

SHE DANCES

Written by

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**AUTHOR'S NOTE:** THE FOLLOWING IS BASED ON A TRUE STORY.

FADE IN:

INT. PROM - NIGHT

A dimly lit crowd of high schoolers. They dance slowly to ABSOLUTE SILENCE, smiles plastered over their faces. The smiles vanish when they all catch a glimpse of

A GIRL IN A RED DRESS

stepping out of the shadows, approaching the center of the dance floor. A spotlight catches her.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

"Nobody cares if you can't dance well. Just get up and do it."

The girl moves slowly, her high heels CLICKING against the wooden floor.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

I heard that phrase somewhere. I don't exactly remember. It never appealed to me partially because I never understood it.

(beat)

I understand it now.

FLASHBACK TO:

BEGIN SERIES OF CLIPS:

Adults wait patiently in line at the local Wal-Mart checkout.

A group of kids from the community college tailgate in front of Sonic, hardly doing the place business.

Grown men lounge around Boland Lanes, a smoke-filled bowling ally.

Students exit the high school. Some of their faces are painted blue and white, the school colors.

A girl, riding in the backseat of a convertible, waves a banner as the car exits the school parking lot.

The banner reads: GO WILDCATS.

END SERIES OF CLIPS.

INT. MORGAN SQUARE MALL - DAY

A small, but eloquent, shopping center. The stores are mostly fashion-related, and women are the only people in sight.

INT. DRESS STORE - CONTINUOUS

Prom dresses align the white walls. A few women browse quietly through the racks of dresses.

One of them is 17-year-old

JAMIE

beautiful and innocent. Her black hair is familiar and mesmerizing.

Standing opposite Jamie is her older sister

MICHELLE

who is just as beautiful. You can tell they're sisters.

MICHELLE

(pointing to a dress)

How 'bout this one?

JAMIE

Eww. No. That looks like a grandma took a dump on her afghan.

MICHELLE

We've been here for twenty minutes and you haven't even tried on one dress.

JAMIE

This isn't rocket science. I'll try a dress on when I find a good one.

MICHELLE

So you're telling me that in twenty minutes, NONE of these dresses fit your needs?

JAMIE

Pretty much.

MICHELLE

You're too picky.

(CONTINUED)

JAMIE  
And you're too impatient.

A CLERK approaches.

CLERK  
How is everything?

MICHELLE  
Fine. Thank you.

JAMIE  
No. Not really. Do you have any  
dresses in here that are nice?

MICHELLE  
Jamie!

CLERK  
What do you mean by *nice*?

JAMIE  
A dress that will look good on me.  
And something I can afford.

The clerk smiles.

CLERK  
I'll check in the back. I think we  
got something new in yesterday that  
will be perfect.

The clerk exits.

MICHELLE  
See? You're being such a pain, you  
made that woman do extra work.

JAMIE  
I haven't bothered anybody in my  
whole life. She volunteered.

MICHELLE  
She shouldn't have to.

Michelle grabs an absolutely hideous blue dress.

MICHELLE (cont'd)  
Here. This is nice. I'd definitely  
wear this to my prom. Now buy it  
and let's go.

JAMIE

That thing? It looks like a smurf's  
tablecloth.

The clerk returns carrying a very recognizable

RED DRESS.

Jamie eyes it in awe and wonder. Her fingertips gently grace  
over the smooth silk texture.

CLERK

How is this?

Michelle is dumbstruck by the dress, too. It's absolutely  
gorgeous.

JAMIE

It's beautiful. It's perfect. How  
much?

CLERK

It's normally \$200, but you look  
like a nice enough girl. I'll give  
it to you 25% off.

MICHELLE

Wow. That's so nice of you.

JAMIE

What do you think, Michelle?

Michelle simply nods.

MICHELLE

I like it. It really is perfect.

JAMIE

I hope it fits.

CLERK

Here. Go try it on and let me know  
what you think.

Jamie grabs the dress excitedly and runs to the dressing  
rooms.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jamie removes her blouse and pulls the dress from its  
hanger.

SOFT MUSIC echoes from the store's loudspeaker. It suddenly  
cuts off and is replaced by an announcer.

(CONTINUED)

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

(filter)

The national weather service has issued a tornado warning for the following counties: Cherokee, Clarke, Clay, *Coffee*, Geneva...

Jamie is too wrapped up in the dress to notice.

She applies the final touches to the dress and looks in the mirror.

Perfection.

JAMIE

(to herself)

Wow.

Suddenly, a KNOCK on the dressing room door.

MICHELLE (O.S.)

Jamie, hurry up. It's gonna start storming any minute.

