

When the Music Changes

By

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INT. AUDITORIUM - EVENING

A college student steps into a nearly empty auditorium, people meandering to find seats.

AMY, 20 years old and lithe, walks straight to the center seat in the front row. She sits down with a contented sigh.

She gazes wondrously at the empty stage and smiles.

Amy is startled out of her staring by a voice.

GIRL'S VOICE (O.S.)

Amy!

Amy looks up and sees her friend SHEA in the aisle. Mousy looking but built like a dancer, Shea waves to Amy.

Amy has a brilliant smile back on her face. She goes to hug Shea, who is a little shorter than her.

AMY

Shea! What are you doing here!
You're not in this dance
competition are you??

Shea looks up from the hug, with a chuckle and a smile. Shea has a soft voice but every word is clear.

SHEA

No, no, I would have told if I was,
I know you're nuts for dancing.

They let go, but don't move.

AMY

What could have given you that
impression? The posters in my room,
my lucky front row seat, the
million dance competition tickets?

Shea chuckles again, but then eyes Amy thoughtfully.

SHEA

And no actual dancing from you
still...?

Amy rolls her eyes.

AMY

We've talked about this Shea, I'd
be a terrible dancer.

(CONTINUED)

SHEA

But you've never tried!

Amy looks a little startled at Shea's outburst. Shea looks startled too, but then goes back to looking determined.

Amy hesitates.

AMY

Is this about me joining your group again? Shea, I know you guys need members but-

SHEA

You don't understand Amy, this is getting bad. We just got back from meeting the new management, and they're considering cutting us because of the dip in its popularity.

Amy blinks, startled at this information and worried.

AMY

But. They can't do that, Storm Watch has been the dance group here for ages!

Shea looks morosely in the distance.

SHEA

Yes, but they will.

Both girls are silent for a moment. You can practically see the light bulb over Shea as she gets an idea.

SHEA

You've got thirty minutes until the showing right? Let me take you to Britt.

AMY

What?

Shea snatches Amy's hand and starts dragging her away.

SHEA

She's probably in the practice room!

AMY

Who's Britt??

INT. PRACTICE ROOM - EVENING

BRITT

I'm Britt.

BRITT, 23, beautiful, and strong, holds her hand out to shake Amy's.

They're in the practice room, a large room with one wall entirely mirrors and a well maintained wooden floor.

Amy hesitates. She shakes Britt's hand, looking confused.

AMY

I have to admit I have no idea why
I'm here.

Britt raises an eyebrow and looks to Shea.

SHEA

I was thinking that you could show
her your last performance?

Britt continues to look at Shea. Shea fidgets.

SHEA

I was- I mean, my friend Amy here
loves dance, but she wasn't sure
she wanted to join our group. I
thought maybe a demonstration...

Shea's explanation dies off as Britt's lack of response finally gets to her. Britt finally gives a nod, and looks back to Amy.

BRITT

Right. Go ahead and sit.

Amy blinks, but then looks around for a seat. Seeing none, she sits on the floor. Shea joins her.

Britt goes over to a boombox against the mirror and hits play.

MONTAGE

-Britt starts off fast and furious. Every move is a controlled explosion.

-Amy's eyes widen in admiration. Shea keeps her eyes on Amy and smiles.

(CONTINUED)

-Britt abruptly stops and then rolls into a smoother sequence, every inch of her graceful.

-Amy's jaw is dropped. Shea's nose is crinkled in quiet amusement.

-Britt finishes in one last drawn out move.

INT. PRACTICE ROOM - EVENING (CONT.)

Amy is transfixed. Then she blinks back and applauds Britt.

Britt smiles and nods her head in thanks. She offers her hand for Amy to stand. Amy takes it.

BRITT

There's my bit. Enough for you to join?

AMY

I couldn't, you're so wonderful and I've never danced and-

SHEA

She'll join, yes.

AMY

Shea!

Amy turns to Shea, and sees her looking at Amy with a soft knowing smile.

Britt nods to Shea.

BRITT

Alright. You get her to practice. We'll shape her up.

Britt nods to Amy, grabs her stuff, and walks out.

Shea gets to her feet and dusts herself off. Amy stands dazed, looking at Shea.

AMY

(distantly)

I'm in a dance group.

SHEA

Welcome to Storm Watch, Amy.

