

The Final Dance

By

Bess Howell

EXT. STUDIO BUILDING - DUSK

SYDNEY, 19, walks towards a large building. She is pretty, with long brown hair that is tied up in a tight bun. She is wearing a cropped tank top and leggings with a jean jacket and a small backpack slung over her shoulder. Large headphones adorn her ears. Sydney reaches a large set of glass double doors and enters the building

INT. STUDIO BUILDING HALLWAY - DUSK

Sydney walks through a wide hallway, which is lined with doors that open up to dance studios. As she walks down the hallway, Sydney subtly mimes dance moves.

INT. STUDIO BUILDING FRONT DESK - DUSK

Sydney walks up to a glass encased desk and takes off her headphones.

SYDNEY

Hi. I reserved room #4 from eight to twelve.

The desk attendant reluctantly looks away from her laptop and lazily up at Sydney.

DESK ATTENDANT

Name?

SYDNEY

Sydney Charleston

The desk attendant looks something up on her computer and then turns to go get the key from a case on the wall.

The key to room #4 is missing from its spot in the case. The attendant grabs a spare key from the case, hands it to Sydney, and goes back to watching her show.

INT. STUDIO BUILDING HALLWAY - DUSK

Sydney puts her headphones back on and walks toward room #4, doing dance moves with her eyes closed. When she gets to door #4 she twirls into it, eyes still closed.

INT. ROOM #4 - DUSK

DAVID
Uhm, hello?

Sydney's eyes open, and she sees a boy reaching down to turn off a stereo. DAVID, 19, is already set up in the room. He is wearing a gray t-shirt and long black spandex shorts.

DAVID
Can I help you?

SYDNEY
(Caught off guard)
Yeah... I have this room reserved for eight o'clock. So, now.

DAVID
I think you're mistaken. I have this till twelve. Number 4?

SYDNEY
Yes... There must be a mistake. I need this room. You probably got the wrong key.

DAVID
No... I don't think so. Mine has a four on it.

Sydney looks down at her key, seeing the words "SPARE" scrawled on it. She hides the writing with her finger.

SYDNEY
Yeah, so does mine. Let's just go get this figured out.

Sydney goes to walk out the door, but David stays in place.

SYDNEY
Well aren't you coming? This is your problem too.

David sighs and follows her out the door.

INT. STUDIO BUILDING FRONT DESK - DUSK

The two arrive at the desk, and the desk attendant looks up.

SYDNEY
Hi. I reserved room #4, but there was already someone in it. I think you gave him the wrong key.

(CONTINUED)

ATTENDANT

What are your names?

SYDNEY

Sydney Charleston, and...

Sydney realizes that she doesn't know David's name and looks back at him for clarification.

DAVID

(Rolling his eyes)

David. David Collins.

The desk attendant looks at her computer.

DESK ATTENDANT

Oh. Looks like someone overbooked the room. Sorry.

SYDNEY

Well do you have any other rooms available?

DESK ATTENDANT

(Looking at the computer)

Nope. You're gonna have to share it or something. Sorry.

Sydney's heart drops, and she looks at the desk attendant, open mouthed.

DAVID

Wait what? Are you kidding? No! I need this room. Can't you look at who reserved it first?

SYDNEY

No, I need the room! I can't believe this. Of all the times I need to rehearse, this has to happen now. There's seriously nothing else open?

DESK ATTENDANT

Nope. I'm really sorry but you two are just gonna have to work it out.

Sydney and David both looks at each other, glaring. Suddenly, Sydney's eyes get very wide, and she beings to sprint down the hallway.

INT. ROOM #4 - DUSK

Sydney runs into room #4 and locks the door behind her with her key. A smug look on her face, she starts to walk to the other side of the room. Hearing a click, Sydney turns around, and David walks inside. He holds up his key.

SYDNEY

Fuck.

DAVID

Come on, I need this room. Why the hell do you need to practice so badly anyway? If it's for a class you have the whole weekend, it's only Friday. Let me have it.

Sydney sits down and starts putting wraps around her foot. She answers David without looking at him.

SYDNEY

It's not class. I have a really important audition tomorrow. If I don't do well I can't stay in school. So I'm pretty sure I need it more. If anything you should leave.

Something clicks in David's head, and he becoming visibly frustrated, letting out a groan.

