

THE GIRL WITH SOMETHING EXTRA

By

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FADE IN:

A PIANO PLAYS, tentative and haltingly amateurish.
Liebestraum.

EXT. WINNOWS HOUSE - DAY

A rambling two-story house with a mansard roof set far back from the street - a throwback to another era. The type of house Edward Hopper would paint.

Peeling paint, unkempt yard, and foliage which threatens to obscure the house from the street.

INT. PARLOUR - DAY

Heavy brocade drapes frame the window, parted just enough to let through a shaft of light.

Large wooden furniture and faded rugs. Everything in the room feels bulky and thick.

A mason jar rests on a crocheted doily atop the piano. Air holes punched into the metal lid. Inside a chrysalis attached to a twig.

We see the BACK OF A YOUNG GIRL playing the piano. Frilly dress. Long brown hair tied with a huge bow. Booted feet work the piano pedals.

The girl glances out the window as a UPS truck pulls to a stop in front of the house. She bolts from the piano bench.

EXT. WINNOWS HOUSE - DAY

A rugged-looking UPS MAN wearing brown shorts and shirt hops out of his truck. He carries a package and hand-held scanner.

He bounds up the steps and KNOCKS.

UPS MAN
UPS. Hello?

He opens the screen door and steps into...

INT. FOYER - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

UPS MAN (CONT'D)
UPS. Anyone home?

ELDA WINNOWS appears at the top of the stairs, her face obscured in shadow. From her boots and frilly dress, we know her to be the young girl playing piano a moment ago.

ELDA
Are you a pervert or a rapist?

UPS MAN
Beg your pardon?

ELDA
Mama says all men are perverts or rapists. Which are you?

UPS MAN
Uhhh... I'm with UPS. Is this 10708 Willowbrook? I couldn't find a street address.

ELDA
I knew Mama was wrong! I've read stories about you and dreamed you'd come... and here you are!

UPS MAN
Huh?

ELDA
You'll have to excuse me. I'm afraid I'm ill-prepared to receive a gentleman, let alone a someone of your obvious refinement and breeding...

Elda steps into the light. She's in her late teens, thin and angular, and is clearly...

A YOUNG MAN DRESSED LIKE A VICTORIAN TEENAGE GIRL.

The UPS Man reacts.

UPS MAN
Holy shit!

ELDA
I love to dance. Do you know the quadrille? It's such a civilized form of expression, don't you agree?

UPS MAN
Dude... what the fuck?

Just then, MARY WINNONS, 50s, appears in the doorway carrying a basket of vegetables. She wears a drab unflattering floor-length dress and a cameo choker accentuates her neck. Her face a road map of bitterness and disappointment.

This is Elda's mother.

She stops upon seeing the UPS man. Spins on Elda. Her eyes like laser beams.

MARY
What's goin' on here?

ELDA
Nothing, Mama. He just stopped by.

MARY
I shoulda known the minute my back was turned...

ELDA
No, Mama.

MARY
Go to your room.

ELDA
But...

MARY
To your room.

ELDA
Mama!

MARY
(hissing)
TO YOUR ROOM!!

Elda scampers up the stairs. Mary turns, confronting the UPS man.

MARY (CONT'D)
I can't believe what I'm seeing.

UPS MAN
Tell me about it -- you let him dress like that?

MARY
You come smellin' around like a dog in heat, making googly eyes at my daughter...

UPS MAN
Daughter? Are you fuckin' kidding
me?

MARY
She may be a looker now, but in
twenty years this is what you're
gonna get.

Mary lifts her dress over her head. The UPS Man spins in
horror, shielding his eyes.

UPS MAN
Jesus Christ! What the hell is
wrong with you people?

He makes his escape. Mary turns. Looks at the package left
behind.

She moves to the box, cracks the seal. Lifts out a card.

INSERT: "Happy Birthday, Son. Your Father."

Mary reaches into the box and extracts a baseball glove. Her
eyes narrow with pure hatred.

INT. ELDA'S ROOM - DAY

Elda gazes out her window and watches the UPS truck pull
away. She rests her forehead against the windowpane.

She moves to her bed and lifts the corner of her mattress.
She pulls out a well-worn copy of "Jane Eyre."

She sits on the edge of bed and opens the book. Her eyes
swim over the pages, devouring the words. She SIGHS.

MARY (O.S.)
Elda!

Elda jumps, startled, and closes the book. Deftly returns it
to its hiding place.

INT. WINNOWS KITCHEN - DAY

Mary stands at the sink, peeling potatoes.

Elda enters timidly. Nervously toys with her hair.

ELDA

I don't see the harm in just
talking to the young gentleman.

MARY

The world is an evil place filled
with vile, disgusting creatures...
and men are the worst.

ELDA

How would you know, Mama? You
never allow anyone within a mile of
this house!

Mary stares ahead, a faraway look in her eyes.

A DOG BARKS. We cannot tell if real or imagined.

MARY

Trust me. I know.

ELDA

Like it or not, one day I'm gonna
get married and leave this place.

MARY

You're full of pretty stories.

ELDA

It's not stories, Mama.

She moves to the window, lost in her fantasy.

ELDA (CONT'D)

He'll be handsome and ride a big
white horse. We'll move to an
estate in the country. Maybe get a
little cottage out back just for
you.

MARY

You've been readin' that "Jane
Whore" again, haven't you?

ELDA

Eyre, Mama. "Jane Eyre." It's
just a book.

MARY

I told you, I don't want you
reading that smut. It puts ideas
in your head and gets you all riled
up.

(MORE)

MARY(cont'd)

Ain't no man ever gonna come for
you. Ya hear me? Nevah! Nevah!

ELDA

Why must you chase away any dream I
ever have?

MARY

Settle down, clackety-clack!

ELDA

Alright, Mama. Then why was he
here? Huh?

Mary slams down the paring knife. Wipes her hands on a tea
towel.

MARY

You wanna know why? He stopped by
to wish you happy birthday.

Elda reels. A beat while the news registers.

ELDA

Birthday?! Mama, today is my
birthday?

MARY

Mmm-hmmm.

ELDA

(to herself)

The 16th of August is my birthday.

MARY

I shoulda told ya sooner.

ELDA

Oh, Mama!

Elda moves to hug her. Mary shrinks back.

MARY

He left something for you.

Elda's hand flies to her chest, breathless.

ELDA

What? Where?!

Mary points. Elda races into...

INT. PARLOUR - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

A BEAUTIFULLY WRAPPED GIFT sits on the table.

Elda grabs the box. Mary appears in the doorway.

ELDA
I ain't never had no package like
this before. It's so beautiful!

MARY
He wanted to give you something
special. I hope you like it.

ELDA
Oh, I'm sure I will. I'm just sure
I will!

Elda kneels on the floor. The package before her. She lifts
the lid and removes a BOOK, a puzzled look on her face.

ELDA (CONT'D)
(reading)
"Venereal Diseases of the Mouth?"

Elda opens the book to see a PHOTO OF A MOUTH COVERED IN
SORES. She flings the book away in disgust, her eyes wide.

ELDA (CONT'D)
Aaaa!

She scrambles to her feet.

MARY
The world is full of disease and
men.

Elda rushes from the room.

MARY (CONT'D)
(calling after her)
They kill anything of beauty.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Elda scrubs a dress on a washboard which rests inside a
galvanized metal tub. Her eyes red from crying.

Behind her, she HEARS LEAVES RUSTLE. A TWIG SNAPS.

Elda spins. Looks at the overgrown hedge running along the back of the property.

ELDA

Hello?

Nothing.

She returns to her washing.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

BIRDS CHIRP. Sunlight streams through the window.

Elda sits at the dining room table reading aloud from a McGuffey Reader, an antiquated school book. Mary stands behind her, braiding her hair.

ELDA

"We sat in the grass next to a brook, and drank in the warmth of the sun. I turned to look at my lover, at his parted lips while he slept. The lips that held the promise of a kiss that was mine and mine alone."

(putting down the book)

Can we stop now? I'm tired.

MARY

Did you review your spelling?

ELDA

Yes, ma'am.

MARY

Anagnorisis.

ELDA

"Anagnorisis."

(spelling)

A-N-A-G-N-O-R-I-S-I-S.

Anagnorisis.

MARY

Derivation?

ELDA

Greek.

MARY

Sentence?

Elda hesitates. She bows her head in shame.

ELDA

I don't remember what it means.

MARY

It's a character in a Greek tragedy
whose true nature is ultimately
revealed.

ELDA

Sorry, Mama.

MARY

What happens to ignorant girls?

ELDA

They get gang-raped by toothless
carnival men with dirty
fingernails.

MARY

Now get along to your chores.

Elda closes the book and gets up from the table. She bites
her lip, knowing better, but still...

ELDA

I saw the yellow vehicle again.

MARY

So?

ELDA

Why can't I go to a real school?

MARY

You know why. The world is a
dangerous place filled with awful
things. You're better off here.
With me.

ELDA

In my books young ladies meet
gentlemen at cotillions and social
functions, so I thought --

Mary thrusts a broom into Elda's hands.

MARY

Sweep the porch while I'm gone.

EXT. WINNOWS HOUSE - DAY

Elda stands in the doorway.

Mary puts on her gloves as she moves down the walkway. She wears a hat and shawl, dressed for town.

MARY
...And don't feed that cat. It's
feral.

ELDA
Boots isn't feral.

MARY
(disdainfully)
Boots.

Mary disappears behind the foliage.

EXT. WINNOWS HOUSE - DAY (LATER)

Elda sits forlornly on the porch steps playing with a small BLACK CAT WITH WHITE PAWS. A broom rests against the railing.

A SCHOOL BUS FILLED WITH KIDS passes the house.

The bus BACKFIRES and the cat springs off her lap.

ELDA
Boots!

EXT. YARD - DAY

The cat races across the yard, Elda in pursuit.

EXT. FIELD - DAY

The cat disappears into a field. Elda follows.

ELDA
Kitty?!

EXT. STREET - DAY

A FLASH OF BLACK streaks across the road. Elda follows a split second behind.

She darts into the path of an approaching CAR. The driver BLASTS THE HORN. Elda spins on her heel and falls backward, the vehicle narrowly missing her.

She scrambles to her feet, shaken. Looks across the street to see...

A two-story brick building. SPARTANBURG HIGH SCHOOL spelled out in metallic letters.

TWO JOCKS IN A TRANS AM barrel into the parking lot, HIP HOP BLASTING from their car stereo.

Elda instinctively grooves to the music, as if it possesses her. She pop-locks, her natural ability evident. The effect is both unsettling and compelling.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

A nameplate reading "Miriam Anderson - Principal" rests at the edge of a meticulously organized desk. Behind which sits...

PRINCIPAL ANDERSON, 40s, officiously put-together, wearing a matching tailored jacket and skirt. She hears:

GIRL'S VOICE (O.S.)

Excuse me?

Principal Anderson looks up to see Elda, standing in the doorway. Is this a joke?

PRINCIPAL ANDERSON

Yes?

ELDA

I'd like to enroll, please.

Principal Anderson raises an eyebrow.

INT. ELDA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Elda works at her loom. She passes a shuttle back and forth through the shed, pulling the reed of the loom forward after each pass.

Elda wears a floor length gown, her long braided hair cascading down from underneath a sleeping cap.

A SMALL PEBBLE hits her window with a TICK. She turns toward the window.

ANOTHER PEBBLE. TICK. She lays down the shuttle. Peers into the darkness.

A third PEBBLE. Elda draws back, alarmed.

EXT. BACKYARD - NIGHT

CRICKETS CHIRP. Elda carries a kerosene lamp to LIGHT her path.

ELDA
Hello? Is someone there?

She waits for a beat. Nothing. She turns to go inside.

ELDA (CONT'D)
(gasping)
Ahhh!

The light REVEALS A HEART-SHAPED CIRCLE OF STONES in the grass. A small plastic bottle of hand lotion lies in the center.

EXT. PORCH - DAY

Mary naps in a wicker chair, a fly swatter on her lap.

PRINCIPAL ANDERSON (O.S.)
Excuse me. Mrs. Winnows?

Mary opens her eyes to see Principal Miriam Anderson standing before her. The Principal holds a manila folder in her hand.

MARY
Yes?

PRINCIPAL ANDERSON
I'm Miriam Anderson with the
Spartanburg School District. Elda
came to see me yesterday. Your
grand... child?

MARY
Daughter. Not that it's any
concern of yours.

Principal Anderson studies Mary's face. Is she serious?

PRINCIPAL ANDERSON
Actually it is. She stopped by to
enroll.

A mixture of surprise and betrayal washes over Mary's face.

MARY

Elda is home-schooled.

