

Black Swan
by
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FADE IN:

INT. STAGE - NIGHT

OPENING CREDITS:

All darkness, except for a bright spotlight illuminating a BALLERINA'S FEET, wearing the iconic satin shoes.

The feet begin going up and down on point, in time to the music.

They move around the black space, performing complex choreography. Leaps, twirls, quick, masterful steps.

The feet dance their way to a very long stair case and begin to climb, one step at a time.

As they rise, so do we, slowly seeing more and more of the dancer's body. Petite and bird-like, wearing a luminescent WHITE SWAN costume.

Finally, as the DANCER arrives at the top, we see her face: Beautiful and porcelain, with a performed sadness.

She looks over the edge, where the staircase ends. Below her a dark, endless void.

She closes her eyes and LEAPS.

Falls through the air, her thin arms held behind her like wings.

As she falls, the sound of APPLAUSE, faint at first, builds to a roar, drowning out the music.

The dancer continues falling, a slight smile on her face, soaking in the applause.

CUT TO:

INT. NINA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

A pair of eyes open. They belong to the same dancer, NINA. Self-conscious and hungry for approval, Nina hides her insecurity behind a sweet, likeable facade.

She stares at the ceiling, where many pairs of POINT SHOES are nailed. Very small all the way up to her current size, they testify to how long she has been a ballet dancer.

She glances over at her ALARM CLOCK. It reads 6:59.

She lies completely still, staring at the digital numbers.

Until they change to 7:00 and the alarm begins BEEPING. She clicks it off.

She sits up in bed. The bedding and trinkets around the room are that of a teenage girl more than of an adult. Pink and frilly.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Nina's BARE FEET stand on a hardwood floor. Like all ballerinas, she's beautiful and her feet are atrocious. Covered in corns, broken blisters and bunions.

She begins her morning stretches, extending and contracting her feet and legs in precise and rhythmic motions.

She holds herself up on a barre which is mounted to the wall. The room is empty of furniture to leave space for dancing.

Defined vertebrae run up her back, sinewy muscles contract as she moves. Her slender neck leads into her hair, contained in a ballerina's bun.

Nina focuses on her movements with an intense, unwavering gaze, Trying to perfect each movement.

She looks up and stops dancing, suddenly self-conscious.

Across the room, an older woman, ERICA, coldly stares at her. Her hair likewise in a bun, propped up by a cane.

Nina wordlessly picks up a towel and wipes the sweat from her face.

Erica walks down the hallway and Nina follows.

KITCHEN

Nina sits at the table as Erica places a single, soft-boiled egg into an egg cup.

Erica pours her a cup of tea out of a porcelain kettle.

She pours in some milk and drops two lumps of sugar.

Nina glances up at her imploringly.

Erica begrudgingly drops in two more sugars and stirs.

NINA
Thank you, Erica.

ERICA
Don't linger, you're going to be
late.

Nina smiles at her and nods. Erica coldly nods back, and shuffles out of the room, leaving Nina to her breakfast.

Nina cracks the delicate white shell and eats the yellow goo inside.

INT. SUBWAY TRAIN - DAY

Nina rides inside a crowded subway. She stares self-consciously at her faint reflection in the train's window, checking herself out.

Suddenly, another train roars by on the opposite track, snapping her awake.

She looks away, towards the door at the end of the train. Through the small window, she sees the back of a girl, standing in the midst of the crowd. Her hair pulled into a BALLERINA'S BUN.

She looks nearly IDENTICAL to Nina.

Nina cranes her neck to see who it is, but difficult to get a good look on the crowded train.

EXT. LINCOLN CENTER - DAY

Nina emerges from the subway station onto a city street. The other BALLERINA walks several paces in front of her.

Nina keeps her distance and watches as a SECOND BALLERINA joins the first and they begin chatting.

One of them glances back, and Nina diverts her eyes to the ground. She doesn't make a move to join them.

They approach a MAJESTIC-LOOKING THEATER, where other BALLERINAS likewise trickle towards the entrance. They all look strangely similar: slender, carrying shoulder bags, wearing leggings and loose sweatshirts.

Nina scans the various cliques of girls, but is too shy to join any of them.

Finally, she spots an older looking ballerina just up ahead, and her face lights up.

NINA

Beth!

The older dancer, BETH, faces her with a dark expression that lightens as she recognizes the caller. Jaded and confident, she bears a striking resemblance to Nina, though a little older. Beth waits as Nina catches up and gives her a hug.

BETH

Hey.

NINA

Hey!

They continue walking, Nina glances at her with an enamored gaze, but Beth flaunts her higher-status, like an older sister.

NINA (CONT'D)

So...?

BETH

So what?

NINA

How was it?

BETH

How was what?

NINA

Beth! Stop it.

Beth smiles.

BETH

Sorry. It was...okay.

NINA

How could Greece just be okay?

Beth self-consciously looks at the other girls.

BETH

Can't really talk about it now.

NINA

Oops, sorry. Wanna meet up after rehearsal? Unless you two have plans...

BETH
(glum)
We don't.

NINA
Great, then let's grab a tea.

Beth nods, but Nina can tell something's off with her.

NINA (CONT'D)
Everything okay?

Before Beth can answer, they run into a small group of BALLET FANS assembled by the backstage entrance.

They excitedly surround Beth, clamoring for her autograph. They are a motley crew of older men and women who's fandom lies somewhere between doting mother and serial stalker.

Nina is separated and pushed out of the forming circle.

NINA (CONT'D)
(calling to Beth)
See you inside.

Beth either doesn't hear her or pretends not to.

Nina's smile fades. She watches with a hint of jealousy as Beth gracefully signs autographs.

Nina turns away and disappears inside the building alone.

INT. SOLOIST DRESSING ROOM - DAY

Crammed into a single dressing room, Nina and the ballet company's 7 SOLOISTS get ready for rehearsal. Sewing ribbon onto shoes, applying makeup, removing street clothes, putting hair into buns.

Nina removes a new pair of BALLET SHOES.

One confident, icy soloist, VERONICA, applies a fresh coat of lipstick

VERONICA
You think it's her last season.

SOLOIST 1
Fingers crossed...

Ignoring the gossip, Nina takes out a pair of scissors and cuts off the satin toe.

VERONICA
Thank god. I mean, *Giselle*? Looked
like my mother up there.

SOLOIST 1
More like grandmother.

VERONICA
Seriously. Did you see the veins on
her hands...gross.

Clearly upset by the insult, Nina loudly POUNDS the shoes
against the floor to soften the toe.

