

DANCE LESSONS

Written by

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INT. LE MONDE STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

The marginal sunlight left filters through the door, aiding Jo as she steps into the studio.

JO

No way.

Reflecting the scant light, every feature of the room - from the deco reception counter to the fireplace, mantle and seating area - resonates a 1920's sensibility and luxury.

JO (CONT'D)

Hello. Can anyone hear me?

Jo steps further into the lobby, her shoes squeaking on the flawlessly clean marble. As she continues to scan the room, she finds every facet impeccably maintained, each surface buffed and polished.

A door behind the reception counter draws Jo's interest, and she moves slowly toward it.

JO (CONT'D)

(continuing; still calling
out)

I'm seriously not trying to
trespass here. The door was open.

Rounding the counter, she knocks on the door behind it. Again no answer.

JO (CONT'D)

Hello there. Is someone here or
not?

Jo tries the door, and, like the first, this one opens as if on buttered hinges.

IN THE BALLROOM

Almost near the ceiling, several windows on both sides of the room allow hesitant rays of dusk to crisscross the path before her like competing spotlights.

Jo's eyes are drawn, however, not straight in front of her but to the walls where leftover sunlight shimmers across thousands of reflective plaques that stud the walls from floor to vaulted ceiling.

In absolute awe, Jo takes a couple of breathless steps further into the room, her trajectory toward the plaques.

Suddenly however, her step makes a different sound - commanding, more resonate - and it reverberates throughout the cavernous room.

She stops in her tracks and looks down.

POV - JO

Her feet are now on the dance floor.

THE DANCE INSTRUCTOR (O.S.)
That's the sound of a new
direction.

Gasping, Jo looks up quickly, eyes wide, and takes a step backward as THE DANCE INSTRUCTOR slices through the criss-cut rays of light toward her.

JO
Um, I'm here to see about dance
lessons.

THE DANCE INSTRUCTOR
Why else would you be here?

JO
The door was unlocked...

THE DANCE INSTRUCTOR
There's no need to apologize. The
studio is here for you. In that
sense, it's yours.

Closer now, he smiles at Jo, and again she gasps. The perfection of his features seems to shine more strikingly than any other reflective surface in the room. Yet he is more than polished.

The Dance Instructor is that perfect beauty, bordering on difficult to behold, which exists only in the imagination and the reality of celluloid.

JO
Are you the one who's been calling
me?

THE DANCE INSTRUCTOR
Yes.

JO
Don't you need to know who I am
before you can answer that?

THE DANCE INSTRUCTOR
I call everyone who comes here.

JO
Do your tactics usually work?

THE DANCE INSTRUCTOR
You're here, aren't you?

Jo takes another small step backward but remains on the dance floor.

JO
You know, where I come from, they slap you with a funny name in Latin for that kind of fallacious logic.

THE DANCE INSTRUCTOR
It's my job to teach people how to dance.

JO
Probably since you're not the best at telemarketing.

THE DANCE INSTRUCTOR
Again I would argue that you're here, aren't you.

JO
You take your job pretty seriously, don't you?

THE DANCE INSTRUCTOR
It's an important position.

JO
It is? I mean, it is.

THE DANCE INSTRUCTOR
People who learn to dance tend to move through life more smoothly.

Jo tilts her head to the side like a spaniel trying to understand.

JO
You have kind of a small staff. Ballroom dancing just doesn't draw quite the same crowd these days, I guess.

THE DANCE INSTRUCTOR
Do you always do that?

JO

Do what?

THE DANCE INSTRUCTOR

Distract yourself with idle, not to mention amateurish, attempts at humor in order to slip around the delicate give and take of a conversation.

JO

Wow. Normally my detractors just throw tomatoes.

THE DANCE INSTRUCTOR

Were you expecting me to giggle?

JO

You know, I think that just might be the last thing I'd expect.

THE DANCE INSTRUCTOR

Actually I am quite enamored of humor - when it's funny.

JO

Look, I apologize if I was...

THE DANCE INSTRUCTOR

Insulting?

JO

Yeah, that one.

THE DANCE INSTRUCTOR

Then you'll be relieved to learn that I don't really listen to what people have to say about me in the beginning.

JO

Again explaining the crowd this place draws.

THE DANCE INSTRUCTOR

As you can see, I've taught a great many students.

He points the hundreds upon hundreds of shiny plaques lining every wall.

THE DANCE INSTRUCTOR (CONT'D)

But very little dancing is done in a ballroom.

JO
So why are we here?

THE DANCE INSTRUCTOR
Because you'll need everything you
learn here to take with you out
there.

He now points beyond the walls with the shiny plaques.

JO
It's not that big of a deal,
really. I just need a quick cram
session so I can be prepared for an
event I've got coming up.

THE DANCE INSTRUCTOR
I'm sorry, but I don't allow part-
time commitment from my students.

JO
What does that mean?

THE DANCE INSTRUCTOR
No starting and stopping. You need
to commit to full and punctual
attendance of at least six lessons,
more if necessary. Otherwise, I
won't work with you.

JO
You've gotta be kidding.

THE DANCE INSTRUCTOR
No, that's your department,
remember? Now when you arrive
tomorrow, Josephine, I'd like you
to wear something a little nicer.

JO
Wait a second, who do you think
you're talking...

Her face pales slightly.

JO (CONT'D)
How did you know my name?

He smiles at her then turns back in the direction from which
he came.

THE DANCE INSTRUCTOR
Same time tomorrow works for me.
Don't forget the dress.

Jo looks down at her overalls, ink marking the bib like a canvas. Suddenly uncomfortable, she looks up, but the Dance Instructor is gone.