DAVID

You're going out for the McGill Scholarship aren't you?

Sydney realizes why David asked, stops wrapping her feet, and lays flat on her back.

SYDNEY

I can't believe this. First I don't get my own room, and now I have to share it with the competition.

DAVID

Believe me, I'm not thrilled about it either.

SYDNEY

So how are we gonna do this? Because I don't want to practice with you...

(CONTINUED)

DAVID
And you think I want to with you?
This is so dumb. Whatever, we take
turns I guess?

SYDNEY
Song for song?

DAVID
Sure.

David walks over to the speakers sitting on the ground, and gets ready to play music.

DAVID
Uh, can you like sit on the side or something?

SYDNEY
Hey, wait, what makes you think you can go first?

DAVID
I got here first.

SYDNEY
No no no. We rock-paper-scissors.

David rolls his eyes, and walks over to Sydney. The two rock-paper-scissors, and David wins. He scoffs at Sydney, and walks back to the speaker.

David begins dancing as Sydney sits on the side of the studio. She watches him intensely.

SYDNEY
(Over the music)
Make your "developpe" tighter. And point your toes better.

David continues dancing as if he can't hear her, but his face looks annoyed.

SYDNEY
Don't be so rigid. You look mad. It's supposed to be a beautiful dance.

David stops dancing

DAVID
(Yelling)
I look mad because you're making me mad! Stop talking. You know what?
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DAVID (cont'd)
You don't get to watch me dance.
Turn the other way. Those are the
rules.

SYDNEY
Whatever, fine, psycho.

Sydney turns her back to David. The song ends and David
walks over to the stereo as if to replay the song.

SYDNEY
What do you think you're doing?
It's my turn.

DAVID
That's not nearly enough time!

SYDNEY
It's the only way to make this
fair! You're going to have to deal
with it.

Annoyed, David shuts off the stereo and goes to sit on the
edge of the studio. Sydney walks over to turn it back on,
but David jumps up.

DAVID
Whoa! What do you think you're
doing? Those are my speakers, you
can't use them.

SYDNEY
Are you kidding?

DAVID
Not my fault, you should have come
prepared.

Sydney scoffs and walks over to the cabinet that holds the
studio speakers. She opens it and looks for the AUX chord to
connect her phone to the speakers. There isn't one.

SYDNEY
The AUX cord is missing.

DAVID
Not my problem.

SYDNEY
Fine, whatever.

Sydney grabs her headphones out of her bag and puts them on. She twists the cord around her phone as tightly as possible and puts the phone in her shirt so that she doesn't have to hold it in her hands.

She begins dancing, and the headphones move around on her head, distracting her. As she moves, the cord slowly becomes unraveled from her phone and flies about as she dances. As Sydney leaps into the air, the cord gets caught around her arms and she falls to the ground.

David begins to laugh.

SYDNEY

Fuck you.

DAVID

I'm sorry, but you should see yourself.

SYDNEY

How is that in any way funny? I'm working my ass off, just like you, and you won't let me use your fucking speakers.

DAVID

You should have been prepared so don't fucking blame me for it. Also, it's my turn.

SYDNEY

Whatever, asshole.

As she walks over to the side of the studio, she kicks the CD player, and it flips over.

DAVID

Hey! What the fuck?

SYDNEY

Sorry. I didn't mean to kick it.

Rolling his eyes, David turns on the CD player to begin practicing. A few seconds into the song, the music skips a little, and David loses his place in the dance.

He recovers, but soon after, the CD skips again. He walks over to the speaker and takes the CD out. Looking at it, it is clear that there are scratches in the CD.

DAVID

Are you fucking kidding me? You scratched my CD, you stupid bitch! I get that you're pissed that we have to share the same space, I feel the same way, but you don't have to mess with my shit. It's not my fault that you're not prepared. It's pretty fucking low to mess with my chances of getting the scholarship like this.

Sydney, taken aback, stands to confront David.

SYDNEY

I didn't do it on purpose, you psycho! I'm sorry, okay? I was frustrated, but I'm not malicious. If anything you've been trying to sabotage me. Not letting me use your speakers and forcing me to use my headphones?

DAVID

You weren't prepar-

SYDNEY

(Cutting David off)

You fucking laughed at me. I want this so much, and you're just making us working together harder than it has to be.