VERONICA (CONT'D)
(annoyed)
We bothering you?

Nina shakes her head.

VERONICA (CONT'D)
You sure? Don't have something to
say?

Nina stops pounding, looks at her.

NINA
I think Beth's beautiful.

VERONICA
(exasperated)
Of course you do.

Nina ignores her, starts sewing ribbon onto her shoes.

VERONICA (CONT'D)
You know, it's not like you two are
really friends.

Growing tense, Nina's hands start to tremble.

VERONICA (CONT'D)
She only tolerates you because you
kiss her ass.

SOLOIST 2 (O.S.)
Take it easy, Veronica.

VERONICA
It's true. Like the pretty girl
that hangs out with the fat girl.

Nina throws her shoes in her bag and stands in a huff. She leaves, avoiding eye-contact and further conflict. The other girls titter behind her.

INT. LARGE REHEARSAL SPACE - LATER

The entire company, including the still pubescent CORPS MEMBERS, and a handful of MALE DANCERS, warms-up along several rows of barres.

Anonymous in the middle, Nina goes through the moves, staring at her reflection in the wall-length mirror.

All around her, LEGS, HANDS, and FEET repeat the same identical motions. In unison and precise.

In the background, a severe-looking FEMALE INSTRUCTOR leads them through the exercises.

FEMALE INSTRUCTOR

To the back, fondu, to the back,
plie. Fourth, fourth, and one and
fifth, to the back, eight to the
side...

Next to Nina stands the very poised, Beth. She sneaks glances at her, studying her movements.

She's caught off guard by the approaching instructor.

FEMALE INSTRUCTOR (CONT'D)

Nina, it needs to be looser. Not so
rigid and controlled.

Nina nods, feeling insecure.

Suddenly, the girls around Nina begin stripping off their sweatshirts and heavy, insulated pants.

Nina looks towards the door and sees that the intense and brooding director of the company, KOROLYEVNA (Yevna to friends), has entered the space. He has the unshaven, unkept look of an artist. Magnetic and intimidating.

The ballerinas take off their warm-up gear to show off their bodies.

Yevna walks around the room, silently judging his flock. He makes a few subtle corrections, touching a back here, raising an arm there.

Beth watches him with a particularly interested gaze.

KOROLYEVNA

Okay, good!

The music stops and all the girls face him, attentive.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)

(Russian accent)

Good morning.

They respond "Good morning" in nervous, unsure voices.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)

Welcome back from your holiday. 5 weeks of freedom, now you're mine once again.

He flashes a sarcastic grin. The company titters, at his "joke."

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)

First, let us greet the new blood: Jessica and Sarah.

Two young ballerinas, JESSICA and SARAH, sprightly step forward and curtsey as a sign of respect. He gently touches each of their faces, paternally.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)

At conservatory, you were the best, here you start at bottom again. Welcome.

They return to the barre, a little dejected.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)

Second, we open new season with Swan Lake. It is old ballet. But we try to make it new. No pretty little swans. No. Damaged, trapped, tortured. We embrace darkness, so that the light might shine more bright.

He glances at Beth. She smiles, but he immediately looks away towards the soloists. Her smile fades.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)

And a new production begins with a new Swan Queen.

The soloists look at each other, giddy and nervous.

KOROLYEVNA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 A fresh face to present to the
 world.

Korolyevna turns his attention back to Beth.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
 Odette is vulnerable. Never known
 love. Innocent. Not proud. Not
 vain.

Nina stares at Beth to see her reaction. She looks worried.
 She catches Nina staring and gives her an annoyed glance.
 Nina looks away.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
 Who will be our new Odette? Who?

He looks at the instructor.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
 Please, continue.

The instructor nods and the piano resumes. The girls pick up
 the movement exercise where they left off.

Korolyevna silently strolls down the line of soloists as they
 dance. Smiles and glances are thrown his way.

Beth hastily walks out of the room. Nina looks after her,
 concerned, but then returns her attention to Korolyevna.

He notes Beth's exit, but resumes studying the girls. Every
 so often he taps one on the shoulder. A selection process of
 some kind.

He nears Nina. She watches him, a little hopeful. He
 glances at her momentarily...

Then he walks on without tapping her. She deflates.

He taps a couple more girls and goes to the front of the
 room.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
 Okay, good!
 (the music stops)
 All the soloists I touched, please
 continue rehearsal with the rest of
 the company in studio 5.

The girls are confused.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
The four I didn't touch, please
stay.

Nina smiles, realizing the girls he didn't tap are the ones
he's selected, purposefully toying with them.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
Well, what are you all standing
around for? Come on, vit, vit!

Nina watches the rejected girls file out with the full
company, grumbling. She's excited...and nervous.

INT. LARGE REHEARSAL SPACE - LATER

Soloist 2 dances Odette's Variation from Act II, her audition
in progress. The three other dancers Korolyevna selected--
Nina, Veronica, and Soloist 4--watch from the side.

Nina awaits her turn, looking anxious. She looks down and
sees her fingers trembling. She takes breaths, trying to
relax.

KOROLYEVNA (O.S.)
Okay stop, stop.

The music and Soloist 2 stop.

Displeased, Korolyevna just shakes his head, unimpressed.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
Odette is forever a swan. She is
completely trapped...and you're
smiling?

SOLOIST 2
I'm sorry.

KOROLYEVNA
Alright...Nina.

Disappointed, Soloist 2 rejoins the group of girls as Nina
steps away from them. She stands in the middle of the space,
freaked out.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
When you dance, let me see some
fear, okay? Do not try to hide it.

She nods.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)

Maestro?

The PIANO PLAYER begins.

Nina begins dancing Odette's Variation from Act II of the ballet.

Her nervousness actually meshes well with the role.

Although her movement is incredibly precise, there's a certain vulnerability. Exactly as the White Swan should be.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)

Okay, good.

He waves his arm at the piano player. The music and Nina stops abruptly. She's frozen facing the mirror.

In the reflection, Nina can see Yevna approach her. She starts to face him, but he places his hands on her waist.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)

No, Nina. Face yourself.

She looks at her reflection. He talks softly so the other girls can't hear.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)

Are you scared?

NINA

I'm sorry, I just-

KOROLYEVNA

Sssh. Don't be sorry. Fear is good. It's a sign of desire.

He turns her to face him. He gets very close.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)

Do you want to be Odette?

NINA

If you want me to be.

KOROLYEVNA

Answer me straight.

NINA

I do. More than anything.

KOROLYEVNA

See, if I was just casting Odette,
you'd have it.