PRINCIPAL ANDERSON

I suspected as much, given her...
proclivities... but there's no
paperwork on file.

MARY

My daughter won't be going to your
school. She's better off here.

PRINCIPAL ANDERSON

Mrs. Winnows, we have a very strict
truancy policy in this county. A
number of standards need to be met
before we approve home-schooling.
Elda will have to attend public
school in the meantime.

She hands Mary a little blue card.

PRINCIPAL ANDERSON (CONT'D)

If she doesn't report to the
registrar tomorrow, I'll have to
get protective services involved,
and we may even move to emancipate
her. Have a good day.

Principal Anderson turns and walks down the pathway. Mary
looks back at the house. Her lips tight.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

An overgrown hedge, thick with entwined vines and gnarled
branches. Elda sits on the ground, her head resting on the
hedge. She SOBS.

SOFT LILTING VOICE (O.S.)

Please don't cry.

Elda GASPS and sits upright. The voice is high-pitched with
a slightly effeminate drawl, though still recognizably male.

SOFT LILTING VOICE (O.S.)

I didn't mean to frighten you. I
don't like to hear anyone so
unhappy.

Elda peers through the overgrowth. A darkened shape visible on the other side.

ELDA
Who are you?

SHELBY (O.S.)
My name is Shelby. We moved here about a month ago.

ELDA
I'm Elda.

SHELBY (O.S.)
I heard you playing Liebestraum the other night. It's my favorite.

ELDA
You heard me on the piano? Oh my! I'm so embarrassed.

SHELBY (O.S.)
Don't be. You play beautifully.

ELDA
I find it unforgivably cruel to make fun of me so.

SHELBY (O.S.)
I wasn't making fun. I could listen to your fingers dance across the keys all night. Such lovely hands deserve to be protected.

She looks at Shelby. A realization.

ELDA
The lotion! That was you?

SHELBY (O.S.)
Your music is a gift. I wanted to give you something in return. Why were you crying?

ELDA
Oh, I've never gone to a real school before. I afraid people won't like me -- that I won't fit in. You must think me silly.

SHELBY (O.S.)
Not at all. It would be weird if you weren't nervous.

Elda approaches the hedges.

SHELBY (O.S.)
Stay back!

ELDA
I'd like to see you.

SHELBY
No. You won't think I'm
attractive.

ELDA
I'm not like that.

A DOOR OPENS in the distance and another voice, high-pitched
and effeminate, calls out.

SHELBY'S PARENT (O.S.)
Shelby! Time to come in.

SHELBY (O.S.)
Yes, Dad!
(then, to Elda)
I have to go.

LEAVES RUSTLE. Shelby is gone.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Elda packs her lunch into a wicker picnic basket. Mary sits
before a large colander snapping beans.

Elda, flushed, presses her hands to her cheek.

ELDA
My gosh. I'm a nervous wreck. How
do I look, Mama?

MARY
Like a skull on a stick.

ELDA
I know you're upset, but it's time
for me to meet people. To live my
life.

MARY
You have no idea how cruel it can
be out there, Elda.
(MORE)

MARY(cont'd)

You're like a dumb piece of corn
riding toward the grist mill,
waiting to be crushed into meal.

ELDA

Please, Mama, you're scaring me.
Can't you be happy for me just this
once? Think of it as a young lady
making her debut into society.

MARY

Why, of course! Like a debutante!

ELDA

Yes!

MARY

So now my daughter thinks she's a
member of the Social Register?

Mary waves her arms, majestically.

MARY (CONT'D)

Ladies and gentlemen, may I present
Miss Jangley Bones.

Elda glances at the clock.

ELDA

Goodness. 8:15!

She grabs her lunch basket and bolts.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Elda stands at the side of the road, the wicker basket
clenched in her fist.

The bus pulls to a stop. Elda bites her lower lip and places
her foot on the first step.

She spins toward home. The porch is empty. She looks back
to the bus, exhales and climbs aboard.

EXT. SPARTANBURG HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

General mayhem as students make their way to class.

Elda stands on the lawn in front of the school. Her eyes
swim across the sea of teens, her face hopeful.

A GROUP OF GIRLS approach. Elda curtsies. The girls look at Elda incredulously and burst into PEALS OF LAUGHTER.

Elda watches them pass. She looks at their short skirts and fitted tops. She glances down at her own floor-length woolen dress.

A JOCK passes. Elda coquettishly drops a handkerchief. His tennis shoe grinds it into the grass. Her face falls.

CLOSE ON CLEAVAGE. The rack belongs to CYNDI MILLER, 20, devastatingly beautiful, wearing a crop top and talking on her cell.

CYNDI
(into phone)
Rob! You're such a liar! I saw
Dave at the party, so you weren't
hanging with him. Where were you?

She is intercepted by TERSHELLE LEONARD, 17, a walking Noxzema ad.

TERSHELLE
Hey, Bee-yotch!

CYNDI
(into phone)
Talk to you later. Tershelle's
here.

She hangs up. She and Tershelle air kiss.

CYNDI (CONT'D)
Fuck he pisses me off!

Tershelle rolls her eyes.

TERSHELLE
Let me guess. Rob? Call the
Action News Team.

CYNDI
If you knew he was fucking around,
you'd tell me, right?

TERSHELLE
Of course. Cyndi, it doesn't say
much if you can't trust him.

CYNDI
I know.

TERSHELLE
Sooo.... I just got off the phone
with Robyn.

Tershelle grimaces, not wanting to be the messenger.

TERSHELLE (CONT'D)
She's gonna call... after her x-
ray.

CYNDI
Fuck!

TERSHELLE
Don't get your thong in a wad. We
don't know anything yet.

CYNDI
Well "x-ray" can't be good, now can
it?

They are joined by SUSAN LITTELL, 16, pretty with large eyes
and a small brain. Her arms full of books.

SUSAN
Hey!

TERSHELLE / CYNDI
Morning, Susan.

Tershelle looks at the book titles.

TERSHELLE
"Surviving Menopause," "Psychic
Pets," "Self Breast Examination for
Dummies?" W-T-F?

SUSAN
My chiropractor said the weight of
my boobs is putting a strain on my
back, so she wants me to build up
my muscles by carrying these.

CYNDI
Won't that just be more weight up
front?

SUSAN
She's a medical doctor, Cyndi.

CYNDI
Who massages your bush with a warm
rock to bring you good luck.

SUSAN
You can laugh, but it works. Now I
do it before every performance.

TERSHELLE
Way too much information.

Cyndi turns. Smacks into Elda.

CYNDI
Watch where you're going!

The girls stare at Elda, shocked by her appearance. Elda
fumbles nervously.

ELDA
I'm sorry. I was looking for my
class schedule.

CYNDI
Well, Mother Hubbard, have you
checked your cupboard?

The GIRLS LAUGH and continue on their way. Elda stands,
dejected.

A SCHOOL BELL RINGS.

INT. SCIENCE CLASS — DAY

Raised lab desks littered with Bunsen burners and various
flasks. Students sit on stools behind desks, two to a table.

MS. DANIELLE MASTERSON, mid-30s, shapely and tall, stands
with Elda at the front of the room. Elda stares at the
floor.

A periodic chart hangs on the wall behind them.

MS. MASTERSON
Everyone. This is Elda Winnows.
She'll be joining us for the rest
of the year.

ROB and DAVE, the two Trans Am jocks we saw earlier, SNICKER.

MS. MASTERSON
Is there a problem, you two?

ROB
No. We're good.

Ms. Masterson places her hand on Elda's shoulder and points toward the back row.

MS. MASTERSON
Why don't you take that empty seat
next to Kevin?

Elda looks past Rob and Dave to see KEVIN LUCE, 16, lanky and adorable. She stares, thunderstruck by his handsome good looks.

Rob spins around toward Kevin.

ROB
You should tap that. At least
it'll be clear who plays the girl.

KEVIN
Good point. How do you and Cyndi
work it out?

DAVE
Fuck off, faggot.

KEVIN
Lick my puckerhole, bitch monkey.

MS. MASTERSON
HEY! Knock it off!

Elda slides into the empty seat. Smooths her hair. Kevin nods at her.

KEVIN
'Sup?

Elda GIGGLES coquettishly, HICCUPS then BURPS.

INT. HALLWAY — DAY

Elda stands before her locker, in deep concentration. She holds a piece of paper in her hand and spins the combo lock to and fro.

TWO GIRLS talk at an open locker a few feet away.

GIRL 1
Just try out.

GIRL 2
No way. It's too scary.

Elda pulls the handle and the locker opens. She GASPS. Looks at the locker with amazement.

GIRL 1
You're always complaining how you
don't fit in. You wanna be
popular, right?

GIRL 2
Of course I wanna be popular.

Elda turns toward them, all ears.

GIRL 1
So audition.

GIRL 2
I don't know --

GIRL 1
I've seen you dance. You've got
the moves. And once you're a
Sparkler, every guy at school is
gonna be hot for you.

ELDA
Excuse me? What's a Sparkler?

Rob and Dave pass. Rob pushes Dave into Elda, slamming her into the locker.

Dave recovers and shoves Rob.

DAVE
Anus flake!

Rob LAUGHS as they continue down the hall. Elda rubs her shoulder. She looks over. The girls are gone.

INT. CAFETERIA — DAY

The United Nations of high school, each table a different clique. There is much LAUGHING, CHATTERING, and CLANGING OF SILVERWARE AND TRAYS.

Elda scans the room. Her hand tightly clutches her picnic basket.

AT THE JOCK TABLE

Rob holds court.

ROB
... so my mom gets a call, and it's
a picture of this dude's Johnson.
She had my sister's phone!

The group LAUGHS.

Elda slides into an empty chair. She LAUGHS, an attempt to
be part of the group.

All heads turn and look at her in disbelief.

ROB (CONT'D)
Get the fuck out of here, freak!
(he points)
Your table's over there.

AT THE GAY TABLE

Elda approaches a group of effeminate gay boys. A GAY BOY
holds out his arm, blocking her.

GAY BOY
We're only into straight-acting
boys. Sorry, girlfriend.

Elda turns away, puzzled.

AT THE GOTH TABLE

Lots of black hair, eye makeup, and heavy jewelry. Elda
stands next to a GOTH GIRL.

GOTH GIRL
Are you into The Cure?

ELDA
There's a cure now? When I had
polio Mama said it had to run its
course.

The Goths look at each other, a bit uncomfortable.

GOTH GIRL
Okay... you're a little too weird
even for us.

AT THE MISFIT TABLE

A GUY IN A BACK BRACE sits alone. He is gawky, peculiar-looking, with long hair. He looks up at Elda and smiles. She pauses, then moves on.

AT THE SPARKLERS TABLE

Team captain Cyndi and not-so-bright Susan eat side by side. Tershelle approaches with her tray and sits across from them.

TERSHELLE

It's a hairline fracture. Robyn can't walk without crutches. Six weeks.

CYNDI

Six weeks?! That's great. Just fuckin' great.

SUSAN

So she can't walk without crutches. It doesn't mean she can't dance.

Cyndi looks at Susan incredulously.

CYNDI

What are you talking about?

SUSAN

Maybe it's like an accent. You know how English people are all "cheerio chap" and shit when they talk, but when they sing, they don't have an accent?

Susan smugly looks at the girls, proud of her analytical reasoning skills.

CYNDI

It must suck to lose brain cells when you take a dump.

Susan's face falls.

TERSHELLE

We've got time. We'll come up with something.

CYNDI

We are so fucked.

Elda appears at their table. She curtsies nervously.

ELDA
Hello. May I join you?

CYNDI
Look! It's Little Orphan Tranny!

Tershelle and Susan CRACK UP.

ELDA
No. My name's Elda.

CYNDI
(overly cheerful)
Hi! I'm "I don't give a shit."
(pointing to Tershelle and
Susan)
And that's "You're interrupting us"
and "Fuck off you fugly freak."

Tershelle and Susan wave as Cyndi "introduces" them.

Elda stands frozen with embarrassment.

CYNDI (CONT'D)
Okay. This is when you slink away
and leave us alone. No words
necessary. Buh-bye now.

Cyndi turns back toward the girls. Elda shuffles away.

TERSHELLE
Harsh, Cyndi!

BACK AT THE MISFIT TABLE

Elda sits down and smiles at Back Brace Boy. He stands and leaves.

INT. ENGLISH CLASS - DAY

MR. GRAYSON, 30s, walks along the rows, passing back papers.

"JANE EYRE" written in large letters on the blackboard.

Elda sits in the back row. Cyndi, Tershelle, and Back Brace Boy are seated toward the front.

MR. GRAYSON

Since it appears no one is doing
the reading, tomorrow you're
responsible for the next two
chapters of "Jane Eyre," and there
will be a quiz.