INT. HOUSE - THE NEXT DAY

Jamie sleeps in her bed when her MOTHER enters, waking her. Jamie stirs, rubbing her eyes.

MOTHER

Jamie, get up. You're gonna be late for school.

JAMIE

Is there school today? I thought with the tornado warnings --

MOTHER

You have to go. Come on. Get up.

JAMIE

OK.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - THE NEXT DAY

A huge brick building. A football stadium can be seen in the distance as

RAIN

pours over the school. Lightning flashes as thunder ECHOES. The trees sway furiously to the strong, WHISTLING winds.

A TORNADO SIREN whirls in the distance.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Students are aligned against the lockers. TEACHERS appear alert and worried. Some are counting their students. Others are making sure the students aren't misbehaving.

STUDENT #1

Can I use the restroom?

STUDENT #2

Gross! I can already smell it, Daniel!

STUDENT #3

Stop poking me, Ryan!

Chaos. The students are tired and restless. The teachers are worn out, too.

An ADMINISTRATOR walks down the corridor authoritatively, a megaphone practically glued to his lips.

ADMINISTRATOR

Face the wall and keep your hands on your heads. I can't hear the other teachers if you everyone is talking at once, so no talking period.

A teacher approaches.

TEACHER

What time is it?

ADMINISTRATOR

A little past 1:00.

TEACHER

Maybe we should just let the kids go. It's been three hours.

ADMINISTRATOR

I haven't gotten the permission yet. They don't want the kids leaving until they're sure it's okay.

TEACHER

When is that gonna be?

(CONTINUED)

ADMINISTRATOR

Soon. Very soon.

At the end of the hallway is Jamie, resting her chin on her hand. Her head slouches against the locker.

JAMIE

Rachel, did your mom text you back?

RACHEL

Huh?

Sitting next to Jamie is

RACHEL

a pretty brunette. A year younger than Jamie.

JAMIE

Your mom. Did she text you?

RACHEL

Yeah. She's still stuck at work.

JAMIE

Oh.

RACHEL

So why'd you come to school today?

JAMIE

I guess nobody thought this would turn into such a serious thing. My mom didn't.

RACHEL

Serious, huh? Sitting here for three hours is mighty serious.

JAMIE

It's a delicate subject.

RACHEL

So did you find a dress yesterday?

JAMIE

Yeah. It's amazing.

RACHEL

What's it look like?

(CONTINUED)



JAMIE

It's red and made of silk. It looks great.

RACHEL

I had a red dress for homecoming. I got chocolate cake on it before I even got to dance.

JAMIE

So? I would dance like no one else existed.

RACHEL

I wish I could be like that.

JAMIE

You are. Everyone is. They just need a motivation to make them realize it.

Suddenly, and quickly, the SKYLIGHT above shatters, spilling glass in the hallway.

At this moment, the soundtrack DROPS TO NOTHING.

SILENCE.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

The black funnel of a tornado touches down, heading straight for the school.

The cars furthest from the school begin to shake when

THE WINDOWS EXPLODE.

It's a domino effect as every car in the lot has its windows shatter. The cars flip over as the wind hurls them toward the school building.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Jamie ducks down as

THE ROOF BLOWS AWAY.

Rainwater and electrical wires spill over the concrete wall.

Students are screaming, but their voices can't be heard. The SILENCE itself is deafening.

(CONTINUED)

A PREGNANT TEACHER slouches over one of the students, shielding their body with her own.

The wall tilts, COLLAPSING, falling over towards the students just as

A MALE STUDENT

stands, trying to hold up the wall. The weight of the concrete is too much for him. The wall collapses over him as he his knees buckle. The lights FLICKER, and the brave young man is gone in an instant.

Jamie grabs Rachel, holding onto her. The wall finally falls over them, enveloping them in blackness.

INT. PROM - NIGHT

NARRATOR (V.O.)

"Dance like no one else is watching..."

The girl in the red dress is finally centered in the middle of the dance floor.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (cont'd)

I'm dancing for you, Jamie.

The girl in the red dress turns, revealing her true self.

IT'S MICHELLE.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (cont'd)

I miss you, Jamie. Sometimes I wonder where you are. Sometimes I think you're up there in the clouds, watching me.

A teacher watches from the sidelines. She's carrying a baby, brimming with happiness and the thrill of life itself.

Michelle smiles at the teacher. The effect is contagious. The entire dance floor is nothing but smiles.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (cont'd)

I hope you're watching this, Jamie. This is for you. This is for my little sister, and I don't care who else is watching.

The lights dim.

(CONTINUED)

NARRATOR (V.O.) (cont'd)  
If we don't change, we don't grow.  
If we don't grow, we're not really  
living. I'll never forget you,  
Jamie. I love you.

She dances.

FADE OUT