She can't help but smile, flattered.

NINA

Thank you.

KOROLYEVNA

But I'm not. There's the dark-half,
Odile. She is bold and unafraid.
You need to be this also.

He nods and turns to the PIANO PLAYER.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)

Maestro, Odile's Coda.

The piano player rifles through the song book.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)

(to Nina)

Let me see your Black Swan.

She nods, intimidated. Glances over to the other girls. All eyes are on her.

The role is hers to claim...or lose. She takes a few breaths, then looks towards the piano player and nods.

The music begins.

Nina dances a few steps, and then launches into the most difficult and famous part of Swan Lake: The coda of Odile's Pas de Deux. It consists of 32 consecutive fouettes (spins).

Unfortunately, she's very stiff and mechanical.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)

Come on, Nina. Don't just do the turns.

The music builds in intensity, she pushes herself into the next turn. A look of fear grows on her face as she spins and spins.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)

You are seducing him. I need to see passion, confidence. You look like a scared little girl, performing for daddy.

Too thin skinned for the criticism, her focus falters. She stumbles and stops, several spins short of finishing.

Breathing hard, she's too ashamed to meet Yevna's eyes.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)

Too bad. You would have made an excellent Odette.

Nina nods. She hears a muffled giggle and eyes Veronica whispering to Soloist 2.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)

Okay, Veronica. Your turn.

Upset Nina quietly exits the space, into the

BACKSTAGE HALLWAY

Her eyes start tearing up. She wipes away the tears, embarrassed. Inside the room, the same MUSIC begins playing.

She glances back through the glass window and sees Veronica doing the spins.

Veronica handles the virtuosic movement with ease, looking calm and assured. A confident smile on her face.

KOROLYEVNA (O.S.)

(muffled, through door)

Yes, Veronica. Good.

Envious, Nina's face hardens and she walks away.

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY - NIGHT

Nina presses a door buzzer inside a nice apartment building.

There's some shuffling behind the door, the sound of the lock turning, and then the door opens, revealing Beth holding a glass of wine. Her eyes red from crying, her makeup removed, she looks older and more haggard.

NINA

Hey...Just came by to make sure you were alright.

Beth gives a drunken nod.

BETH

Thanks. Come in.

Nina enters and Beth closes the door behind her.

INT. LUXURY APARTMENT - NIGHT

It's far more spacious and well appointed than Nina's. There are posters on the wall featuring Beth in various principal roles: Juliet, Giselle, Odette, etc.

Beth walks towards the kitchen, Nina trails behind her.

BETH
All we did was fight on the trip.
He accused me of being stuck up,
which was code for not bending to
his every whim.

Beth takes the bottle, refills her glass to the brim.

BETH (CONT'D)
(re: wine)
Want some?

Nina shakes her head "no."

BETH (CONT'D)
I was stupid to think it'd be
different with me.

Beth drains the remainder off the bottle directly into her mouth. Nina watches, a little concerned.

NINA
He broke up with you?

BETH
That's not exactly how he works.

Beth can tell Nina needs clarification.

BETH (CONT'D)
He's shopping for someone new.

NINA
How do you know?

BETH
Trust me. I know him better than
you do.

NINA
Then he's out of his mind. You're
the most beautiful dancer in the
company.

Beth looks at her and smiles. She walks out of the kitchen and into the living room.

She collapses on a chair and gestures for Nina to sit on the couch. She does.

BETH
Who'd he end up "auditioning?"

NINA
Sarah, Kathleen, Veronica...and myself.

BETH
Really?

Nina nods.

BETH (CONT'D)
Hmmm, did anyone pique his interest?

NINA
Not me. He liked my white swan, but I messed up Odile.

BETH
Yeah, she's very hard. What about Veronica?

Nina's bothered to be so quickly brushed aside.

NINA
She was okay.

BETH
I'm sure she was good.

Nina shrugs.

BETH (CONT'D)
It'll be her.

NINA
Not necessarily.

BETH
Watch. She's the kind of girl who goes after what she wants.

NINA
Yeah...she is.

Beth shakes her head, upset. She does her best to control them, but tears start falling out. Embarrassed, she wipes them away, but they keep coming.

Nina goes to her, kneels down and takes her hand.

NINA (CONT'D)
Hey...she doesn't even compare.

BETH
Yeah...

Beth looks her in the eyes.

BETH (CONT'D)
I wish all the girls could be as sweet as you.

NINA
(vaguely insulted)
Thanks.

Beth pats her on the head.

BETH
(joking, like she's a dog)
Good girl.

Beth laughs, trying to lighten the mood. Though a little humiliated, Nina smiles.

INT. SUBWAY TRAIN - NIGHT

Nina sits in a sparsely crowded car and stares down at the ground, brooding. Mulling over the encounter with Beth, she thinks of things she wishes she had said, unconsciously moving her lips slightly.

The train slows and she looks up to see the name of the stop:

"ROCKEFELLER CENTER"

NINA
(to herself)
Dammit.

On the wrong train, she quickly stands and pushes out the sliding doors.

INT. SUBWAY STATION - NIGHT

She quickly walks through a grungy tunnel, crossing to the opposite train platform. Strange, cartoony music echoes off the tile walls.

She passes a subway musician, an OLD KEYBOARDIST, accompanied by ELECTRONIC DOLLS, which sway and jerk, "dancing" to the music.

She stares at the dolls as she walks past, at their frozen, wide-eyed smiles, unable to stop dancing as long as the music plays.

Creeped out, she hurries to the other end of the tunnel and clips down the stairs.

SUBWAY PLATFORM

Nina peers down the tunnel, impatiently looking for the train.

She notices two RATS scurrying along the tracks, fighting over a scrap of food.

Repulsed, she backs up from the track and BUMPS into an OVER-WEIGHT WOMAN with blood-shot eyes.

OVER-WEIGHT WOMAN

Watch where you're steppin'...

NINA

Sorry.

OVER-WEIGHT WOMAN (CONT'D)

...fat little bitch.

The over-weight woman stares her down. Nina backs away.

She stands further down the platform, but when she looks over, she sees the over-weight woman still staring at her.

Scared, she leaves the platform, out through the stairs marked EXIT.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Nina emerges from the subway station, checking behind her to make sure she's not being followed.

She gets to an intersection and looks at the street signs.

She's a little puzzled, does a 360. Lost.

A few blocks away, she sees a familiar sight--Central Park--and heads in that direction.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - NIGHT

Nina walks home along a pathway in Central Park. The pathways are barely lit. She clutches her jacket, for warmth and comfort.