The CLASS GROANS. Elda smiles with delight. Mr. Grayson
looks at her.

MR. GRAYSON (CONT'D)

And dressing like Charlotte Bronte
will not earn you extra credit.

The CLASS LAUGHS. Elda notices all eyes on her. She tries
to make herself as small as possible. The BELL RINGS.

Back Brace Boy stands to leave.

MR. GRAYSON (CONT'D)

(to Back Brace Boy)

When am I getting a paper from you?

BACK BRACE BOY

I'll turn it in tomorrow.

His voice is lilting and effeminate. Elda knows that
voice.... SHELBY!

Elda tries to catch him, but he's out the door.

IN THE HALLWAY

Elda scans the crowd. No sign of him.

INT. GYM — DAY

PERCUSSIVE MUSIC. GIRLS IN WORKOUT CLOTHES rehearse a
choreographed dance routine.

COACH TESLEY, early 30s, watches carefully. She wears cotton
shorts and a spandex top.

Elda appears in the doorway. She stares, mesmerized by the
girls' moves.

COACH TESLEY

Make it sharp! Really hit those
positions. Come on, Sparklers!

ELDA
(to herself)
Sparklers?!

COACH TESLEY
You're off the beat, Susan. Pick
it up! There ya go!

Cyndi and Tershelle rush toward each other. Tershelle lands
an aerial cartwheel. Cyndi puts her hands down and collides
with Tershelle on the way up.

TERSHELLE
Damn, girl!

COACH TESLEY
(yelling)
Stop! Stop!

Coach Tesley walks to a boom box and TURNS OFF THE MUSIC.

COACH TESLEY (CONT'D)
Grab some water.

The girls towel off, grab water, stretch. Tershelle moves to
her gym bag, followed by Cyndi.

TERSHELLE
You almost took off my weave.

CYNDI
Sorry.

Coach Tesley approaches.

CYNDI (CONT'D)
I think we should cut the tumbling
pass.

COACH TESLEY
Not if you want to get to
nationals. The team needs air.
You gotta nail it, Cyndi.

Coach Tesley notices Elda standing in the doorway.

COACH TESLEY (CONT'D)
Hey! This is a closed practice.
No spectators! Out!

Elda backs out of the room. Coach Tesley does a double-take.

COACH TESLEY (CONT'D)
What the hell was that?

EXT. SPARTANBURG HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Elda rushes out of the building as the bus pulls out of the parking lot into the street.

ELDA
Wait!

She exhales, resigned.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

LIGHT RAIN falls.

Elda walks at a clip, head down, her wicker basket clutched to her chest.

A Trans Am glides to a stop next to her. Rob drives with Dave riding shotgun.

ROB
Hey! Want a lift?

Elda smiles, her eyes sparkle.

ELDA
How very gallant!

ROB
Hop in.

Elda moves to the door. The CAR LURCHES FORWARD and stops.

ROB (CONT'D)
Sorry about that.

Elda approaches the car. Grabs the handle. The CAR LURCHES FORWARD.

ROB (CONT'D)
Ooops. My bad. Come on.

Elda grabs the handle. Rob floors it. TIRES SQUEAL as the car PEELS OUT, throwing GRAVEL into Elda's face. The car makes a u-turn and passes Elda.

ROB
Hey, idiot! That trick's older
than your granny dress!

The car speeds away. Elda picks up her pace.

A beat. Elda HEARS a CAR ENGINE REV behind her.

DAVE (O.S.)
Whack-a-mole!

Elda turns to see Dave leaning out the car window with a hockey stick.

The CAR ACCELERATES.

She tries to run but they are upon her. The stick catches her behind the knees, flinging her into the mud. Her basket flies into a puddle.

EXT. PORCH — DAY

Elda tiptoes up the steps and gingerly removes her muddy boots.

She hurriedly rubs the dirt off her face and smooths her hair.

INT. DINING ROOM — NIGHT

Mary and Elda sit across the table from each other. Their silence interrupted by the CLINK OF UTENSILS.

Elda stares at her plate, eating without tasting. Mary watches her with smug delight.

MARY
One time my daddy took me to the
shore to watch the gulls. They
were so pretty. Alabaster white.
Well, this gray gull shows up that
wasn't like any of the others. You
know what happened?

ELDA
No.

MARY
One of them white gulls came up and
pecked him. Peck!

Elda flinches.

MARY (CONT'D)

Then another gull. Peck! In an instant they all turned on the gray one. Peck peck peck peck peck peck peck peck!!

Elda grips her napkin.

MARY (CONT'D)

When they were done, the only thing left was a beak.

ELDA

That's a horrible story.

MARY

People are like gulls. They smell the weak and the sick...

Looking at Elda, with meaning.

MARY (CONT'D)

... and the different.

Elda swallows hard.

ELDA

I'm awfully tired. May I be excused?

MARY

You must think me a liar -- telling you what a horrible world it is, when a debutante like yourself has got nothing to worry about. You must be quite popular already.

Elda stands and moves toward the door. She pauses.

ELDA

Mama? I've been thinking about school...

MARY

So have I.

Elda spins, her face hopeful.

MARY (CONT'D)

It might be a good thing for you to be out in the world.

Elda's face falls. She trudges out of the room. Mary sips her tea, a self-satisfied smile creeping over her face.

INT. BUS - DAY (MOVING)

Elda stares out the window of the bus as they pull into the school parking lot. Shelby glides into view RIDING A SEGWAY.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Shelby removes his helmet as Elda approaches. She runs her hands along the Segway.

ELDA

I like your riding machine.

SHELBY

I wanted a horse. My parents bought me a Segway instead.

ELDA

It's nice.

(a beat)

I'm sorry I walked away yesterday.
I didn't know it was you.

SHELBY

I know I'm not much to look at.

ELDA

That's not it. I was scared. I don't think I belong here.

SHELBY

Of course you do. You're just overwhelmed is all. Know what helps me when I'm scared?

ELDA

What?

SHELBY

Break it down into steps, then concentrate on the first one. Nothing else. It all begins with one step.

ELDA

What does?

SHELBY

Anything you truly desire. I
wanted to meet the girl who plays
such lovely music. And look... I
have.

Elda coyly turns away, embarrassed. Shelby smiles.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY – DAY

A large piece of paper posted on the wall. Huge glittery
letters spell "SPARKLER TRY-OUTS!!!"

Elda stands before the sheet, contemplating. She bites her
lip, turns and walks away.

A beat later she returns.

ELDA

One step.

She scribbles her name on the sheet.

INT. GYM – DAY

PERCUSSIVE MUSIC.

Cyndi, Susan, and Tershelle, wearing gold and purple Sparkler
outfits, sit behind a table. Susan works a boom box.

A GROUP OF GIRLS IN WORKOUT CLOTHES gather off to the side.
Each has a number pinned to her.

TERSHELLE

No way!

Cyndi looks up to see...

Elda, wearing a full-length dress and audition number.

CYNDI

Cinder-fella?! Hee-fuckin-larious!

Coach Tesley steps out onto the floor, addressing the group.

COACH TESLEY

Robyn's out for the rest of the
season, so we're only looking for
one girl. You've got some big
shoes to fill, ladies. You ready?
Group One! Let's see it.

Four girls run into position.

COACH TESLEY (CONT'D)

Five - six - seven - eight!

Coach Tesley leads the group in the first part of the combination, then steps aside. The girls range from mediocre to no talent. They hit a pose.

COACH TESLEY (CONT'D)

Nice job! Group Two!

Group One exits as Group Two runs into place, which includes...

TANYA MORETTI, the school whore. Bad highlights. Tons of makeup. Skimpy top.

TERSHELLE

Tanya Moretti is such a skeeze.

CYNDI

Just looking at her makes my cooch itch.

Elda looks at Tanya. Notices her ample cleavage. Elda undoes the top button of her high-necked dress.

COACH TESLEY (CONT'D)

Five - six - seven - eight!

Group Two starts the combination. Tanya's boob leaps out of her top. She dances, unaware. The girls CRACK UP.

Group Two hits the closing pose. Tanya smiles broadly, her breast exposed. Clueless.

COACH TESLEY (CONT'D)

Way to go Group Two! Tanya... your friend upstaged you.

TANYA MORETTI

Huh?

Coach Tesley points.

COACH TESLEY

Feel a draft?

Tanya looks down and stuffs her breast back into place.

Elda quickly re-buttons her top button.

COACH TESLEY (CONT'D)
Group Three! Let's go!

Group Three -- Elda's group -- runs into position.

CYNDI
This is gonna be sweet!

COACH TESLEY
Ready? Five -- six --

Coach Tesley sees Elda. She gestures to Susan -- "kill the music."

COACH TESLEY (CONT'D)
Wait! Wait! Stop!

The MUSIC CUTS OUT.

COACH TESLEY (CONT'D)
(to Elda)
Ha ha. Very funny. Clear the floor, please.

Elda looks around in confusion. Coach Tesley points at her.

COACH TESLEY (CONT'D)
Yeah, you.

Elda, embarrassed, scoots off the floor.

CYNDI
Coach?

Cyndi rushes to Tesley and whispers in her ear. Coach Tesley looks at Elda.

COACH TESLEY
(to Elda)
Okay. Sorry. Come back.

Elda takes her spot with Group Three. Coach Tesley nods to Susan. MUSIC BLASTS.

COACH TESLEY (CONT'D)
Five -- six -- seven -- eight!

Elda attacks the routine with crisp sharp moves. She trounces everyone else.

The group hits a pose as the MUSIC ENDS. A beat of silence. Cyndi, Tershelle, Susan, and Coach Tesley stare in shock, mouths open.

SUSAN

Whoa!

COACH TESLEY

Oh my God!

TERSHELLE

"Dude Looks Like a Lady" rocked it!

A beat. Coach Tesley shakes off her excitement. Back to business.

COACH TESLEY

Great job, everyone. Give yourselves a hand.

The girls APPLAUD.

COACH TESLEY (CONT'D)

We'll be making our decision tonight and post our selection in the window next to the principal's office.

AT THE DRINKING FOUNTAIN

Elda GULPS down water. A GIRL IN LEOTARDS waits behind her.

GIRL IN LEOTARDS

You were awesome! Where did you learn to dance like that?

ELDA

Mama used to chase me around the house with a skillet.

Elda moves away, leaving the Girl in Leotards looking perplexed.

Coach Tesley intercepts Elda.

COACH TESLEY

By any chance, can you do an aerial cartwheel?

INT. COACH TESLEY TESLEY'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Photos of sports teams and memorabilia hang on the wall. Coach Tesley sits on the edge of her desk, facing Tershelle, Susan, and Cyndi, who paces.

CYNDI

I'm not gonna let some fugly granny tranny ruin the team!

SUSAN

What's a tranny?

CYNDI

A boy that wants to be a girl.

TERSHELLE

You're overruled, Cyndi. She was the best.

CYNDI

This is my last shot at Nationals!

SUSAN

Listen to the tranny! He knows what he's talking about.

Cyndi looks at Susan. Are you kidding me?

CYNDI

Susan, how can I be a tranny? You've seen me naked.

SUSAN

I know. You look REALLY good!

CYNDI

I'm not the tranny, moron! We're talking about Scrotum Girl.

COACH TESLEY

You want a chance at Nationals? Elda is your ticket.

CYNDI

But she's a he!

COACH TESLEY

Nothing in the books says a Sparkler has to be female.

CYNDI

I'd take an Emo chick with hairy armpits... even a fat ass who can move... but that thing...

COACH TESLEY

It's not a beauty contest.

TERSHELLE

We can work on her appearance.

SUSAN

I have surprisingly hard nipples.

They all react to Susan. Huh?

SUSAN (CONT'D)

I wanted to contribute, but I didn't know what to say.

COACH TESLEY

Listen to your heart, Cyndi. You know what's right.

Cyndi looks at the group. She nods begrudgingly.

INT. PARLOR - NIGHT

Elda kneels with a skein of yarn looped around her outstretched hands. Mary sits in her rocking chair, winding the yarn into a ball.

MARY

I've decided to let you come back home. You don't belong at that school.

ELDA

I want to stay, Mama.

Mary stops winding the yarn. Looks at her daughter.

ELDA (CONT'D)

There's a group called the Sparklers. They dance at football games and stuff.

MARY

Why should I care about something like that?

ELDA

I tried out.

A beat, then Mary bursts into LAUGHTER.

ELDA (CONT'D)

It's not a joke, Mama.

MARY
Dancing? You! Of course it's a
joke. Clackin' around like a
demented skeleton...

ELDA
I made the team.

Mary's LAUGHTER SUBSIDES.

ELDA (CONT'D)
I'm a Sparkler.