INT. PRACTICE ROOM - DAY

Amy, Shea, and two other girls are warming up, Britt in the front, leading.

One girl is JENN, 18 and bubbly, who hums next to ZOE, stern faced and 20.

Amy is a little distanced from them all, face bouncing between nervous and defeated.

BRITT

Stretched? Good. There's another dance competition for you in 10 weeks, let's start learning.

Shea, Jenn, and Zoe line up in front of Britt. Amy gets closer but is a bit behind the girls.

Britt turns on the song they'll perform to, waits for the right beat, then demonstrates the first 3 moves. The girls imitate it. Amy barely tries.

Britt pauses, eying Amy.

BRITT

One more, for clarification.

Britt hits the rewind button, then repeats the moves. The girls seem to grasp it better already. Amy does them half heartedly.

All the girls are watching Amy now, Shea frowning, Jenn confused, Zoe miffed. Britt pauses the music.

BRITT

Is there something wrong Amy?

AMY

I don't...I've never danced. I won't be good. I shouldn't even be in your competition, should I just sit out?

Britt frowns. Jenn seems to suddenly understand everything.

JENN

Oh! That's alright! I was new to dance too when I joined my group in high school! You don't need to panic, we'll totally help you out!

Amy goes for a smile and ends up with a grimace to Jenn.

(CONTINUED)

AMY

Thanks Jenn, but I don't think-

ZOE

Think what? You care enough to try?

All heads whip to Zoe. Shea takes a step towards Amy.

BRITT

Zoe.

ZOE

(to Britt)

No don't "Zoe" me. She doesn't want to dance? She doesn't have to dance. Don't force the girl who doesn't want to try.

AMY

I just don't think I could keep up-

ZOE

(to Amy)

It's fine Amy. Do what you like.
(to Britt) Keep going Britt. We have a competition to get to in few weeks.

There's a tense pause. Britt glances to Amy. She hits the play button again. Shea looks sadly to Amy, and dances.

MONTAGE

-Another day, more moves, more that Amy half-heartedly tries.

-Another day, Shea demonstrating to Amy alone, Amy waving her off, pointing to herself, shrugging, and walking away.

-Another day, the girls stand sweating on break and getting their drinks, except for Amy who is dry and not thirsty.

-Another day, more moves, Amy barely moves.

INT. PRACTICE ROOM - DAY

Amy packs up in a corner with Shea nearby. Zoe tsk's in disgust and goes to her stuff in another corner, and Jenn sends a miserable look over the group but goes with Zoe.

The door to the room opens, and an old man with silver hair, STEELE, enters the room.

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Britt looks up from her pack and frowns. She walks over.

BRITT
Mr.Steele, what can I do for you?

AMY
Who is that?

SHEA
Mr.Steele, the new
management...what is he doing here?

Steele gives a cursory glance over the girls and looks unimpressed. He looks back to Britt.

STEELE
Hello my dear, I thought it best
that I inform you and your...group
together about a recent change.

Britt stiffens and looks suspiciously to him. Amy glances down to find Shea clinging to her hand. The blood seems to drained away from her face.

SHEA
(whisper)
No.

STEELE
Sadly, due to lack of interest, I'm
afraid we're going to have to shut
down Storm Watch.

Shocked cries come from Zoe and Jenn, Shea sucks in a sharp breath and tries to crush Amy's hand, and Britt seems shocked into freezing.

AMY
(firmly)
No.

Steele turns to Amy quizzically. Amy glances down to a shaking Shea, and glances back to Steele, determined.

AMY
No, you can't shut this group down,
they've been around forever! And
they're so good! And, and, they're
not unpopular if they're getting
new members, right? Like me?

Amy gestures to herself.

The girls all seem to hold their breath and glance back to Steele for his response.

Steele just raises an eyebrow.

STEELE

Dear, I've seen you in your practices. You don't actually participate. I also know for a fact you're a good friend of Miss Shea there. I imagine she asked you to join after our last meeting.

AMY

That's not-!

Amy bites back her response, and grits her teeth in frustration. Britt unfreezes, clenches her jaw, but draws a deep breath before responding.

BRITT

Amy, it's okay, we've-

AMY

It's not okay! You all work so hard with- THE COMPETITION!

Everyone jumps at Amy's loud outburst. Amy looks like she's had a lightbulb moment. She focus back on Steele, who looks a little nonplussed by this strange girl.