Up ahead, the pathway goes into a TUNNEL underneath a bridge.

Nina slows, looking around for an alternative path, but there is none.

She takes a breath and descends into the tunnel.

It is very dark, almost pitch black.

Suddenly, she hears the sound of soft FOOTSTEPS approaching. She stops, and the FOOTSTEPS continue, get closer.

She looks up and sees the faint outline of someone approaching, almost ghostlike.

As she gets closer to the approaching figure, the shape becomes clearer and clearer: definitely a WOMAN and slender. Not threatening. Nina seems relieved.

But as they pass each other, Nina glances at the woman's face and discovers...

The woman looks EXACTLY LIKE Nina. Her DOUBLE.

But the moment passes quickly, as the woman continues walking.

Nina stares after her, startled. It happened so quickly and it's so dark, was it her eyes playing tricks on her?

INT. NINA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Unsettled, Nina sits on her bed and opens an ANTIQUE MUSIC BOX. A plastic ballerina pops up, and begins twirling to TINNY MUSIC.

It's her most prized possession, and the familiar music comforts her.

She stares at the twirling ballerina and then up at her reflection in the mirror attached under the lid.

She places the open music box back on her nightstand.

She finds her point shoes and puts them on.

She finishes, flexes her foot, and stretches.

She stands on the small patch of hardwood floor and does a single spin, testing the waters.

She spins again, then a double, then a triple. Each spin is punctuated by a sharp jab of her left foot into the floor.

She jabs it down a fourth time, hard...

NINA

Owww! Dammit.

She removes her shoe and unwraps her foot. Her big toenail has split, oozing blood.

Nina grimaces. She breathes through the pain and puts her shoe back on.

She stands, takes a couple breaths, and starts spinning again. First a little unsure, self-conscious.

Her toe jabs into the floor. She winces a little with pain, but keeps pushing.

Her face grows more determined, focused. 20, 21, 22 spins....

THWACK, THWACK. THWACK.

She starts to look powerful, willing herself to succeed this time.

At the end of the 32nd spin, Nina jabs her foot down hard.

She's done it! A huge smile erupts on her face.

Nina looks at herself in the mirror, glazed in sweat, a slight smile of satisfaction.

She lies down on her bed and stares at the music box. The plastic ballerina spins and spins, hypnotizing her to sleep.

INT. APARTMENT BATHROOM - MORNING

Nina digs underneath the sink, looking for something.

Finally, she extracts a small make-up purse.

She unzips it and removes some lipstick and some mascara.

She twists open the lipstick--a cheap, DARK RED. She paints it on her lips.

Then she brushes the mascara on her eye-lashes.

She looks at her reflection. She's applied a bit too much, clearly not a regular wearer of makeup.

EXT. UPPER WEST SIDE APARTMENT, FOYER - DAY

Nina readies to leave the apartment, Erica waits by the door to say goodbye.

ERICA

What's that on your face?

NINA

Makeup.

ERICA

I know what it is. Why are you wearing it?

NINA

Just wanted to.

Erica stares at her suspiciously.

NINA (CONT'D)

(vexed)

I like it, Erica.

ERICA

(she doesn't)

Okay.

NINA

Go shopping today. I want asparagus for dinner.

Erica nods and Nina walks out.

INT. THEATER - DAY

Determined, Nina walks through the bowels of the theater towards Korolyevna's office.

It's a dank maze of crisscrossing hallways, lined with large, coffin-like instrument cases.

She gets to his closed door, "Mr. Korolyevna, Artistic Director" printed in black letters.

She's about to knock when she notices the sound of MUFFLED ARGUING coming from inside.

She leans her ear against the door, eavesdropping for a moment, and then backs up, not wanting to interrupt.

She leans against the opposite wall to wait her turn.

After a moment, the SHOUTING gets louder and closer, and suddenly the door whips open, revealing a very angry Beth.

BETH
(to Korolyevna)
No, get the hell away from me!

Beth turns to leave, but stops in her tracks when she sees Nina.

NINA
(covering)
Hey...

Beth sees Nina's uncharacteristic makeup. Senses something afoot.

BETH
What are you doing here?

NINA
I...I wanted to talk to him about something.

BETH
(suspicious)
About what?

Just then, Korolyevna appears behind Beth in the doorway. He sees who Beth's talking to.

KOROLYEVNA
(overly friendly)
Ahh, my little white swan, come in.

Beth looks at Korolyevna, then back at Nina, perplexed.

NINA
(to Beth)
Excuse me.

Nina squeezes past Beth into the office. Beth stares at her, betrayed. Nina glances back at her.

NINA (CONT'D)
See you later, okay?

Korolyevna shuts the door on Beth.

KOROLYEVNA'S OFFICE

It's a cozy, dark space. Large couch, posters from the ballet on the wall.

Korolyevna sits in his chair and lights a cigarette. Nina remains standing, feeling very awkward.

He takes a much-needed drag, exhales and then finally looks at her.

NINA

If now's not a good time...

KOROLYEVNA

Now's a fine time. Go ahead.

Nina takes a breath of courage and speaks...

NINA

I just wanted to tell you, I practiced the coda last night, and I did it.

KOROLYEVNA

So? Every dancer in the company could do the coda with practice.

NINA

Yes, but...

KOROLYEVNA

Technique is just technique. It's safe. You don't take any risks. Makes your dancing...frigid.

She nods, a little hurt.

NINA

Okay....

KOROLYEVNA

And I've already chosen Veronica, so...

He lifts his hands in the air, "there you go."

NINA

Oh. I see.

She starts to go, but then stops.

NINA (CONT'D)
 (tentative)
 You know, I'm sorry that you and
 Beth are having trouble.

KOROLYEVNA
 Is that so?

NINA
 Yes. She's a good friend. I know
 she can be a bit stuck up...

KOROLYEVNA
 Uh-huh.

He watches her, waiting to see where this is going.

NINA
 Anyway, it's none of my business,
 but don't hold it against her.
 She's just ready for things to get
 more serious. I mean, she is 34.

It's difficult to tell if Nina means to help or hurt Beth's
 cause.

KOROLYEVNA
 You're right.

NINA
 No more time for fun.

KOROLYEVNA
 I mean, it's none of your business.

NINA
 Of course, I'm sorry.

She turns to leave.

KOROLYEVNA
 Hold on.

She stops on command.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
 You've been here four years. You've
 brought me little gifts, but have
 hardly ever said a word.

NINA
 I know.

KOROLYEVNA
I thought you were just a nice,
sweet girl, but now I see other
side.