MARY
Why would you subject yourself to
that kind of embarrassment?

ELDA
They think I'm good. They wouldn't
have picked me otherwise.

MARY
Oh, Elda. Look at yourself. You
can't honestly believe that!

ELDA
Say what you want. I'm doing this.

A beat. Mary returns to her yarn.

ELDA (CONT'D)
Did you meet father at school?

Mary's hands freeze mid-air. Her jaw tightens.

ELDA (CONT'D)
Why don't you ever talk about him,
Mama? I've never even seen his
picture.

Mary looks at Elda. Her eyes blazing and fierce.

MARY
I burned 'em all. He was a vile,
disgusting creature. Like all men.

Elda swallows. Looks away.

INT. SCHOOL DISTRICT OFFICE - DAY

A SECRETARY stands behind the counter of a drab,
institutional-looking office.

Mary approaches.

MARY
Hello. I'd like a home school
application, please.

INT. MALL - DAY

An escalator. Elda rises into view. Cyndi, Tershelle, and Susan behind her. Elda trips at the top and falls. The girls help her up.

TERSHELLE
So, Elda, inquiring minds want to
know... are you a transvestite or a
tranny?

ELDA
I don't understand.

CYNDI
Do you still have your junk?

ELDA
No. Mama made me get rid of it a
long time ago.

CYNDI
What?!

SUSAN
Your Mom?! Ewwww!

ELDA
Mama doesn't like any junk lying
around the house. She likes
everything put in its place.

The girls exchange a look.

TERSHELLE
No. That's not what we're talking
about.

Cyndi nods toward Elda's crotch.

CYNDI
We mean your "junk."

TERSHELLE
Did you get it cut off?

Elda looks at them, puzzled. Tershelle "cuts" with her fingers across her face. Elda brightens.

ELDA
Oh! No. Mama says short hair is
for harlots.

CYNDI
Elda, we're talking about what
you've got between your legs.

Elda glances around, embarrassed.

CYNDI (CONT'D)
It's okay. It's just us girls...

Elda relents. Leans in confidentially.

ELDA
(whispering)
Why... I have a dingle dangle, of
course.

CYNDI
Of course.

The girls GIGGLE. Elda walks to the railing. Gazes in wonder at the mall.

ELDA
This place is like a storybook
land!

TERSHELLE
You've never been to a mall?

ELDA
Mama doesn't approve of them.

SUSAN
So where do you get your clothes?

ELDA
I make them.

CYNDI
Quelle surprise.

A SERIES OF QUICK CUTS:

Elda stands before a department store mirror in a cute dress.
The girls on either side of her. Elda shakes her head no.
The girls nod yes.

Elda in a skirt and sweater. Elda shakes her head no. The
girls nod yes.

Elda in a drab floor-length black dress. Elda nods yes. The
girls shake their heads no.

INT. MALL FOOD COURT - DAY

The girls sit around a table with trays of fast food. A
shopping bag at Elda's feet.

Elda sees Kevin seated across the way.

ELDA
He's beautiful.

The girls follow Elda's gaze.

TERSHELLE
Kevin Luce?

ELDA
He's my science partner. He's so
handsome.

SUSAN
You two would make a cute couple!

CYNDI
There's just one problem.
(pointing)
That's what he likes.

JUSTIN, 16, delicately handsome, slides in next to Kevin. He
takes a bite of corn dog.

ELDA
I like corn dogs, too.

TERSHELLE
Everyone at this table likes corn
dogs. Holla!

The girls high-five. Elda looks at them, perplexed.

SUSAN
Except when they jizz in your face.

Cyndi, Tershelle, and Susan LAUGH.

Cyndi turns. Her smile fades.

Rob and Dave stand at a food counter waiting for their order. Tanya Moretti, the school whore, leans against Rob. Her hand strokes his chest.

CYNDI
What the fuck?!

Cyndi bolts from the table. Tershelle looks after her. Sees the trouble.

TERSHELLE
Oh shit! Come on.

Tershelle, Susan, and Elda scramble to their feet.

AT THE COUNTER

Cyndi steps between Tanya and Rob.

CYNDI
(to Rob)
I told you I don't want you hanging
with her!

TANYA MORETTI
It's a free country.

CYNDI
I wasn't talking to you, Terror
Tits!

TANYA MORETTI
Terror Tits?

CYNDI
Yeah, your boobs are like a horror
movie. Just when I think I'm safe,
they keep popping up.

Tershelle, Susan, and Elda join them.

ROB
(to Cyndi)
Chillax, will ya?
(MORE)

ROB(cont'd)

We're just talking. Don't get all psycho bitch.

ELDA

Don't speak to her that way.

Everyone looks at Elda, surprised.

ROB

What did you say, Dick Chick?

CYNDI

Elda, I can handle this.

Elda steps forward. She gets in Rob's face.

ELDA

A gentleman should treat a lady with respect. Not say hurtful things to her.

ROB

Wow. You're right. I feel real bad.

(he bows, formally)

My apologies, your ladyship.

Elda curtsies.

ELDA

Apology accepted, but tell Cyndi you're sorry. Not me.

ROB

Oh... one more thing...

Rob nails Elda in the crotch. Elda goes down. Cyndi rushes to her side.

CYNDI

(to Rob)

You asshole!

ROB

(to Elda)

Thanks for the lesson... freak!

He leaves with Dave and Tanya.

TERSHELLE

(calling after them)

Have fun with Chlamydia!

CYNDI
 (to Elda)
 I told you to stay out of it. Why
 did you have to butt in?

ELDA
 My dingle dangle hurts so bad.

CYNDI
 Hey! I know something that'll make
 you feel better.

INT. CYNDI'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

We HEAR a RIP and Elda SCREAMS.

QUICK CUTS:

-- Cyndi holds a strip of fabric covered in wax and hair. A
 smooth swath of skin visible on Elda's hairy back.

-- Elda leans back, her head in a sink. Cyndi shampoos her
 hair.

-- The WHIR OF A BLOW DRYER. Tershelle twists a brush
 through Elda's hair.

-- CLOSE ON Elda's eye, magnified in a vanity mirror. A hand
 applies mascara.

-- CLOSE ON Elda's lips. An applicator adds sheen.

The girls look at their work.

CYNDI
 Ready?

ELDA (O.S.)
 Uh-huh.

Tershelle holds up a mirror. Elda stares at her reflection.
 Her hair in a French braid, eyebrows arched, face made up.
 Still not much of an improvement.

Elda GASPS, tears welling up in her eyes.

ELDA
 Oh my God! I'm so pretty! I'm a
 pretty girl!

The girls exchange an incredulous look. Tershelle teeters
 her hand to and fro making a "so-so" gesture.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Mary walks with her arms full of folded linens. She looks at the door, slightly ajar, at the end of the hallway.

She pauses.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Mary, twenty years younger, nears the door. Her face fresh and hopeful. A noticeable baby bump.

We HEAR FAINT MOANING coming from within.

MARY

Henry?

She grips the doorknob and swings the door open to reveal...

A HAND holding a HONEY BEAR SQUEEZE BOTTLE.

Mary GASPS. Hands fly to her mouth. The linens fall to the floor.

AN ENORMOUS GREAT DANE/SHEPHERD MIX bolts from the bedroom, knocking her against the door jamb.

CLOSE ON Mary's face, contorted. Her mouth opens...

EXT. WINNOWS HOUSE - DAY

We HEAR A PIERCING SCREAM. Shrill and prolonged. CROWS perched in the tree next to the house take to the air with a SQUAWK.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY (AS BEFORE)

Mary SLAMS the door shut. The folded linens still in her arms.

EXT. CAR WASH - DAY

A large handmade sign which reads "WET YOUR FAVORITE SPARKLER!"

The Sparklers, clad in bikinis, throw soapy sponges and chase each other with buckets of water.

Susan collects money from customers.

Elda wears a vintage bathing suit that resembles long underwear with a skirt. She puts on a pair of fashionable sunglasses and poses. Cyndi and Tershelle spray her with water.

INT. AUDITORIUM — DAY

A placard onstage reads "SPARTANBURG'S GOT TALENT." We HEAR "Flight of the Bumblebee" as Elda works a loom.

She pulls off an area rug just as the MUSIC ENDS.

Perplexed reactions from the students.

INT. ELDA'S ROOM — NIGHT

Elda stares at her reflection. She wears glitter eye shadow and lip gloss. She glues an appliqué heart to her cheek.

Mary appears next to her.

MARY

When I was a young girl, an organ grinder would parade his monkey through town beggin' for coins. BoBo. His face was done up just like yours.

ELDA

Please, Mama! I'm nervous enough as it is.

MARY

If I give you a penny, will you dance me a jig?

INT. ROOM OFF THE AUDITORIUM — NIGHT

The Sparklers, clad in purple crop tops and gold skirts, stand in a circle.

They CLAP RHYTHMICALLY -- their version of a club handshake. Elda joins in, thrilled to be part of the ritual.

SPARKLERS

Say what? We own it. Our moves
are gonna show it. We're here. So
smell us. We know that you are
jealous. We what? We rock it. A
win is in our pocket!

The girls hug each other.

SPARKLERS

(ad lib)

Good luck! Let's rock this shit
out!, etc.

COACH TESLEY

Listen to the music and stay on the
beat! I wanna see tight
formations!

She picks up a ROCK from the table, a puzzled expression on
her face.

COACH TESLEY (CONT'D)

Does this belong to anybody?

She holds it to her cheek.

COACH TESLEY (CONT'D)

Wow. It's warm.

SUSAN

Oh! That's mine.

Susan takes it. Cyndi and Tershelle look at each other and
CRACK UP.

ELDA

(to Susan)

I'm so nervous. How do I look?

SUSAN

As good as can be expected.

ELDA

Thanks!

TERSHELLE

Oh, Elda! Spirit ribbons.

ELDA

What?

Tershelle holds up her ponytail. It is tied with gold ribbon.

TERSHELLE

You need a spirit ribbon. Hurry!

Elda frantically scans the dressing tables. She spots a purple ribbon and grabs it.

A HAND slams down on hers. It belongs to Cyndi.

CYNDI

Only team captain wears purple.
Everyone else wears gold. There's
some over there.

Elda rushes to the table. Grabs the ribbon. Looks at her reflection in the mirror and smiles, giddy with nervous excitement.

INT. GYM — NIGHT

Spectators fill the stands.

An electronic scoreboard reads "SPARTANS 32, COUGARS 28."
BASKETBALL PLAYERS line the front row.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Make some noise for the award-
winning Spartanburg
Sparkleeerrrrsss!

The SPARKLERS sprint onto the floor and strike their opening pose. Elda stands front and center.

IN THE STANDS

Coach Tesley watches nervously.

People notice Elda. Nudge each other. Titters of LAUGHTER.

Cyndi and Tershelle, smiles frozen, exchange a look. Uh-oh.

Elda scans the crowd. All eyes on her. A few people point.
LAUGHTER SPREADS. Doubt flits across her face.

Suddenly, *Elda catches a glimpse of Mary*. Looks again to make sure, but a spectator shifts, blocking her view.

The MUSIC STARTS.

Elda falters. Thrown. A few steps behind.

She turns the wrong way. Knocks Tershelle to the ground.
Elda offers her hand. Tershelle pushes her away.

Elda struggles to find her place in the routine. She turns.
Face to face with Cyndi.

CYNDI

Relax. Give into the music. Let
it take you.

They part. Something changes within Elda. Her dancing
becomes passionate. Intense.

BASKETBALL PLAYER 1 watches Elda. He nudges his friend.

BASKETBALL PLAYER 1

Yo! Check out low-rent RuPaul!

Elda attacks the routine with sharp precise moves.

BASKETBALL PLAYER 2

That's some freaky ass shit, man!

The Sparklers strike their final pose as the MUSIC STOPS.

Spectators WHISTLE and STOMP THEIR FEET. Elda's chest rises
and falls. She smiles.

Coach Tesley stands, APPLAUDING WILDLY.

COACH TESLEY

Woo! Yeah!

Elda glows, triumphant. She looks into the crowd. Mary is
gone. Was she ever there?

INT. PARLOUR - NIGHT

Elda, carrying a duffel bag, discovers Mary asleep in a chair
with a blanket pulled up to her neck. An open book rests on
her lap.

Elda gently shakes her.

ELDA

Mama?

Mary opens her eyes and stretches.

MARY
What time is it?

ELDA
It's late.

MARY
How was your little show?

ELDA
I thought I saw you there.

MARY
Me? What business would I have
going to something like that?

ELDA
They liked me, Mama. I made people
smile.

MARY
I wasn't aware you were performing
for the deaf, dumb, and blind.