AMY

The dance competition in a few weeks, if we win it, we'll get a lot of attention yeah? If we win, will you not shut us down?

STEELE

This is no movie. You don't win the prize and everything's better dear. I have no way of knowing people will be interested in your group even if you win.

JENN

I do!

All heads turn to Jenn.

JENN

I do. A lot of my friends would be interested if they thought I was in a group that won a trophy instead

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JENN (cont'd)
of just people doing whatever they
wanted.

ZOE
My friends as well.

Steele sees their determination and sighs.

STEELE
That arrangement is amendable. Win
the competition and we'll see.

Zoe punches the air and Jenn whoops in delight. Shea loosens her grip on Amy and uses her other hand to cover her face as she breathes. Britt extends a hand to Steele.

BRITT
Thank you sir, you won't regret it.

Steele eyes her hand and reluctantly shakes it. He lets go quickly.

STEELE
Done here then! Good luck ladies.
You'll need it.

Steele marches out the door. The girls all breathe. Shea lets go of Amy and slides to the floor.

Amy is not so relaxed.

AMY
Oh my god I have so much catching
up to do.

Shea chokes on a laugh but then can't stop. Zoe joins in and Jenn giggles. Britt shakes her head and smiles.

BRITT
You just saved our butts. You can
handle some harder practices. Since
I can't compete, you're my new
project.

Amy's startled.

AMY
You're not competing??

Britt shrugs.

BRITT

It's for undergraduates. I'm not.
How many hours are you free every
week again?

Amy gulps.

MONTAGE

-Amy clumsily trying to practice during practice. Jenn jumps over to help. Amy smiles gratefully.

-Another day. Amy's already practicing when the rest of Storm Watch comes in. Amy jumps and looks a bit bashful, but then pushes herself back to practicing.

-Another day. Amy cannot get a certain move right and just keeps repeating it. Zoe comes up behind her, taps her shoulder, and then manually fixes it. Amy blinks, but nods in thanks. Zoe nods back.

-Another day. Amy talks to Britt, who hands her a DVD.

-Amy intently watches a TV with a recording of Britt doing the performance. She makes notes.

-Shea runs into the practice room in street clothes at night, frantically searching her bag only to notice Amy still practicing. She pauses, but then slips out quietly.

INT. PRACTICE ROOM - EVENING

Amy stares at herself in the mirror, sweaty, exhausted, and frustrated. In a fit of pique, she kicks her waterbottle across the room.

It lands at Shea's feet, who picks it up. She's dressed in street clothes again, clearly not here to dance.

AMY

Shea.

SHEA

Amy...I realized I never said
thanks.

Amy blinks, confused.

AMY

What for?

(CONTINUED)

SHEA
Joining Storm Watch.

Amy realizes, and then snorts.

AMY
I didn't really have a choice.
Since when have you been that
pushy?

Amy's grinning, joking, but her face falls again.

AMY
Not that it'll matter. I can't get
this goddamn routine DOWN.

A pause.

SHEA
Amy, I hope you know that Storm
Watch doesn't ride on your
shoulders. Just breathe, you're
learning well in practice.

AMY
But I'm not! At least not well
enough! Those weeks where I did
nothing but shuffle in front of the
mirror may very well be the reason
we lose the competition, which
means the club you love will shut
down! And it'll all be my fault for
giving up on dancing before I'd
even tried!

Shea walked over to Amy during her frantic speech and at the last sentence she brings Amy in for a hug.

There's a pause for breath, as Amy calms down.

SHEA
It's true I'll be crushed if Storm
Watch is shut down. But Amy, you
should know more than anyone, that
I dance for the love of dance. When
you watched dancers with awe, I did
too. And when you decided that you
actually wanted to try, I could
have jumped for joy if I hadn't
been panicking about the group. But
there will always be groups and
there will always be dance, so
please don't panic. Instead, enjoy

(MORE)

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SHEA (cont'd)
the thing that you loved to watch
for so long.

Amy finally reaches up to hug Shea back.

A pause.

Her response is muffled.

AMY
But if I can save Storm Watch,
that'd be good too right?

Shea draws back to look Amy in the eye.

SHEA
Only if you don't panic and give
up.

Amy looks up and gives a smile.

AMY
No more panicking. And I'm
definitely not giving up.

Shea blinks in surprise that she's telling the truth. A soft smile creeps up.