NINA
Excuse me?

KOROLYEVNA
Why did you come in today?

NINA
You know why. I want to be Odette.

KOROLYEVNA
(skeptical)
So, you're just going after the
role?

NINA
Yes.

Korolyevna gets up from his chair and approaches her. She
subtly backs up, intimidated.

KOROLYEVNA
Are you afraid of me?

NINA
I'm sorry if I overstepped-

KOROLYEVNA
What are you afraid of?

NINA
Nothing, I-

He grabs the back of her hair. She stiffens.

KOROLYEVNA
This?

She shakes her head.

Suddenly, he forces a kiss on her. She lets herself be
kissed for a moment and then pulls away, stunned.

Her eyes burn and she SLAPS him, hard.

And immediately regrets it.

NINA
Oh god, I'm sorry.

He rubs his cheek, smiling.

KOROLYEVNA
No, no, that's quite alright.

NINA
I didn't mean...

KOROLYEVNA
Nina, shush. It's done. You can go now.

She leaves, freaked and confused.

INT. LARGE REHEARSAL SPACE - DAY

The company goes through their usual warm-up routine, a tension in the air. The casting decision still uncertain.

Nina stares at Veronica, knowing the good news in store for her. Veronica notices. Nina looks away.

VERONICA
(irked)
What?

NINA
Nothing.

A sudden energy sweeps the room, and she hears the sound of scuffling feet and whispering. "It's up." "She just posted it." "C'mon."

The dancers start exiting into the hallway. Veronica turns to follow.

NINA (CONT'D)
Veronica?

Veronica turns back.

NINA (CONT'D)
Congratulations.

Veronica looks puzzled at first, but then it dawns on her. Nina must have heard something.

Veronica excitedly pushes through the crowd of girls, wanting to see for herself.

Nina remains in the room, knowing the outcome already.

Resigned, she finishes stretching in the deserted space, and then grabs her belongings and walks out.

BACKSTAGE HALLWAY

As she exits, she sees the crowd of gossiping dancers surrounding the bulletin board. Some of them sneak glances at her.

She starts walking down the hall in the opposite direction.

Behind her, she can hear a small commotion and then:

VERONICA (O.S.)
Why did you tell me that?

She turns and sees Veronica, her face flushed with anger.

VERONICA (CONT'D)
That some kind of joke?

NINA
What do you mean...

VERONICA
Fuck you.

Veronica storms away, upset.

The group of girls stares at Nina, making her very self-conscious.

Nina tentatively approaches the bulletin board, to see what Veronica's outburst was all about.

First a few, then more and more of the girls smile at her. They make room for her as she pushes through.

She finally gets to the CASTING NOTICE, finds "New Swan Queen" and underneath:

NINA SAYERS

Nina is stunned.

She turns around to face the mass of ballerinas, watching her. Envy hidden by polite smiles.

Nina emits a high-pitched SHRILL of joy.

NINA
I can't believe it!

Other girls come up to her and give her congratulatory hugs, some more sincerely than others.

NINA (CONT'D)
Thank you! Thanks! Thanks! I can't believe it! Thank you!

INT. PRINCIPALS' DRESSING ROOM - DAY

Yevna shows Nina into her new dressing room. It's larger than the SOLOISTS' room. Still somewhat spartan, but comfortable

KOROLYEVNA
You can change in here from now on.

She starts looking around the space. Sees a large WARDROBE CLOSET and a SMALL SOFA. All luxuries.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
You share of course with Beth and Sophie. So..be considerate.

NINA
(bowed over)
Oh my god...

KOROLYEVNA
(joking)
Please, just Yevna.

NINA
Yevna...I don't know what to say.

KOROLYEVNA
You don't sound happy.

NINA
Are you kidding? I'm thrilled! But you said-

KOROLYEVNA
I know. But then you slapped me. And I came to my senses.

NINA
I'm sorry. I didn't-

KOROLYEVNA
Stop being sorry. It was a brave thing to do. Showed me there was some passion inside there.

NINA
Well...okay.

KOROLYEVNA
I'm taking a chance on you.

NINA
(stung)
I know.

KOROLYEVNA
But I look at you, I see Odette.
Exactly. And Odile...I see
potential.

NINA
Thank you so much.

KOROLYEVNA
Don't thank me. It will be a lot of
work.

NINA
I understand.

KOROLYEVNA
Congratulations.

He leans in, she stiffens, and he kisses her on the cheek.
Just then, Beth opens the door, purposefully interrupting
them.

BETH
What's going on?

Korolyevna stares daggers at her.

KOROLYEVNA
Beth. Not now, okay?

Beth's face stiffens and she SLAMS the door, upset.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
(sarcastic, to Beth)
Good girl! Well done!

NINA
(exits after her)
Excuse me, I'm sorry.

HALLWAY

Nina sees Beth walking quickly towards the exit door.

NINA

Beth!

Beth doesn't stop. Nina runs after her, through the door and finally catches up with her in the

STAIRWELL

Beth's a half-flight up the stairs already.

NINA

Come on, Beth. Don't be mad-

Beth whips around.

BETH

How could you do that to me?

NINA

I'm not doing anything. I just want to be Odette.

BETH

Thought you'd messed up the audition. Suddenly, you're there this morning for a "private meeting," and what do you know.

NINA

It's not like that.

BETH

Oh yes it is. You fucked your way into the role.

NINA

Beth, I get that you're upset, but you're acting crazy.

BETH

He hasn't tried anything?

NINA

(adamant)

I would never do that to you.

BETH
I don't believe you. You're two-
faced. Yesterday you're my friend,
today you're, what?

NINA
Why can't you just be happy for me?

BETH
Happy???

NINA
Yeah. People are finally going to
know who *I* am, applaud for *me*.

BETH
So forget about me, then. Who cares
what happens to me so long as you
get some time in the spotlight.

NINA
You're being so selfish...

BETH
Go fuck yourself.

Beth continues up the stairs, but Nina's too upset to follow.

INT. UPPER WEST SIDE APARTMENT LOBBY - NIGHT

Nina enters and the DOORMAN looks up from his paper.

DOORMAN
Good evening.

Still upset, she passes without acknowledging him.

INT. UPPER WEST SIDE APARTMENT- EVENING

Nina jumbles with her keys and finally manages to unlock the
front door.

She enters, sees Erica preparing ASPARAGUS in the kitchen.

ERICA
Dinner's almost ready.

Nina walks into the kitchen, causing Erica to glance up at
her.

NINA
I have some good news.