ELDA
You're not gonna get to me tonight.
I feel too good. I don't think
I've ever been happier.

Elda kisses Mary on the cheek and bounds out of the room.
Mary scowls and rips off the blanket. She is fully dressed.

INT. ENGLISH CLASS — DAY

Mr. Grayson leans against his desk. Elda sits in the front
row. Tershelle and Cyndi seated behind her.

MR. GRAYSON
In Victorian times, it was quite
common to lock away the mentally
ill. Was Rochester right to
confine Berte to the attic?

TERSHELLE
Hell yeah. That crazy bitch was
setting fires!

Elda leaps out of her seat. She appeals to the class.

ELDA
It was a cry for help! Berte
wanted to see the world.
(MORE)

ELDA(cont'd)

Meet a man! Wouldn't you set a
fire if you were locked away and
couldn't escape? Hello?!

The class stares at her in stunned silence.

TERSHELLE

(to Cyndi)

Okay, girlfriend needs to get out
more.

EXT. TERSHELLE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

MUSIC BLARES. A house party in full swing.

Elda stands on the front lawn. She nervously fiddles with a
lace handkerchief. She watches KIDS through the window.

She turns to leave and drops the handkerchief. A HAND swoops
in, retrieves the fabric. Elda looks into the face of Kevin,
who stands with his boyfriend, Justin.

KEVIN

Hey, Elda!

She mouths "Kevin." The words won't come.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Thanks for the other day.

(then, to Justin)

We had this dissection in
Masterson's class. Elda totally
saved my ass.

He turns back to Elda.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

I owe you big time. You ever need
a favor, just ask.

Elda nods, unable to speak.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

You comin' in?

Elda nods.

INT. TERSHELLE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

KIDS dance, SHOUT over the music and play drinking games.

Elda stands in the kitchen with Cyndi, Tershelle and Susan.

ELDA
I just stood there. I couldn't say anything. Gentlemen make me so nervous.

CYNDI
Wait. You get nervous around guys?!

Tershelle hands Elda a large red plastic cup.

TERSHELLE
This will help.

Elda takes a whiff. A look of alarm.

ELDA
Devil water?!

TERSHELLE
It's just a beer.

Elda hesitates.

CYNDI
Let me guess. You've never had a drink before.

ELDA
Mama doesn't approve of liquor. She says every time a young lady drinks, a puppy is born without a tail.

SUSAN
That's so not true. My mom drank when she was pregnant with me, and I had a tail.

The girls look at Susan, horrified.

SUSAN (CONT'D)
I got it taken off. Duh!

A beat. Tershelle turns to Elda.

TERSHELLE
I don't see your Mama here. Do you?

Elda smiles. She downs the cup in one gulp.

SUSAN
You're gonna be soooo popular!

A SERIES OF QUICK CUTS

Elda drinks.

Elda spins a girl around to reveal an elaborate braid. A
LINE OF GIRLS APPLAUD. The next girl in line eagerly rushes
forward, ready for Elda to work her magic.

Elda drinks.

She pop-locks with a GROUP OF GUYS.

Elda drinks.

A row of red plastic cups. We HEAR IRISH FOLK MUSIC.

KIDS (O.S.)
Go! Go! Go! Go! Go!

A semi circle of KIDS CLAP and CHANT in time to the music.

Elda dances a traditional Irish folk jig -- rigid upper body
above flailing legs.

EXT. TERSHELLE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Kevin and Justin talk on the patio. Elda approaches, a
plastic cup of courage in her hand.

ELDA
I want you to take me to the dance.

Kevin, surprised, looks at Justin, then at Elda.

KEVIN
To the Junior Prom?

Elda nods.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
I already made plans with Justin...

ELDA
He can come, too. You said if I
never needed a favor...

KEVIN
Yeah, but --

ELDA
I've always dreamed of going to a
dance with a boy, even though Mama
won't like it.

Kevin looks at Justin. How can I say no? Justin shrugs and
nods.

KEVIN
(to Elda)
Okay. It's a date.

Elda beams.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
Your mom have a problem with you
being gay, too?

ELDA
Oh, yes. Mama hates when I'm
gay... And I've been gay a lot
since I started school.

Kevin and Justin LAUGH. They've been there.

INT. TERSHELLE'S HOUSE — NIGHT

Elda rushes up to Cyndi, Tershelle and Susan, plastic cup in
hand.

ELDA
I'm going to the dance with a boy!

She swoons drunkenly. Tershelle and Cyndi catch her.

ELDA (CONT'D)
Oh, my! I think I've got the
vapors!

TERSHELLE
(to Cyndi)
You know where she lives?

CYNDI
Yeah.
(then, to Elda)
Come on, Lady Nutsack.

ELDA
Call me Berte. I'm never going
back to the attic. You hear me?
Never!

CYNDI

Okay.

EXT. ELDA'S HOUSE — NIGHT

Cyndi's Miata parked in front of the house.

Cyndi guides Elda up the walkway. Elda drinks from a large plastic cup, her other arm slung around Cyndi's shoulder.

CYNDI

Where's your key?

ELDA

You're like my sister. I always wanted a sister. Promise you'll help me.

CYNDI

I am helping you.

ELDA

No. Help me escape.

CYNDI

Escape from what?

ELDA

She'll try and stop you. Don't let her. Promise?

CYNDI

Yes. I promise.

Cyndi reaches into Elda's pocket. She GASPS. Quickly extracts her hand.

CYNDI (CONT'D)

Sorry.

ELDA

What?

CYNDI

That wasn't your house key.

Elda reaches into her pocket and retrieves her key. Hands it to Cyndi.

ELDA

No attic. I don't want to be locked in the attic.

Elda stops. She looks at Cyndi, studying her face.

ELDA (CONT'D)
I used to think you were pretty,
but you're not. You're not pretty
at all.

CYNDI
You want me to dump your ass right
here?

ELDA
You're beautiful. If I looked like
you, I don't think I could stand
it. So so beautiful.

Cyndi looks away, touched and embarrassed.

CYNDI
Come on. You're drunk.

They move toward the door.

ELDA
Now you have to tell me I'm
beautiful. That's how it works.

CYNDI
You're beautiful... inside, okay?
Let's get you to bed. You're gonna
be in a world of pain tomorrow.

INT. ELDA'S ROOM - DAY

Mary flings the curtains open with a WHOOSH. SUNLIGHT blasts Elda's face. She MOANS and lifts her hand to shield herself. A massive hangover.

ELDA
Ow! Mama, what's your problem?

Mary rips off the covers. Throws them to the floor.

MARY
Going to the mall... Shakin' your
bee-hind at football games...

Mary holds up a red plastic cup.

MARY (CONT'D)

... and now comes the booze. A respectable young lady doesn't do such things.

Elda lumbers out of bed.

ELDA

A teenage girl does, Mama. Chillax.

MARY

Chillax? I don't even know what you're sayin' to me.

Elda grabs her robe. Passes Mary.

ELDA

It's English, Mama. It's the way teenagers talk. Why are you all up in my grill?

Mary grabs Elda's arm. Spins her around.

MARY

Someone's gettin' a little big for her britches.

ELDA

No. Someone's got a life outside this house, and you're jealous.

MARY

Jealous? Of you? Come come, Elda.

ELDA

For years you told me what an awful world existed outside these walls. I know I'm the gray gull. I see that I'm different. It doesn't matter. People like me anyway. The world treated you poorly and you turned your back on it. Maybe you got pecked to death, Mama... but not me.

MARY

There's gonna be some big changes around here, gal.

ELDA

Like what?

INT. SPARTANBURG HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY

Elda SLAMS her locker door, revealing Cyndi, Tershelle, and Susan.

CYNDI
Grounded? How long?

ELDA
A month.

TERSHELLE
That's so shady! The prom is this weekend.

ELDA
I'll have to tell Kevin I can't go.

CYNDI
Screw the dance. What about regionals?

ELDA
You'll have to find someone else. She won't even let me come to practice after school.

CYNDI
What?! I knew you'd fuck us over!

ELDA
Cyndi?!

CYNDI
You only got into the Sparklers because of me. I... We... need you.

ELDA
Really? You need me?

CYNDI
Yes.

Elda shakes her head, solemnly.

ELDA
Okay. I won't let you down.

INT. ATTIC - DAY

Elda carries a large dress form across the floor. She disappears down a flight of stairs.

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

Elda and Mary eat across from each other. Elda places her utensils on her plate and stands.

ELDA
I'm not feeling well, Mama. I
think I'll go to bed.

INT. ELDA'S ROOM - EVENING

Elda tucks a blanket around the dress form, which lies in her bed. She grabs her duffel bag and disappears out the open window.

INT. GYM - NIGHT

Elda, in antiquated workout clothes, rehearses with the Sparklers.

INT. SCIENCE CLASS - DAY

A roomful of students. Elda holds an elastic woven band with a headlamp attached to the front. She scans the room and slides it into her backpack.

INT. PARLOUR - DAY

Mary dozes in her rocking chair. Elda tiptoes through the room with a small bolt of fabric.

INT. ATTIC - NIGHT

Elda guides a swath of fabric through a sewing machine. A SMALL CIRCLE OF LIGHT from her headlamp illuminates a dress form.

She cuts the thread, stands and holds the fabric up to the form. She turns. Her elbow hits the dummy.

In slo-mo, the dress form falls with a DULL THUD.

MARY (O.S.)
(calling up)
Elda?!

Elda flicks off the headlamp, plunging the room into DARKNESS.

We HEAR FOOTSTEPS ON THE STAIRS and Mary enters with a kerosene lamp, ILLUMINATING the room.

MARY
Why didn't you answer me?

ELDA
I didn't hear you. I was looking for a spare shuttle and my lamp went out.

MARY
I don't like hearing sounds in the attic. Makes me think we got us a rat.

Elda slides past Mary and disappears down the stairs. Mary glances around the room.

EXT. SCHOOL COURTYARD — DAY

Elda sits outside with Shelby eating lunch.

ELDA
I've been practicing so much, I think my toes are nearly bloodied, Have you ever been to a dance?

SHELBY
No. I can't dance.

ELDA
Oh, everybody says that. I bet you can.

SHELBY
No. Really. My body doesn't metabolize calcium properly. That's why I have a Segway and the brace. I can't stand for long periods or walk too far. I always wanted to dance, though.

He gazes at Elda.

SHELBY (CONT'D)

Elda? Would you wear your dress for me? I've been imagining what you look like in it.

ELDA

It's too risky. Besides, I can't let Mama find out.

SHELBY

No... from your bedroom window. I can see you from mine. Please?

Elda bites her lower lip, contemplating.

INT. ELDA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Elda wears a royal blue satin gown, and admires her reflection in a full-length mirror. She looks surprisingly elegant.

She moves to the window and parts the drapes. She spins.

INT. SHELBY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Shelby watches Elda spin from afar, framed by her window. He twirls on his Segway.

INT. PARLOUR - AFTERNOON

Elda works the loom while Mary knits in her chair.

Elda glances at the grandfather clock. Distracted. Mary notices.

MARY

Why don't you make us some tea?

ELDA

Tea?

MARY

Yes, tea.

Elda stands and tentatively moves toward the kitchen. She makes a show of noticing the clock.

ELDA

Oh my. Look at the time.
Shouldn't you be headin' into town
before it gets too late?

MARY

Sounds like you're trying to get
rid of me. You fixin' to go
somewhere?

ELDA

No, Mama. I'm grounded. Remember?

MARY

Oh, I remember. Just making sure
you do, too.

Elda's mind races. She sits back down.

MARY (CONT'D)

Aren't you forgetting something?

ELDA

What? Oh! The tea. Yes.

Elda stands again. She moves toward the kitchen.

MARY

I'm chilly. Hand me my wrap before
you go. It's on the loveseat.

Elda picks up a piece of fabric draped over the chair. Royal
blue satin. Her blood freezes.

ELDA

Where did you get this fabric?

MARY

That ol' thing? Well, I been
hearin' sounds coming from the
attic, so I threw everything out
thinkin' we might have a rat.

ELDA

My dress! My dress was in the
attic!

MARY

Oh, was that yours? It was so big
I thought it was an old tarp. What
would you need with a dress like
that, anyways?

The DOORBELL RINGS. Elda looks up, her eyes wide with terror.

MARY (CONT'D)
Expecting company?

Elda tries to speak but the words won't come.

MARY (CONT'D)
Go to your room.

Elda stands, frozen.

MARY (CONT'D)
(hissing)
To your room!

Elda bolts.

INT. FOYER - AFTERNOON

Mary opens the door. Kevin stands on the porch dressed in a tux. He carries a wrist corsage.

KEVIN
Mrs. Winnows? Hi, I'm Kevin.