DAVID

You broke my CD. At least you now have some working form of music. What the hell am I gonna do now, huh? Practice to a skipping song? My timing is going to be completely off. I can't believe this. Do you really think you're going to get this scholarship anyway? You probably got in on a scholarship because they thought you had potential, they thought you could "mold" you. Now they're realizing they were wrong and are giving you one final chance to prove that you can make it. But you're unprepared and clearly not good enough. Go home, be a fucking teacher, you're not good enough for this.

(CONTINUED)

Sydney is silent, taken aback by David's harsh words. Her eyes well up and she begins to cry angry tears.

SYDNEY

What makes you think you have any more right to that scholarship than me? You can say all the mean shit you want but that isn't going to make me want it any less. I was let in off the wait list and yeah, I *am* on scholarship, but I had to do an extra audition for that, so I know how it goes. I don't know why you need this so badly but you have no right to come in here and shit all over me for wanting to be able to do what I love. I know I haven't been the easiest to work with either, and I apologize for that, but you don't have to be downright cruel. We both know that I'm no worse a dancer than you, and you aren't a good person, so I can promise you that I will get that scholarship over someone like you.

David stares at Sydney, unsure of what to say back to her. Stuttering a little, he responds.

DAVID

You - I - We'll see about that.

SYDNEY

Let's just fucking get through this. No talking. No watching. Okay?

DAVID

Whatever.

Sydney and David do not argue or talk at all after that.

MONTAGE

- Sydney struggles with having to dance with her headphones.
- David cleans the CD and it is a little less scratchy, but he still has trouble getting the timing correct with some of the skips.
- Sydney looking sad and frustrated.
- David looking sad and frustrated.

INT. ROOM #4 - MIDNIGHT

Sydney and David are in the middle of switching turns, and the desk attendant knocks on the door. David walks over to the door and opens it.

DESK ATTENDANT

Hey, it's midnight. You guys have to leave. The building opens at seven if you need to come back.

David and Sydney look at each other and quickly look away.

SYDNEY

Thank you.

They give their keys to the desk attendant, pack up their stuff, and leave the room.

EXT. STUDIO BUILDING - DUSK

Walking out of the doors of the building at the same time, Sydney goes left and David goes right.

INT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sydney walks through her door, gets a glass of water, chugs it all, and goes into her bedroom.

INT. DAVID'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

David opens the door to his apartment, throws his bag onto his couch, and walks into his bedroom.

INT. DAVID'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

David takes his phone out of his pocket and dials a number. An automated voice-mail can be heard, and then a beep.

DAVID

(Speaking into the phone)

Hey Mom. I just wanted to remind you that I have my scholarship audition tomorrow. I know Dad doesn't want me doing this anymore, but I am. I want you guys to know how serious about this I am, and how hard I've worked for it. Okay, uh, love you. Bye.

INT. SYDNEY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sydney gets onto her bed and lays on her side, looking at a picture on her wall of Margot Fonteyn and Rudolf Nureyev. She closes her eyes and a tear rolls down her cheek.

INT. DAVID'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

David sits on his bed, puts his head in his hands, and then looks up at the same picture Sydney has in her room, on his wall. He sighs.

INT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sydney opens her eyes, sits up, and wipes away her tears. She plugs her phone into a set of speakers, and begins miming the dance moves for the audition in her room.

INT. DAVID'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

David walks out of his bedroom and into his living room, opens his laptop, and begins playing the audition song from his computer. In the living room, he does the same as Sydney.

The screen splits, the second half being Sydney dancing in her room. The two dance in their respective apartments, and although doing different parts, are in sync with each other.

EXT. STUDIO BUILDING - EARLY MORNING

David walks up to the studio building. He has a backpack on and poking out of the top of it is his laptop.

INT. STUDIO BUILDING HALLWAY - EARLY MORNING

David walks down the hallway, looking into the rooms on either side.

Something catches his eye, and he stops. Inside one of the rooms, Sydney is putting on her foot wraps. On the floor next to her, her phone is plugged into a set of speakers.

David notices that the door isn't fully closed, and he walks in.

INT. ROOM #7 - EARLY MORNING

Sydney realizes there is someone else in the room and looks up. Seeing David, she glares.

SYDNEY

What are you doing here?

DAVID

There aren't any other rooms available.

Sydney rolls her eyes and stands up.