ERICA

Oh?

NINA

I've been given the role of Odette.

Nina smiles a little, can't help but be proud. Erica stops cooking, processing.

ERICA

(flat)

That's wonderful.

If Erica's surprised or happy for her, she does a very good job of hiding it. She resumes cooking.

NINA

It means I'll be dancing opening night.

ERICA

Yes. I know.

NINA

Are you happy for me?

ERICA

Of course...It'll be a lot of pressure, won't it?

NINA

I can handle it.

ERICA

Of course you can. I'll make sure of that.

Erica can sense Nina expects more, grows uncomfortable.

ERICA (CONT'D)

Dinner is going to burn if I don't pay attention.

NINA

That's all you have to say?

ERICA

What else is there?

Nina fumes.

NINA

Nothing. Nevermind.

ERICA

Then go wash off.

Nina walks away, bottling her frustration.

INT. APARTMENT BATHROOM - NIGHT

Post-shower, Nina's fuzzy reflection stares back in a steam covered mirror.

Nina takes her hand and wipes a streak across, to see herself more clearly.

She turns from side to side, to check out her profile. She notices a small cluster of RED BUMPS on her right shoulder blade. A small rash.

She feels the rash, bothered by the imperfection.

She digs out a compact from the medicine cabinet.

She twists to get a better look in the mirror, and covers the bumps with a layer of MAKEUP.

INT. BACKSTAGE HALLWAY - DAY

As Nina walks, other dancers look at her and subtly part to make way. Her new status already having an effect. She smiles at them, a little uncomfortable with the attention.

Nina checks the bulletin board, to see that day's rehearsal schedule, then continues on.

She sees Beth exit the principals' dressing room. Nina tenses up and slows. Beth notices her and gives her a cold stare.

Nina holds her own, stares back, as Beth passes her.

It's clear that whatever friendship existed is over.

Beth walks by without a word or incident, and Nina relaxes a little. She enters her new dressing room, seeking refuge.

PRINCIPALS' DRESSING ROOM

But the room has been trashed. Empty water bottles, trash, makeup compacts, and other odds-and-ends have been thrown all over the floor and vanity counter.

Nina drops her stuff on the floor, upset. She notices a message scrawled in RED LIPSTICK on the mirror:

BACKSTABBING BITCH

Nina grabs some tissue and angrily wipes it off.

There's KNOCK on the door. The ballet's no-nonsense ADMINISTRATOR pokes her head in.

NINA

Hey.

ADMINISTRATOR

Oh, Jesus, look at this mess. For god's sakes.

NINA

It's okay.

ADMINISTRATOR

No, it's not okay.

The administrator holds out the grey PRACTICE TUTU.

ADMINISTRATOR (CONT'D)

Here.

Nina takes the tutu, slightly in awe of it.

ADMINISTRATOR (CONT'D)

You girls, think I'm your personal maid.

She dumps makeup, clothing, everything, into the wastebasket.

ADMINISTRATOR (CONT'D)

Bunch of spoiled brats.

NINA

I didn't-

ADMINISTRATOR

Save it.

Pissed, the administrator exits with the wastebasket.

Nina sits down at her vanity. She looks at the crumpled tissue in her hand, colored red from the lipstick.

She looks up at her reflection in the mirror, feeling very overwhelmed already.

INT. PRINCIPAL REHEARSAL SPACE - DAY

Nina stretches alone. Raises her foot to the barre, brings her head down to meet her ankle.

Muffled sounds of other ballerinas chatting, giggling drift in from the large rehearsal space, down the hall. Making Nina feel a little isolated.

DAVID (O.S.)

Hey there...

Nina turns and sees DAVID, the high-cheeked, cocky Russian playing Prince Siegfried.

DAVID (CONT'D)

It is so full, where do I stand.

It is his version of a joke. Nina politely laughs.

NINA

Yeah...good luck finding a spot.

DAVID

I am David.

NINA

Oh, I know who you are. I'm Nina.

DAVID

Nice to meet you, Nina. Here we go, huh?

NINA

Here we go.

KOROLYEVNA (PRE-LAP)

Remember, Odette is wanting love, that is what is needed to be free.

INT. PRINCIPAL REHEARSAL SPACE - DAY

Korolyevna sits at his chair in the center of the mirror, watching from a distance.

KOROLYEVNA

But she has been betrayed. Why trust Prince Siegfried? Why trust anyone at all?

He nods to the piano player, who begins.

David dances around the space, miming a hunt with a cross-bow.

Nina enters, sees him and acts spooked. She dances away from him, a scared look on her face.

Nina gracefully undulates her arms, to resemble a bird's flapping, sneaking at glances at Korolyevna, eager for his feedback.

But he just watches, silently.

Nina spins out of David's grasp, disentangles from him.

In the middle of the next spin, Nina sees a girl watching her from the doorway.

She spins, then re-focuses on the girl. She looks a lot like Nina.

She spins again, the girl comes back into focus. She looks EXACTLY like Nina.

Freaked, Nina stumbles.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)

What happened?

NINA

Who's that?

She gestures towards the door, but the girl there no longer looks like Nina's double, just very similar. She wears dark, vampy make-up. Bold and edgy. Her name is LILY.

She walks away from the window, so Korolyevna barely catches a glimpse.

KOROLYEVNA

Uh, it's new girl. Just joined company.

NINA

She looks a lot like me.

KOROLYEVNA

(impatient)

Come on, Nina. Let's keep going.

Nina rejoins David.

NINA

So strange...Did you see her? We could practically be sisters.

DAVID
Yevna has his type.

NINA
I guess...

KOROLYEVNA
Maestro!

The piano begins, and they start their dance once again, Nina still looking a little troubled.

INT. THEATER CAFETERIA - DAY

Hidden in the bowels of the theater, a small cafeteria, servicing the dancers and orchestra members.

Nina stands at the register, buying a salad.

She walks into the dining space, sees her former group of soloists, sitting around a table.

Veronica looks up at Nina and waves her over.

VERONICA
Lily, over here. Lily!

Nina's confused, thinks Veronica's addressing her, but then Lily passes from behind her.

LILY
Hey! Come sit with us.

Lily continues in front of her, but then takes the last chair at the table.

Nina reluctantly follows, all the soloists watching her.

VERONICA
I don't think there's room.

LILY
We could squeeze.

Nina looks at Lily, still put off by how similar they look.

LILY (CONT'D)
I'm Lily, by the way.

NINA
Nina...

LILY
Nice to meet you. Grab a chair.

NINA
No, that's okay. I have to run to
my fitting. See ya guys.