Kevin extends his hand. Mary just looks at it.

MARY
What do you want?

KEVIN
I'm here to pick up Elda - for our date?

MARY
Elda ain't goin' nowhere. She's indisposed.

KEVIN
Is she sick?

MARY
Yes. She's got the polio.

Kevin LAUGHS.

KEVIN
Polio? That's a good one!

Mary glares at him. His smile fades.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
I thought polio was...

ELDA (O.S.)
Mama likes to joke.

Mary spins to find Elda standing on the stairs. She wears her drab floor length dress.

ELDA (CONT'D)
Sorry to keep you waiting, Kevin.

KEVIN
Wow. You look...
(giving up)
My car's outside.

Elda passes Mary. Mary grabs her arm, fiercely.

MARY
Don't you dare leave! Don't you
walk out that door!

Elda flings her hand away. Quickly ushers Kevin outside.

MARY (CONT'D)
You're grounded! You hear me?!

EXT. WINNOWS HOUSE - AFTERNOON (CONTINUOUS)

Mary follows the couple down the walkway. Elda and Kevin jump into his car.

MARY
(shouting)
He's just using you, Elda! You're
gonna be the fool. Wait and see!
I'm right!

The ENGINE REVS and SCREECHES away.

MARY (CONT'D)
I'm always right.

INT. CAR - AFTERNOON (MOVING)

Kevin drives. Elda smells her wrist corsage. She extends her arm and admires it.

ELDA
No one ever brought me flowers
before.

Kevin looks at her and smiles.

KEVIN
(joking)
Glad I could be your first.
(he CHUCKLES, then)
Your mom's a piece of work...

ELDA
Let's not talk about Mama. Tonight
is about us.

KEVIN
Us?

Kevin looks at Elda. She smiles coquettishly. He LAUGHS,
thinking it a joke.

ELDA
I have a confession. This is the
first dance I've ever gone to with
a boy.

KEVIN
Me, too.

Elda smiles, oblivious.

EXT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

A procession of students in formal wear walk up the steps
into the building.

Elda and Kevin follow. Elda gazes at a huge banner above the
entrance which reads "Written in the Stars." She takes a
luxurious breath and smiles.

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Elda and Kevin enter a wonderland of streamers, balloons, and
glittering lights.

A BAND PLAYS on a riser with a dance floor area in front,
ringed by cafe tables.

Elda spots Cyndi, Tershelle, and Susan, all in prom finery.
She GASPS then SQUEALS. Rushes over to them. Kevin follows.

ELDA
You all look so beautiful!

KEVIN
Excuse me, ladies. Time to find
the BF.

Kevin wanders off.

CYNDI
Elda, where's your dress?

ELDA
Oh. Mama found it and tore it up.

TERSHELLE
What?! That is so cunty.

ELDA
Cunty?

TERSHELLE
Yeah. You know, really awful.

ELDA
It's okay. I'm not gonna let it
get to me. Tonight has been
magical.

SUSAN
I think you look very pretty.

ELDA
Really?

SUSAN
No. But isn't it nice to be told
you look pretty?

ELDA
I guess...

CYNDI
Susan, do you have to look at
instructions every time you put in
a tampon?

SUSAN
Duh! Yeah.

Cyndi rolls her eyes.

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT (LATER)

Kevin and Elda dance. She is in heaven.

KEVIN
I really admire you. You've got
huge balls.

Elda looks at her dress.

ELDA
Where?

KEVIN
No. It's an expression.

ELDA
Oh.

Justin, wearing a tux, appears at Elda's side. He taps her on the shoulder.

JUSTIN
May I cut in?

Elda GIGGLES coyly, and curtsies.

ELDA
Of course.

She opens her arms. Justin moves past her and grabs Kevin. They dance.

Elda stands for a beat, confused.

ELDA
I'll get us something to drink.

The boys are too into each other to notice. She moves away.

AT THE REFRESHMENT TABLE

Elda picks up a drink. Trans Am Dave slides next to her and pours from a flask into her cup.

ELDA
Hey!

Dave snatches the spiked drink from her hand.

DAVE

Thanks.

Elda gets herself a fresh drink.

DAVE (CONT'D)

So... what up, Pickle Surprise?

ELDA

My name is Elda.

DAVE

If I get drunk enough, I might let you blow me.

ELDA

I don't know what you're talking about, but Kevin is my escort for the evening.

Dave watches Kevin and Justin slow dance.

DAVE

(pointing)

Looks like you got cock-blocked.

Elda turns just as Justin and Kevin move in for a kiss. Elda stares wide-eyed, covering her mouth.

ELDA

Oh!

She rushes to them, pushing them apart.

ELDA (CONT'D)

What's wrong with you two?!

KEVIN

Elda!

ELDA

That's not right! You've both got hoo-haws!

KEVIN

What's your problem? We had an agreement. You knew Justin would be here.

Elda turns, puzzled. Looks for an escape.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Elda!

EXT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Elda, distraught, rushes from the auditorium. Her HEELS CLACKING on the walkway draw the attention of Cyndi, who sits on a cement wall overlooking the parking lot.

Cyndi is wasted. Dried mascara tears stain her cheeks, making her look like a sinister clown. She swigs from a 40-ounce Olde English.

CYNDI
Run Cinder-fella! At midnight your
pussy turns into a dick!

Cyndi CRACKS UP at her own joke.

Elda hastily wipes her cheeks and approaches.

ELDA
What are you doing out here?

CYNDI
Rob passed out, so I'm getting
shitfaced, too.
(toasting Elda)
Happy prom.

Elda sits down next to her. THUNDER RUMBLES.

ELDA
I'm sorry.

CYNDI
Pffft! It's only a dance. Who
gives a fuck, right? Me and Rob
are gonna have the rest of our
lives together after we get
married.

ELDA
Married? Do you love him?

CYNDI
Love!? I'm the cute popular girl.
He's the cute popular boy. We look
great together. That's how it
works.

ELDA
But that's not enough. How does he
make you feel?

Cyndi puts her hands on Elda's face and climbs to her feet. She lowers her dress straps and hefts her cleavage.

CYNDI (CONT'D)

Check out my tits. Perky, right?
I got a flat stomach and nice ass
too. I've peaked.

(shouting)

I'm at my fuckin' peak!

ELDA

I don't understand.

CYNDI

It's all downhill now. I need to
marry him while I can still land
him, right? Tick tock tick tock.

Cyndi sinks back to the ground, sitting very close to Elda.

ELDA

That's sad.

CYNDI

You're gonna pass judgment on me?
Fuck you!

ELDA

Sometimes I think we get trapped
into seeing things the way they
are, and we're afraid to dream
about what's possible.

CYNDI

You think I'm afraid? Of what?

ELDA

You're lead Sparkler. You're
pretty and popular. People look up
to you. But once you leave the
safety of high school, then what?

Elda has nailed it. Cyndi's eyes narrow.

CYNDI

You don't know shit. You still
think some prince is gonna ride up
on his horse and carry you away to
fairytale land.

ELDA

Is that so bad? Don't we all
deserve that?

CYNDI
I don't know.

ELDA
I think you deserve a prince.

Cyndi turns toward Elda.

CYNDI
You do?

They move into each other. A soft tender kiss. Elda's eyes snap open. She jolts back.

ELDA
Oh no! I'm sorry! I didn't mean
to do that!

The first DROPS OF RAIN fall.

Cyndi gathers her hair. Pulls it away from her face.

CYNDI
Hold my hair.

ELDA
What?

CYNDI
My hair!

Elda grabs Cyndi's hair. Cyndi lurches forward and vomits.

RAIN POURS from above.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Elda stands at the sink, ILLUMINATED by MOONLIGHT. Her hair and clothes drenched. Her body convulses as she stifles a SOB. Mary emerges from the shadows.

MARY
Mama's here, child.

ELDA
Oh, Mama!

Elda, SOBBING, rushes into Mary's arms.

ELDA (CONT'D)

I think there's something wrong
with me! Everything is all
confused!

MARY

I tried to tell you, but you
wouldn't listen.

ELDA

I'm sorry, Mama.

Mary strokes Elda's hair.

MARY

Men dip their bucket into your
well, trying to quench a thirst
that never dies. And when they've
drained you dry, they turn to the
closest thing at hand to satisfy
their needs. A watermelon. A jar
of face cream... or...

Mary gets a faraway look in her eyes.

We HEAR A DOG BARKING.

MARY (CONT'D)

... other things.

ELDA

It hurts so much.

MARY

I tried to protect you. Lord knows
I tried. But you're safe now.
You'll always be safe... long as
you're with your Mama.

Elda slowly nods. Maybe Mama is right...

EXT. BLEACHERS - DAY

Shelby and Elda sit on bleachers bordering a running track.
Shelby's Segway rests nearby.

SHELBY

I thought you liked Kevin.

ELDA

I did, but...

SHELBY
Don't you like him anymore?

ELDA
I don't know...

SHELBY
Is there someone else?

Elda looks at Shelby. She blushes. Searches for an answer.

Shelby scoots closer to Elda. She becomes nervous. No man has ever sat this close to her.

SHELBY (CONT'D)
Elda, can I feel you up?

ELDA
I don't know what that is.

Shelby puts his hands on Elda's man boobs, squeezing rhythmically.

SHELBY
It's like a little massage. You'll like it. I promise.

He opens his mouth, his face in rapturous ecstasy. Elda is surprised by his transformation.

SHELBY (CONT'D)
Oh my! You've got GREAT tits!

ELDA
Thanks.

Elda glances away, slightly embarrassed.

SHELBY
What's the matter Elda? Don't you like me?

ELDA
I do. It's just... I kissed Cyndi at the dance.

Shelby's hands stop.

SHELBY
Kissed her? On the mouth?

ELDA
Yes.

SHELBY
Did you use tongue?

ELDA
I can't remember. We were talking,
and all of a sudden I felt like I
wanted to hold her. To protect
her.

SHELBY
It sounds like you have feelings
for her.

Elda draws back.

ELDA
I can't have feelings for Cyndi.

SHELBY
Why?

ELDA
That would be wrong.

SHELBY
It's not wrong. Maybe you're a
lesbian.

Shelby scoots closer. Starts to "massage" again.

ELDA
A lesbian?

SHELBY
Yeah. A girl who likes other
girls.

ELDA
No! That's impossible.

SHELBY
Our heart tells us who we like,
Elda. There's no choice. We just
have to listen. Maybe you should
invite Cyndi over and kiss her
again. Just to see if you like it.

ELDA
I don't know...

SHELBY
I could even watch.

The thought of this turns Shelby on. He MOANS.

SHELBY (CONT'D)
Oh Elda, you feel so good. Am I
making you feel good?

ELDA
Um... I guess...

SHELBY
Oh! Elda... I love you! I LOVE
YOU ELDA! OH!

Shelby convulses on himself.

ELDA
Shelby?!

Shelby stands frozen, mortified.

SHELBY
I have to go.

He hobbles to his Segway. Elda watches him speed away,
perplexed.

INT. ELDA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Elda, wearing a full length nightgown, sits at a vanity
mirror. Mary stands behind her, brushing her hair.

MARY
No matter what you do, or what you
try, I will always be one step
ahead of you.

ELDA
Why are you telling me this?

MARY
I know you wanted to go to your
competition, but dancing is better
left to whores.

ELDA
May I go to bed now?

Mary walks to the door. She turns.

MARY
I hope you pray real hard tonight.

Mary closes the door. Elda pulls a duffel bag from underneath her bed. She rips off her nightgown to reveal she's fully dressed.

She open the window and climbs out onto the trellis, disappearing into the night.

INT. BUS - NIGHT

Sparklers fill the seats. Animated CHATTER.

Elda bounds up the stairs and scans the rows. No Cyndi.

She grabs an empty seat in front of Susan and Tershelle.

ELDA
Have you ever been felt up?

SUSAN
Yeah. Tons of times.

TERSHELLE
Of course.

ELDA
So it's a normal thing?

TERSHELLE
Did Kevin try to get some?

ELDA
No. Shelby. My next door neighbor.

The GIRLS REACT with OOOHS.

SUSAN
Someone got a handful down below!

The girls LAUGH and high five each other.

ELDA
He told me I had great tits.

TERSHELLE
Wait! Tits?

Cyndi appears at the top of the stairs. Elda smiles.

Cyndi makes her way down the aisle. Elda slides over to the window. Cyndi passes. Elda's smile fades. Cyndi stops at the next row.

CYNDI
(to Susan)
Move.

Susan reluctantly stands, maneuvers around Cyndi and joins Elda. Cyndi slides in next to Tershelle.

TERSHELLE
Hey, girl!

CYNDI
Hey.