SHEA
No. Good.

INT. AUDITORIUM - EVENING

Amy enters the empty auditorium in street clothes with a gym bag. Hesitant, she slowly makes her way to the stage.

She pauses by the front row, gaze stuck on her old seat, considering.

Amy raises her head to look at the inviting stage, face more somber than the last time she was here.

Amy glances back to the seat. She loses her unsure look, and straightens. She marches off to the dressing rooms.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - EVENING

The dressing room is bustling as girls from multiple dancing groups elbow for space to change.

Amy arranging her hair in front of a mirror when Shea nervously steps up behind her, dressed for stage.

SHEA
Are you ready?

She isn't even looking at Amy, instead fussing with her outfit.

Amy turns and grabs her hands to still them, and makes Shea look her in the eyes. Amy give a soft smile.

AMY
Yeah, I think we're ready.

Shea loosens a bit. She gives Amy's hands a quick squeeze and offers a nervous smile.

JENN (O.S.)
Shea! Help me a moment!

Shea jumps a bit and runs over. Amy turns to go back to the mirror but is stopped by Zoe's approach.

Zoe's face is hard and demands no bullshit.

ZOE
Do you *really* think we're ready?

Amy pauses thoughtfully. She checks her hair in the mirror, sees it's okay, then stands to face Zoe.

AMY
We'd damn well better be.

Amy walks over to the other girls and joins them stretching, looking determined.

INT. AUDITORIUM - EVENING

Storm Watch waits in the wings, as the group before them takes a bow to general applause.

Shea and Jenn look nervous, but Amy and Zoe look ready to battle an army.

The MC steps on stage with a microphone.

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MC

And what a lovely performance by the group Stardust! Wasn't that a great performance? Thank you all!

Stardust leaves the stage, exhilarated and content.

MC

And now for our last group! This well-established group has been around the block, and is looking for a revival after some tough times, ladies and gentlemen! So let's put our hands together and say break a leg to the one and only Storm Watch!

The audience give a polite cheer and clap as the girls step onto stage.

Amy gets into position. She glances down to the front seat of the audience.

Steele is sitting a few seats from the middle, unimpressed. Sitting in Amy's old seat is Britt, with a soft smile.

Amy smiles and looks up again, ready.

The music starts.

Storm Watch starts off slow.

Storm Watch steps it up moving quick and precisely.

The audience is looking impressed.

Amy, Shea, Zoe, and Jenn each step up at different times to make impressive moves that make the crowd cheer.

The crowd is cheering now. Britt looks delighted and claps hard. Steele looks surprised.

Storm Watch finishes off with one last flourish and the music ends.

The crowd bellows it's approval. Britt gives a standing ovation and Steele, though sitting, looks grudgingly impressed and claps.

Storm Watch pants but look delighted.

The MC runs onto stage and grins to the girls before raising his mic.

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MC

Ladies and gentlemen, I think it's safe to say we're blown away by this storm!

More cheers from the crowd. Amy's hand covers her eyes at the terrible pun but laughs anyways.

MC

But here comes the scariest part everybody, so hold onto your seats! The judges have been watching and we should be getting word from them any moment. Let's get all the groups up here before we announce right?

The crowd voices their agreement, and the other dance groups pour onto the stage, Storm Watch in the front.

Shea moves next to Amy, biting her lip, nervous. Storm Watch is fidgety. Amy turns to Jenn and Zoe and gives a brittle smile. Equally weak smiles are returned.

MC

Alright you wonder dance groups, let's see which one of you will gain a trophy and some fame tonight!

A STAGEHAND walks on stage with an envelope in their hand. The MC grabs it, pats the stagehand on the back, and steps back toward the crowd.

MC

Well looky what I got! Can I get a drum roll?

A prerecorded drum roll starts playing. Shea snatches Amy's hand and squeezes it. Amy looks like she isn't breathing.

The MC pauses for dramatic effect.

MC

First place goes to...

Amy's eyes widen.

MC

THE WONDERFUL STORM WATCH!

The crowd explodes. Amy looks dumbstruck but is tackled for a hug by a cheering Shea, with the rest of Storm Watch doing much of the same. Tears are visible for some.

(CONTINUED)

Amy blinks and returns Shea's hug with a crushing squeeze, and starts laughing.

AMY
WE DID IT. WE DID IT!