Nina walks away.

VERONICA
Guess she's too good for us now.

Nina ignores the barb, continues walking.

INT. BACKSTAGE HALLWAY - DAY

Sitting against the wall, Nina scarfs down her salad alone. In the empty, locker-filled hallway, she looks particularly small and lonely.

She hears footsteps and looks up to find Lily approaching.

LILY
Hey...

Embarrassed, Nina stands and quickly throws away the rest of her salad. Makes a show of looking at her watch.

LILY (CONT'D)
Sorry about that, didn't mean to
take your spot.

NINA
Don't worry about it. Had to eat in
a hurry anyway.

LILY
What a bunch of bitches, huh?

Nina shrugs.

NINA
I should probably...

LILY
Yeah, totally...

Nina starts to leave.

LILY (CONT'D)
Hey, you wanna grab a drink
sometime?

NINA

Uh...

LILY

I'm new here. You seem cool, unlike some people.

NINA

I'm pretty busy, but maybe sometime.

LILY

Alright. Later.

Nina walks away.

INT. COSTUME SHOP - DAY

The gruff COSTUMER, takes Nina's measurements. Nina wears nothing but a leotard.

COSTUMER

Arm's up.

Distracted, Nina lifts her arms. Costumer wraps the tape around her bust, makes a note of the measurement.

COSTUMER (CONT'D)

Hmm.

Nina looks uncomfortable, disliking the close scrutiny of her body.

The costumer wraps the tape around Nina's hips.

COSTUMER (CONT'D)

Got some hips on you, huh?

NINA

Mmm-hmmm.

COSTUMER

Beth's practically a boy, she's so narrow.

Nina blushes. Costumer makes a note of the measurement.

COSTUMER (CONT'D)

Okay, turn around.

Costumer extends tape across her shoulder's. Notices something.

COSTUMER (CONT'D)
How'd you get that?

NINA
What?

COSTUMER
You have a rash back here.

Nina reaches behind her, feels the bumps on her shoulder blade. They've spread out a little farther.

NINA
I don't know how I got it.

COSTUMER
Mm, well, don't cover it with makeup, it'll just make it worse.

NINA
Okay.

COSTUMER
And get it checked out. Don't think Yevna would want a nasty rash on the White Swan.

Costumer holds the tape back up to her back, and makes a note of the measurement.

COSTUMER (CONT'D)
Okay, done.

Nina quickly puts on a sweatshirt, and some thick, insulated pants. Relieved to cover her body.

INT. UPPER WEST SIDE APARTMENT - NIGHT

Nina enters, exhausted from her day.

She stumbles into the kitchen and downs a bottle of seltzer water from the fridge.

She sees a prepared dinner sitting on the kitchen table. Cold.

She takes the plate and dumps the food in the trash.

ERICA (O.S.)
Not hungry?

Nina turns, sees Erica standing in the doorway.

NINA
(caught)
I ate at the theater.

ERICA
I see. Long day?

NINA
Very. I'm exhausted. Gonna go to
bed.

Nina walks away, before Erica can protest.

INT. BACKSTAGE HALLWAY - DAY

Start of another day. Nina enters, checks the bulletin board
for that day's schedule.

She notices something strange. Beth's name has a line drawn
through it wherever it appears:

~~BETH MACINTYRE~~

A little troubled, Nina backs away from it.

She continues down the hall, and walks into

KOROLYEVNA'S OFFICE

He looks up at her, can tell she's upset.

KOROLYEVNA
Yes, Nina?

NINA
What happened to Beth?

He takes a moment before answering.

KOROLYEVNA
Unfortunately, her time with the
company has come to an end.

NINA
Why?

KOROLYEVNA
She's decided to retire.

She's confused. Can't tell if he's speaking euphemistically.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)

It had nothing to do with you. She was no longer fit to dance.

She nods, still dubious.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)

Go get ready. We start in 5 minutes.

The topic is clearly closed for conversation.

Still disconcerted, she exits.

BACKSTAGE HALLWAY

And heads towards her dressing room.

As she nears it, she hears music emanating from the large rehearsal space.

She gets to the open doorway and stops to watch.

The corps and soloists practice the little and big Swans dance from Act 2.

Veronica and Lily, playing the big swans, break away from the two lines and dance in the middle.

Lily has a looser style than Veronica. Her movements are less precisely articulated, but more fluid.

On her back, she has two, dark WING TATTOOS on each shoulder blade.

KOROLYEVNA (O.S.)

See the way she moves...

Korolyevna has snuck up behind Nina at the doorway.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)

Very sensual. Watch. You'd do well to mirror her.

Nina's expression hardens, bothered by Yevna's praise of Lily.

Unlike Nina, she looks completely at ease. Exuberant even.

She makes a small mistake, but cracks up laughing, amused rather than bothered by her blunder.

Nina watches her, threatened.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
Come, we have a long day ahead of
us.

He leaves and she takes one last glance at Lily and follows.

INT. PRINCIPAL REHEARSAL SPACE - NIGHT

Korolyevna and Nina practice Act 3. They've been rehearsing for hours and Nina is soaked with sweat.

With Korolyevna's hands placed firmly around her waist, Nina does a series of lifts and spins, Korolyevna bracing her.

He sets her down and she leans in close, as though to kiss him. And then pushes off and dances a short solo.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
Remember, the Black Swan offers him
what Odette lacks. Lust, sex. You
will do whatever it takes to get
what you want.

She still looks stiff and a little scared. Certainly not the seductress he's looking for. He shakes his head, frustrated.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
No. No. Stop.

She looks at him like a chastised child. Can tell he's displeased.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
Nina...you are a beautiful girl,
but you have no idea how to...

He tries to find the least offensive way of putting it.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
Use it.

Suddenly, the lights turn off, throwing them into total darkness.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
(finally snaps)
Goddamn it! Fuck!

Korolyevna angrily marches to the door and whips it open.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
 (to someone in hall)
 Hey! We are still working in here.
 Lights back on, please.

There's a momentary pause, and then the lights return.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
 Thank you!
 (to Nina)
 We must be the only ones left.
 Where were we?

NINA
 At the lean-in.

KOROLYEVNA
 Right, the kiss.

He studies her.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
 You know what? That's enough work
 for tonight.

NINA
 I can keep going.

KOROLYEVNA
 No. More practice won't do any
 good.

She looks a little stung. He holds out his hand.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
 Come with me.

She hesitates for a second before taking it. He leads her
 out of the room.

