and his face lights up.

BOBBY JOHN (cont'd)
There she is. So beautiful. My God I missed that smile.

RANDOM MALE (O.S.)
Get off the stage asshole!

BOBBY JOHN
Sorry, I gotta get this out first. Reggie, I haven't stopped thinking about you since the day we met.

The patrons are fixated on Bobby John and more so, Reggie's response. She's captivated and beams.

BOBBY JOHN (cont'd)
You're a blessing. You're good. You're all the things the world needs more of.

Reggie smiles and fights back happy tears.

BOBBY JOHN (cont'd)
Your mind is wise and thoughtful and focused on all the right things. Your personality is playful and compassionate, loyal, and encouraging. You're forgiving, and the kindest soul. And for all that, I trust you, I respect you, I am grateful for you, and I love you. With all I have, I love you and I have to spend one more minute without you in my life, I'll, I'll --

REGGIE
(yelling over the crowd)
I love you too!

The patrons cheer.

Reggie, emotional, heads for the stage. Everyone makes way and parts like the Red Sea.

Bobby John starts toward Reggie and receives the same courtesy from those around him.

The band begins playing a heartfelt song, fitting the moment.

Bobby John and Reggie have a clear path to each other and meet in a passionate embrace. She pulls back and touches his face.

REGGIE (cont'd)
What just happened?

BOBBY JOHN
Life is too short to live scared, and too precious to let the past consume the present.

REGGIE
What about Sylvia?

BOBBY JOHN
You were right, she was my excuse. But you, you're my reason.

She gives him a spirited kiss.

REGGIE
And school?

BOBBY JOHN
(assuredly)
Not for me.

REGGIE
Fair enough. And you do know, you could have just called me, right?

BOBBY JOHN
Then the whole town wouldn't know how I feel about you.

Reggie grins wide and kisses him with all she has.

The crowd claps and whoops it up.

INT. DANCE SCHOOL - DAY - (BACK TO PRESENT DAY)

Bobby John, in the lobby, watches as a class of young dancers are collected by their parents and file out. He nods and smiles at some of the parents. When the last dancer leaves, he makes his way into the dance studio.

INT. DANCE SCHOOL - STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

Alone in the empty studio, Bobby John looks around at the trophies and awards that decorate the room.

JASON (late teens), hipster type, mixed race, saunters in.

JASON

Dad, what are you doing here? I thought I was picking up mom?

BOBBY JOHN

And I thought you had a headache or some BS, so I came to pick her up.

JASON

I'm feeling better now.

BOBBY JOHN

Now that the work day is done?

Bobby John smirks.

BOBBY JOHN (cont'd)

Crap. Did you remember to pick up Uncle Mac from his doctor's appointment.

JASON

Yep. He's waiting for me in the car.

Bobby John pats Jason on the back and proudly soaks his boy in for a beat.

REGGIE (40s), enters from a backroom in a leotard, just as poised and graceful as always.

REGGIE

You guys gonna make me choose which one I want to ride home with? That's cruel.

JASON

I'm the better driver.

BOBBY JOHN

I have better facial hair.

Reggie smiles.

REGGIE

What are you doing here anyway? You know Jason picks me up on Wednesdays.

BOBBY JOHN

I wasn't sure I could rely on him today (he nudges Jason), so I came by. Annnnd maybe I was just in the mood to dance with my beautiful wife.

Reggie looks at him quizzically.

REGGIE

Is that so?

JASON

What about your cranky knee?

BOBBY JOHN

It's feeling good today.

REGGIE

And your tricky back?

BOBBY JOHN

It's feeling good today too.

Reggie and Jason exchange "something's up" glances.

BOBBY JOHN (cont'd)

(to Jason)

Why don't you hop on that piano real quick and give us a little something.

Jason smiles and positions himself at the piano.

JASON

Any requests?

BOBBY JOHN

Our song.

Jason starts to play "**We're All Alone.**" The same song they danced to together years before.

Reggie lights up. Bobby John grabs hold and they move through their motions rusty, albeit beautifully.

REGGIE

What's going on here?

BOBBY JOHN

I'll fill you in later, but for now let's do what we we're made to do together.

They continue around the room, lost in the moment just like they did all those years ago.

His eyes drift to a black and white mural sized photo on the wall. It's of Randolph dancing, close in the frame. His hand reaches to a female in the background. Her face is not in focus, but it's clearly Sylvia. Further in the background is a table of judges. The words on the wall read "Randolph's School of Dance."

BOBBY JOHN (cont'd)

You never think it's weird staring at her picture every day?

REGGIE

When I look at that picture, all I really see is Rand. In his element, carefree, alive and well. Exactly how I want to remember him. As for Sylvia, all we have we owe to her. Because of her, we met each other, my brother got discovered from the dance competition, made a name for himself on Broadway and was able to start this school. Now we are blessed to carry on his legacy and our mission.

BOBBY JOHN

Any kid who wants dance lessons, will have dance lessons. Pay what you can.

As the song comes to an end, he kisses her gently on the lips.

REGGIE

You still got it my man.

BOBBY JOHN

Got it and everything else I ever dreamed of.

Bobby John looks over at Jason and sees his Uncle MAC (70s) standing next to him. Mac winks to indicate Bobby John's done good.

Bobby John smiles and winks back.

FADE OUT.

The End