SYDNEY

Please get out. It's not funny. Stop tormenting me.

DAVID

No, sorry, that wasn't very funny. I wanted to apologize about yesterday. I was way out of line, and I shouldn't have treated you that way. See, my mom supports me dancing, but my dad has always hated it. I convinced him to let me come for at least a semester, but he refused to pay for it now. If I don't get the scholarship I can't stay here either. So I get it, and I'm sorry I was such an dick.

Sydney's face softens.

SYDNEY

It's okay. I think we we're both a little at fault. You were just way more mean about it.

They both quietly laugh.

DAVID

You know, guys dance a separate part than girls. I know we audition separately, but from what I've seen they go together really well. We could practice together. Help each other out. To be honest it'd be nice to have some critique.

(CONTINUED)

SYDNEY
 (Smiling)
 Yeah, okay.

MONTAGE

Music plays over the shots

- David dances. Sydney watches and helps him improve.
- Sydney dances. David watches and gives her pointers.
- Sydney and David laugh and joke together.
- Sydney and David intensely practice the audition song together.

INT. ROOM #7 - MID-MORNING

David and Sydney are dancing together, smiling and having fun, when an alarm goes off through the speakers they are using.

 SYDNEY
 Oh! It's 9:30. We should probably
 head over.

 DAVID
 Yeah, let's go.

They both gather their stuff and start to leave. As David walks out, he notices that Sydney is still standing. She looks really nervous.

David walks over to her, and touches her arm.

 DAVID
 Hey, you're gonna do great.

 SYDNEY
 I just want this so much.

 DAVID
 (Chuckling)
 Trust me, I know.

Sydney quietly smiles at him.

 SYDNEY
 Let's go.

INT. LINCOLN PERFORMING ARTS BUILDING - LATE MORNING

Sydney and David walk into the auditorium, which is full of about 15 students. Sydney sees someone she knows, and waves at them.

SYDNEY

That's my friend from class. I'm gonna to go say hi. Uhm, thanks for everything today. Good luck.

She smiles at David

DAVID

You too.

Sydney breaks eye contact with David and walks to her friend. David watches her go, and then goes and sits with an acquaintance. Sydney looks back at him walking away.

INT. LINCOLN PERFORMING ARTS BUILDING - 10 MINUTES LATER

Students are sitting in neat rows in the auditorium seating. Some look nervous, others smug. The head of the dance department, PROFESSOR SHAFER, stands up. He is in his mid-fifties, is skinny with white hair, and is wearing black pants and a black turtleneck.

PROFESSOR SHAFER

Hello all. We will now begin the auditions for the McGill Scholarship. You will go as your name is called, and dance the prepared song. Afterward, we will deliberate for a short amount of time and then announce the winners. Best of luck.

MONTAGE

- David hears his name get called, gulps, and walks to the stage. Sydney watches as he walks on stage.
- Sydney hears her name get called, takes a deep breath, and walks onstage. David watches as she walks on stage.
- The music starts. David dances.
- The music starts. Sydney dances.
- David dances.
- Sydney dances.

(CONTINUED)

- David finishes dancing, bows, and walks off the stage.

BACK TO SCENE

Sydney finishes dancing. Breathing heavily, she bows to the judges and looks up. Her eyes lock with David's in the audience. He is clapping and has a huge smile on his face. She smiles, and hurriedly runs off stage.

INT. LINCOLN PERFORMING ARTS BUILDING - 25 MINUTES LATER

All of the dancers are back in the auditorium seats. Sydney is sitting by herself, looking very stressed. Professor Shafer stands up.

PROFESSOR SHAFER

Thank you everyone for all of the amazing effort you put out today. It was inspiring. This year we have decided to award two McGill Scholarships. We believe that there are two candidates that showed exemplary talent and passion.

Sydney's eyes widen, and she looks behind her where she thought David was sitting. He isn't there.

PROFESSOR SHAFER

We would like to ask the two winners to come up on stage once their names are called.

Sydney takes a deep breath and closes her eyes. Suddenly, she feels a movement. She opens her eyes and David is sitting next to her.

David takes Sydney's hand. She looks at him, and he is looking forward, smiling. She turns her attention to Professor Shafer.

PROFESSOR SHAFER

The two winners are...

David and Sydney are sitting hand in hand, staring at the stage, smiling.

FADE TO BLACK.