Elda looks at Cyndi. Cyndi avoids eye contact.

SUSAN
(to Cyndi)
Elda was just telling us about
getting felt up.

CYNDI
(uninterested)
Oh.

Susan turns back to Elda.

SUSAN
So was it fun at least?

ELDA
It was okay, until he got really
excited and did this jerky thing...
kind of like dancing.

SUSAN
And it goes all over your face.
Been there. He left right after,
didn't he?

ELDA
Yeah! How did you know?

TERSHELLE
Typical spooger. As soon as they
cum, they're done.

SUSAN
And you're left looking for a
Kleenex.

Elda looks at Cyndi, who listens to her iPod. Cyndi closes her eyes.

INT. BUS - NIGHT - MOVING (LATER)

The girls sleep. Cyndi's head rests on Tershelle's shoulder. Elda watches Cyndi doze.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

A male stick figure indicates the Boys Locker Room. Coach Tesley pushes the door open for Elda.

COACH TESLEY
You can change in here.

ELDA
Why don't I get to change with the
rest of the girls?

Coach Tesley looks at Elda. Is she serious?

COACH TESLEY
You don't have the same equipment.

Elda looks at her blankly. Then a realization. A look of panic.

ELDA
You know! Please don't tell anyone
I'm a lesbian!

Coach Tesley throws up her hands, flummoxed.

COACH TESLEY
What?! Just get changed.

INT. BOYS LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Elda unzips her duffel bag. She GASPS.

She pulls out a crop top which reads "WHORE" and a pair of CROTCHLESS PANTIES.

INT. GIRLS LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Elda rounds a bank of lockers and walks into...

HER TEAMMATES, in various stages of undress.

Cyndi, topless, stands front and center. Elda stares, awed by Cyndi's boobs. The girls notice and SCREAM.

CYNDI
Elda! What the fuck!

TERSHELLE
Get out of here!

ELDA
I'm looking for Coach Tesley.

The girls SHRIEK LOUDER and point, covering themselves.

Elda looks down.

SHE HAS POPPED A WOODY UNDERNEATH HER DRESS.

Elda covers her bulge and runs away.

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

Spectators fill the stands. A packed house. Four Judges sit behind a table at the edge of the floor.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
Ladies and Gentlemen... the Ardmore
Emeralds!

A DRILL TEAM CLAD IN GREEN AND WHITE rushes the floor, waving at the crowd. They hit their opening pose.

MUSIC STARTS.

INT. BOYS LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Elda paces. Coach Tesley enters with a costume wrapped in plastic.

ELDA
Sorry! I didn't know...

COACH TESLEY
(handing her the costume)
We don't have time. Here's a
spare. It's gonna be small but
you'll have to make it work.
Hurry! We're on deck!

Coach Tesley rushes out. Elda spins.

ELDA
What about panties?

Coach Tesley is gone. Elda picks up the crotchless underwear.

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY (MINUTES LATER)

MUSIC STOPS. The Emeralds hit the end of their routine and freeze. The crowd APPLAUDS and SHOUTS.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
Thank you, Emeralds!

The Emeralds break their pose and clear the floor.

INT. BOYS LOCKER ROOM - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Elda stares at her reflection. The costume is ridiculously small.

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
Ladies and Gentlemen, they just missed qualifying for Nationals last year, and tonight they're hoping to change that. Please welcome to the floor... the Spartanburg Sparklers!

The crowd APPLAUDS. The auditorium is PLUNGED INTO DARKNESS.

Lights create FOUR ILLUMINATED ROWS on the floor. Cyndi leads a few Sparklers into position. They strike a modern dance pose.

CYNDI
(like a drill sergeant)
Spark-lers! Light it up!

Cyndi STOMPS and CLAPS. A SYNCOPATED BEAT. The other girls pick it up.

Tershelle and MORE SPARKLERS join them, marching in time to the beat, filling in the gaps. They hit the same pose and join in the STOMP CLAP.

A THIRD GROUP OF SPARKLERS follow.

The formation complete except for a gap in the front line.

Elda marches into position. The costume barely covers her body.

IN THE CROWD

Coach Tesley looks at Elda.

COACH TESLEY
Oh dear God.

Spectators start to LAUGH.

CYNDI
Spark-lers! Sound off.

Row by row the girls shout out a number and pop into starting position, their right leg lifted in passé.

GIRLS
One - two - three - four!

Tershelle stands directly behind Elda. Her eyes widen. She stares at Elda's exposed butt cheek.

PERCUSSIVE MUSIC BLASTS. LIGHTS BUMP TO FULL. The Sparklers launch into their routine. They weave in and out of each other, one formation morphing into another.

CLOSE ON Elda's face, determined. She dances like someone possessed, with sharp tight moves.

Coach Tesley looks at the judges. A row of stoic humorless faces.

Tershelle weaves past Cyndi. She cuts her eyes to Elda's skirt. Cyndi follows her gaze. A glimpse of skin.

Cyndi turns away from the audience and flattens her back. Her legs spread in a wide stance.

Elda loops her arms through Cyndi's and leans back to complete a fan kick.

Spectators recoil.

SPECTATORS
(in unison)
Ohhhhh!

Elda moves to the edge of the floor. A running prep followed by a series of aerial cartwheels.

SPECTATORS
(punctuating each of
Elda's cartwheels)
Oh! Oh! Oh!

A Judge shakes her head with disgust. Scribbles on a scorecard.

The crowd CONVULSES WITH LAUGHTER. General pandemonium. The Sparklers hit their closing pose.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
The Spartanburg Sparklers...
showing us everything they've got!

PROLONGED LAUGHTER with a SMATTERING OF APPLAUSE.

Coach Tesley shakes her head in disbelief.

INT. AUDITORIUM BACKSTAGE - DAY

An elated Elda bounds offstage, followed by noticeably pissed Sparklers.

ELDA
That was awesome! We rocked it!

Cyndi shoves Elda, hard. Elda falls to the floor, stunned.

CYNDI
I'll kill you, you tranny piece of
shit!

Elda scrambles to her feet.

ELDA
Cyndi?

CYNDI
You were planning to fuck us over
all along, weren't you?!

ELDA
What do you mean?

CYNDI
Going commando, numb nuts!

ELDA
I don't understand.

CYNDI
Bullshit! You can't be that
clueless!

Coach Tesley rushes between Elda and Cyndi, holding them at bay.

COACH TESLEY
Look, I know we're all upset, but
we can't have a fight here.

CYNDI
(to Coach Tesley)
What's gonna happen? Do we still
have a shot?

Coach Tesley looks at the group, her expression grim.

COACH TESLEY
We've been disqualified for lewd
conduct.

SPARKLERS
(ad lib)
No! What? Etc.

CYNDI
I never wanted her fugly ass on the
team in the first place. I told
you she'd ruin everything!

ELDA
Didn't want me on the team? I
thought we were friends.

CYNDI
Are you kidding? Look at you!
You're a freak and nobody likes
you. You're only here because you
can dance and land an aerial.

ELDA
You were just using me?

Coach Tesley places her hand on Cyndi's shoulder.

COACH TESLEY
Come on...

Cyndi flings Coach Tesley's hand aside. She points at Elda,
enraged.

CYNDI
Keep away from me, bitch! I don't
wanna see your donkey dick face
again!

Cyndi stalks off.

TERSHELLE
Not cool, Elda.

Tershelle follows, joined by the rest of the girls. Susan
turns for one final shot.

SUSAN
P.S..... your tits suck!

Elda, on the verge of tears, turns to Coach Tesley.

ELDA
Coach, I didn't mean...

Coach Tesley holds up her hand.

COACH TESLEY
Not a word, Elda.

INT. BUS - AFTERNOON

Elda sits at the back of the bus, alone. She CRIES SOFTLY.

INT. PARLOUR - NIGHT

Mary sits in her rocker, working on her needlepoint. We HEAR
THE DOOR open.

MARY
What happens when a young lady lies
to her mother?

Elda pauses in the open doorway carrying her duffel bag. She
looks awful.

ELDA
"A kitten is born without eyelids."

MARY
Go to bed.

Elda shuffles toward the stairs.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Elda walks next to Shelby, who rides his Segway.

ELDA
Cyndi totally hates me.

SHELBY
Give her time. She'll come around.

ELDA
I don't know. I've never seen
anyone so mad. I think I really
blew it, Shelby.

Elda stops, overcome with a wave of emotion.

ELDA (CONT'D)
What if she never talks to me
again?

Shelby stops. Pulls Elda into a hug.

SHELBY
Hey! You're a good person. You
didn't blow it.

She pulls away. Wipes a tear from her eye.

ELDA
Thanks.

SHELBY
I wish there was something I could
do to make you feel better.

Elda smiles, wistful.

ELDA
It's funny. All my life I hoped to
meet a gentleman like you, and now
that I have...

SHELBY
... your heart has picked someone
else.

ELDA
I'm sorry.

SHELBY
Don't you dare be sorry. Go win
back your lady.

ELDA
How?

SHELBY
One step.

Elda smiles.

ELDA
I could kiss you right now!

SHELBY
Can I feel you up instead?

BEGIN MONTAGE

EXT. SPARTANBURG HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

In the courtyard, Elda waves at Cyndi. Cyndi flips her off.
Elda smiles and returns the gesture. Cyndi moves away.
Elda's smile fades.

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

Cyndi, Tershelle, and Susan approach the Sparkler table to
find a cupcake. The icing spells out "I'm Sorry."

Elda watches from the doorway.

Cyndi hands it to a Handicapped Girl who throws her arms
around Cyndi.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER - DAY

CLOSE ON a sign reading "The Sisterhood: A Lesbian Support
Group."

Elda enters and shuts the door.

A second later the door opens and two Lipstick Lesbians
escort her out.

EXT. SPARTANBURG HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Students pour into school. Elda steps off the bus, considers, then turns and walks in the opposite direction.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Elda sits before the four regionals judges. She holds up the crotchless underwear and the "whore" crop top, her face impassioned.

They exchange looks. Is this chick for real?

END MONTAGE.

INT. GIRLS RESTROOM - DAY

Cyndi stands at the sink, fixing her lipstick. Elda emerges from the stall behind her.

CYNDI

You're not supposed to be in here.

ELDA

Lesbians can use the ladies' room.

CYNDI

You're not a lesbian.

Cyndi turns to leave.

ELDA

Cyndi, please! I didn't mean to get us disqualified. I miss you.

CYNDI

Before I left high school I wanted to do something special... to take the Sparklers to nationals. That was it, Elda. That was my shot. Now it's gone.

ELDA

You're already special, Cyndi. You don't need the Sparklers or Rob, or any of that other stuff.

Cyndi looks at Elda. Tears well up in her eyes.

CYNDI (CONT'D)
I started to really like you.
Stupid, huh?

ELDA
Cyndi...

Elda reaches out to touch Cyndi's shoulder. Cyndi draws back.

CYNDI
I can't be seen with a freak like
you. I have a reputation to
protect. Stop trying to be my
friend, okay?

She leaves. Elda looks at her reflection in the bathroom mirror.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Elda, books in hand, walks through the parking lot. She
HEARS MOANING.

Elda sees Rob banging Tanya Moretti in the backseat of the
Trans Am.

Elda flings open the door and grabs Rob by the back of his
shirt.

ELDA
Get off of her!

TANYA MORETTI
(screaming)
Oh my God!

Tanya covers herself as Rob tumbles out of the car. He lifts
up his pants.

Elda GASPS, stares at his crotch.

ELDA
You've got a dingle dangle!

ROB
What the fuck is your problem, Dick
Chick?

Rob grabs his crotch.

ROB (CONT'D)
You want some of this? Is that it?

ELDA
You don't deserve someone like
Cyndi.

Elda charges Rob. They fall to the ground, punching each other. Students gather.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Elda, her face bruised and swollen, sits across from Principal Anderson. Elda has a cut on her lip.

ELDA
Suspended?! Why?

PRINCIPAL ANDERSON
You started the fight.

ELDA
But that's not fair! Rob was
cheating on Cyndi.

PRINCIPAL ANDERSON
I don't care. You threw the first
punch.

ELDA
That is totally cunty.

PRINCIPAL ANDERSON
And now you've been expelled.

ELDA
What?!

MIRIAM ANDERSON
I called your mother. She's on her
way. She can home school you from
now on. We'll put a rush on the
approval.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Elda bursts through the door.

ELDA
Cyndi!

Elda scans the room full of students. No Cyndi. She backs out of the classroom and closes the door.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

MARY (O.S.)
Time to go, Elda.

Elda turns to face Mary.

ELDA
No. I want to stay here. With my friends.

MARY
Friends? Ha! No one here gives a damn about you. They're just using you.

ELDA
I'm not going, Mama.

MARY
(advancing on her)
Don't make a scene.

ELDA
(shouting)
I don't wanna go! I'm staying at school!

Mary grabs a taser gun out of her purse. We HEAR A CLICKING SOUND as she pushes it into Elda's shoulder. Elda convulses and falls to the floor.

Students and faculty rush into the hall, drawn by the commotion. Mary puts Elda's arm around her neck and, with the help of some students, hoists Elda to her feet.

MARY
Please excuse my daughter. She's overcome with emotion.

Mary guides Elda through the crowd.

EXT. WINNOWS HOUSE - DAY

Mary, wearing goggles, clears leaves from the front walkway with a leaf blower.

Cyndi approaches the gate. A purple spirit ribbon in her hair.

CYNDI
(calling out)
Mrs. Winnows?
(then, waving)
Hello?

Mary powers off the blower and lifts her goggles.

MARY
What do you want?

CYNDI
I'm Cyndi, team captain of the
Sparklers. Is Elda around?

MARY
She's doesn't want to see you.

CYNDI
I know she's probably pissed, but I
wanted to apologize and thank her.

MARY
For what?

CYNDI
Regionals. Whatever she told them
worked. They withdrew the
disqualification, and our scores
were enough to compete at
nationals.

MARY
Why do I care?

CYNDI
We want her back. We couldn't have
taken regionals without her, and
she can't dance if she's not
enrolled as a student. I even
smoothed things over with the
Principal.

MARY
My daughter told me she doesn't
want anything to do with you dirty
whores.

CYNDI
Elda would never say that.

MARY
I'd like you to leave now.

Cyndi pauses.

CYNDI
Tell her I stopped by at least?

Mary glares at her. Cyndi turns to leave.

EXT. WINNOWS HOUSE - DAY

Mary, dressed for town, walks through the gate and disappears behind the hedges.

Cyndi emerges from the foliage. She gazes up toward the attic window.

INT. WINNOWS HOUSE - DAY

Cyndi tiptoes across the foyer. She steps on a SQUEAKY floorboard. She pauses. Looks up the staircase.

A DOOR SHUTS in a neighboring room. Cyndi spins toward it.

CYNDI (CONT'D)
(whispering)
Elda?!

INT. PARLOUR - DAY

Cyndi moves through the room. Looks in awe at the antiquated decor.

We HEAR A FAINT GIGGLE. Cyndi spins. Walks into...

THE KITCHEN

A GIRL sits at the table with her back to Cyndi. A shawl over her shoulders.

CYNDI
Elda?

Cyndi moves around to the side to see...

A PORCELAIN DOLL.

CYNDI (CONT'D)
What the fuck?

A LOUD WHIR.

Mary explodes from the pantry with the leaf blower in her hand. Charges at Cyndi. The blower aimed at her face.

CYNDI (CONT'D)
(screaming)
Aaaahhhh!

Cyndi's cheeks flap from the force of the air.
The purple ribbon flies from her hair.

EXT. WINNOWS HOUSE - DAY

Cyndi SCREAMS as Mary chases her through the gate.

INT. ELDA'S ROOM - SUNSET

Elda dozes. Mary sets a tray with a bowl of soup onto the nightstand. Elda stirs and opens her eyes.

ELDA
(groggily)
My body is so heavy.

Mary lifts Elda and props pillows behind her.

MARY
You've been through a lot. Mama's
here to take care of you.

Mary sits beside her. Lifts the bowl of soup.

ELDA
When Rob got out of the car, I
swear I saw a dingle dangle. Why
would he have a dingle dangle?

MARY
Shhh. You're imagining things.

She holds up a spoon to Elda's mouth.

MARY (CONT'D)
Open the hangar.

Elda opens her mouth. Mary feeds her.

MARY (CONT'D)
Your eyes were playing tricks on
you.

ELDA
I guess so.
(a beat)
Did anyone from school stop by to
see me?

MARY
No child. I'm sorry.

Elda turns away from the window.

ELDA
Close the drapes.

Mary stands. Elda shuts her eyes.

INT. PARLOUR - NIGHT

Elda PLAYS PIANO while Mary knits. It's Liebestraum. Elda
stops and PLAYS A FEW CHORDS of some other tune.

MARY
I don't like that song.

Elda stops. PLAYS Liebestraum.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Elda stands before the stove, her worn copy of "Jane Eyre" in
her hand. She opens the latch to reveal glowing orange
embers.

Elda tosses the book into the stove. The book bursts into
flame. Elda watches it burn for a beat, then latches the
door closed.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Elda helps Mary clear breakfast dishes from the table.

MARY
We have time for a quick lesson
before you get to your chores.

ELDA
Yes, ma'am.

Elda retrieves the McGuffey Reader from the sideboard. She sees something on the floor. Familiar. She reaches down.

ELDA (CONT'D)
Where did you get this?

Mary turns. A PURPLE SPIRIT RIBBON dangles from Elda's hand.

MARY
That was part of your costume.

ELDA
No. Mine was gold. Only team captain wears purple.

MARY
You must have picked it up by accident.

Elda looks at Mary. She knows.

ELDA
Cyndi was here, wasn't she?!

MARY
I told you, nobody stopped by to see you.

ELDA
Liar! Why would you do that, Mama? Why didn't you tell me?

MARY
Haven't you suffered enough, Elda?

ELDA
You know! And you're trying to keep us apart.

MARY
Know what?

ELDA
I'm a lesbian! And I love Cyndi! And she's in love with me!

MARY
Oh, Elda!

ELDA
Enough, Mama! No more. I'm done with your interference.

Elda reaches into Mary's purse. Grabs the taser. Points it at Mary. A threat.

ELDA (CONT'D)
I'm gonna be the one in control.

INT. PARLOUR - DAY

Elda pauses in the doorway with a small suitcase. Mary knits in her rocker.

ELDA
I'm all packed up. Goodbye, Mama.

MARY
Before you walk out that door, I
got a little story to tell you
about the birds and the bees.

Elda SIGHS.

ELDA
You done tole me about the birds
and the bees a long time ago.

Elda turns to leave.

MARY
I didn't tell you everything...

Elda stops, frozen in her tracks.

MARY (CONT'D)
When I was a little girl, my most
precious treasure was a doll my
Mama gave me. I named her Clara.
Oh, how I loved that doll!

Elda turns, drawn in by the story. Sets the suitcase down.

MARY
... and when I learned I was with
child, I prayed to God that he
would bless me with a daughter. My
own little Clara...

ELDA
Really, Mama?

MARY

... a pretty little girl that I
could dress up and protect from all
the awful things in this world.

ELDA

You can't keep out all of the bad,
Mama. That's just part of life.

Mary turns to Elda. Her eyes laser sharp.

MARY

You can't keep out the bad when
it's inside of you.

ELDA

(puzzled)

Mama...?

MARY

Boys and girls are different.
Little boys have dingle dangles,
and little girls have hoo-haws.

ELDA

No, Mama, you got that wrong. The
girl's got the dingle dangle.

MARY

And when a boy and girl come
together, the boy puts his dingle
dangle in the girl's hoo-haw.

ELDA

Mama! You're confused. Girls got
the dingle dangle.

MARY

Boys got the dingle dangle.

ELDA

But, Mama, I got...

The realization hits Elda. She MOANS, low and guttural.

ELDA (CONT'D)

Ahhhh... ahhhh.

MARY

God smite me down. But I got my
daughter, didn't I? My own little
Clara. My pretty little girl!

Elda pulls at his hair, beside himself (now that he knows he's a boy).

ELDA
No! Why... ? NO!!!!

Elda grabs his suitcase and flees from the room.

MARY
(calling after him)
My pretty little girl! My own
precious daughter!

EXT. STREET - DAY

Elda races down the street, suitcase in hand.

EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT - AFTERNOON

Elda sprints into the parking lot to find a school bus filled with Sparklers pulling away from the curb. He jumps in front of the bus. Flags it down.

ELDA
Stop!

The bus SQUEALS to a stop.

INT. SCHOOL BUS - AFTERNOON (CONTINUOUS)

Elda leaps up the steps. Tershelle and Susan seated in front.

TERSHELLE
Elda?!

ELDA
Where's Cyndi?

TERSHELLE
She's eloping with Rob tonight.

ELDA
Eloping? She can't. I think I'm
in love with her.

TERSHELLE
Ewww!
(catching herself)
I mean... awwwww!

ELDA
Where is she?

TERSHELLE
Rob's picking her up at her house.

She throws him her keys.

TERSHELLE (CONT'D)
Here. Take my car. Hurry!

ELDA
Thanks.

EXT. PARKING LOT - AFTERNOON

Elda scans the cars in the parking lot.

ELDA
(shouting after the bus)
Which one is yours?!

Too late. The bus pulls onto the street and drives away.

Elda looks at the key chain. He presses a button. We HEAR A CHIRP and LIGHTS FLASH on a beat-up Honda.

INT. TERSHELLE'S CAR - AFTERNOON

Elda climbs into the car and shuts the door. He looks at the steering wheel.

ELDA
I don't know how to drive!

Elda gets an idea.

ELDA (CONT'D)
Shelby!

EXT. CYNDI'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Rob sits in his Trans Am in front of Cyndi's house. He REVS the ENGINE. Cyndi struggles out the front door with a large suitcase.

ROB
Hurry up! I wanna get moving.

CYNDI
You could help with my shit, ya
know?

ELDA (O.S.)
Cyndi!

Elda sails into view -- riding the Segway. Cyndi smiles.

CYNDI
Elda?!

ELDA
You can't marry him!

Rob jumps out of his Trans Am as Elda glides to a stop.

ROB
What the fuck?!

Elda steps off the Segway.

ELDA
He's not a gentleman. I caught him
spooging on Tanya Moretti.

CYNDI
What?!

She spins to confront Rob.

CYNDI (CONT'D)
That's what the fight was about?
You said Elda came onto you.

ROB
(to Elda)
You don't learn, do you?

Rob charges Elda. Lands a punch across his face. Elda
recoils. Rob stands in boxer mode.

CYNDI
Rob! Stop it!

ROB
Come on, Dick Chick!

Elda hits the Sparklers' opening pose. He executes a series
of piqué turns and kicks Rob in the balls. Hard.

ROB
Oooff!

Rob convulses on himself and hits the ground.

ELDA
The name is Elda.

Cyndi rushes to Rob.

CYNDI
Are you okay, Rob?

ROB
What the fuck do you think? No!

CYNDI
Good!

And she nails him in the balls, too. He SCREAMS. Cyndi moves to Elda. Touches his cheek. Elda flinches in pain.

CYNDI (CONT'D)
I was worried about you.

ELDA
You were?

CYNDI
Uh-huh. I tried to see you.

ELDA
I know. Look... I know you think I'm a freak, but I don't care. I have feelings for you, and I had to tell you.

CYNDI
I do think you're a freak...

Elda bows her head. Cyndi smiles and LAUGHS.

CYNDI (CONT'D)
...but the feeling is mutual.

Elda smiles.

ELDA
Really?

Cyndi nods. Elda looks at her, earnest and serious. He takes her hand in his.

ELDA
One more thing you need to know.
I'm not a lesbian. I'm a boy.

Cyndi pretends to be shocked. Shakes her head in disbelief.

CYNDI
Wow. That's... wow.

ELDA
I know it's a lot to take in.

CYNDI
Yeah. That's a huge deal. Ummm...
I knew that.

ELDA
You did?

CYNDI
Uh-huh. Now I've got a confession.
I'm not a lesbian.

ELDA
You're not? So you like...?

CYNDI
I knew you were a guy when I kissed
you. Yeah.

She takes his hand. They walk toward the Segway.

ELDA
Oh... one more thing. I don't have
a hoo-hah. I have a dingle dangle.

CYNDI
I can live with that.

They smile. He steps onto the Segway. She climbs in behind
him. Wraps her arms around his waist.

ELDA
Did everyone know I was a boy all
along?

CYNDI
Uh-huh.

ELDA
Why didn't anyone tell me?

He STARTS THE SEGWAY.

They zoom off into the horizon.

ELDA (O.S.)
By the way, you've got great tits.
I really want to feel you up.

TITLE OVER BLACK: TWO WEEKS LATER

EXT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

"National High School Drill Team Championship" scrolls across
a large electronic marquee. "Exhibition performance"
flashes.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
Ladies and gentlemen. Your silver
medalists, the Spartanburg
Sparklers.

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

A packed house.

LIGHTS REVEAL the Sparklers. Cyndi and Elda are front and
center. They both wear purple spirit ribbons. We HEAR A
PUMPING HIP HOP BEAT. They DANCE.

FADE OUT.

THE END.