INT. PRINCIPALS' DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

They enter and he turns on the vanity lights surrounding the
 mirror.

KOROLYEVNA
 Open the wardrobe.

She goes to the wardrobe, glancing back at him, before
 opening the door. An expensive-looking dress hangs inside.

She looks back at Yevna, questioningly.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
 We have sponsor benefit next week.
 A new swan queen needs a new dress.

She takes the dress out of the closet.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
 Try it on.

NINA
 (shy)
 Now?

KOROLYEVNA
 (annoyed)
 I'll wait outside.

NINA
 Sorry, I just-

He ignores her and exits, closing the door behind him.

She looks at the dress, still feeling uncomfortable, but what choice does she have.

She slips out of her leggings and leotard.

She feels for the rash on her shoulder blade, worried he'll see it.

She slips on the dress and, fortunately, the back material will cover it once closed.

She reaches for the zipper, but she can't zip it up herself. She tries different arm positions. Reaching over her back, reaching back under...

Yevna suddenly re-enters, startling her. She faces him, clinching the back closed with her hand.

KOROLYEVNA
 Very good...Turn.

She does and he notices the back still undone.

He walks over and starts to zip her up. She keeps her hand clinching the material, not wanting to expose the rash.

But the zipper won't go all the way. He tries to force it, but it won't budge.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
 Hmmm, the dress is too small.

Nina faces him.

NINA
(mortified)
Yes...

KOROLYEVNA
It's alright. We'll just have to
let it out.

NINA
Mmm-hmmm...

He lifts her head up by the chin and looks into her eyes. He starts to lean in...

She hears a CLUNK of a heating pipe and pulls away.

NINA (CONT'D)
Did you hear that?

KOROLYEVNA
Nina!

She locks eyes with him, scared.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
Forget about being a good girl.
You want to be Black Swan?

She recognizes the implied threat. She nods.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
Then you need to let yourself go.

He whips her around to face the mirror, starts kissing her neck and fondling her breasts. She lets him, more than participates.

He forces her down on the vanity counter and hikes up her dress.

She notices a yellowed NEWSPAPER ARTICLE taped to the bottom of the mirror. It features a picture of BETH attending a soiree with the headline, "NYBT PRESENTS NEW SWAN QUEEN."

She has a pang of guilt and starts to rise, but he pushes her back down.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
Relax.

She hears the sound of his ZIPPER and the clang of his belt as his pants hit the floor.

She takes a breath and succumbs.

She hastily pulls her panties down, getting them down to her knees.

NINA

Fuck me.

He smiles and roughly enters her. She MOANS in pleasure (and pain).

As he thrusts, she stares at her reflection in the mirror.

It looks at her, silent and stolid. Even as Nina is pushed forward, the reflection remains still, coldly watching.

Nina closes her eyes, to avoid its troubling gaze, but the reflection's eyes remain wide open. Judging her.

INT. APARTMENT BATHROOM - NIGHT

Nina showers, numbly letting the water rush over her. She's still processing what just happened, scandalized and guilty.

She washes herself to feel "clean," and feels the rash on her back. To her dismay, some bumps have started to appear on the other shoulder blade.

She touches them, concerned.

INT. BACKSTAGE HALLWAY - DAY

Nina enters for another day of rehearsal, but the hall is strangely quiet and empty.

Nina continues walking, glancing into the soloists' dressing room, which is likewise empty.

A CORP MEMBER passes behind her.

CORP MEMBER

Everyone's in studio 3.

Nina nods and continues on to the

LARGE REHEARSAL SPACE

Veronica, the soloists, and most of the company have congregated. They socialize in small cliques as they stretch.

Nina catches snippets of some of the conversations.

DANCER 1 (O.S.)
 ...fucking Korolyevna...

DANCER 2 (O.S.)
 ...bitch...

DANCER 3 (O.S.)
 ...shame. Embarrassing really...

Intimidated, she remains standing awkwardly by the door.

LILY (O.S.)
 Hey! Nina.

Nina turns, sees that Lily has entered behind her.

LILY (CONT'D)
 What's up?

NINA
 I don't know.

LILY
 Well, let's find out. Come on.

Lily sees Veronica nearby and approaches her. She glances back and waves for Nina to follow. She does, reluctantly.

LILY (CONT'D)
 What's going on?

Veronica gives Nina a catty stare.

VERONICA
 Somebody's either retired, fired,
 sick, or dead.

LILY
 Very nice...

VERONICA
 It's true. See?

Veronica gestures towards the door.

Yevna enters the room flanked by his support staff, all with very somber expressions. Whatever the news, it *is* bad.

Yevna passes by Nina looks her in the eye and gives her a rueful smile, a little difficult to read.

He stands at the front of the room and gestures for the dancers to come closer.

KOROLYEVNA

Please.

The dancers form a semi-circle around him.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)

(grave)

Company...I regret to inform you that Beth Macintyre's in the hospital. She had a... serious accident last night.

There's a small gasp. Nina's eyes widen.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)

The family has asked for privacy, but flowers can be sent to Presbyterian Hospital.

Nina's eyes tear-up, she assumes the worst.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)

Rehearsal is cancelled. Please, go be with loved ones and keep Beth in your thoughts.

Nina quickly exits the room, upset.

INT. BACKSTAGE HALLWAY - DAY

Nina pushes out the door, tears starting to fall. She rushes down the hall towards the exit.

KOROLYEVNA (O.S.)

Nina!

She turns around. Korolyevna runs to her and grabs her upper arm to comfort, and control, her.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)

She's okay.

She brushes his hand away.

NINA

I need to go.

She leaves him and pushes out the exit door.

EXT. BODEGA - DAY

Nina walks past, on her way to the hospital. She stops and walks back.

She quickly scans the selection of flowers. She grabs a bouquet of white lilies and takes them to the CASHIER to pay for them.

INT. PRESBYTERIAN HOSPITAL - DAY

Nina follows a FAT NURSE down a stark hallway. She gestures towards an open door a little bit down the hall.

FAT NURSE
She's right up here.

NINA
Thanks.

Nina slowly approaches, takes a breath, and then looks inside.

Sees Beth: pale and unconscious, attached to MACHINES.

FAT NURSE (O.S.)
Poor thing. Got a ton flowers, but
no one's come to see her yet.

NINA
Uh-huh...

FAT NURSE
Musta been lonely.

Nina ignores her.

FAT NURSE (CONT'D)
Well, I'll leave you be.

The nurse walks away.

Upset, Nina hesitates before entering.

She slowly approaches Beth's bedside.

Beth's face is gaunt, dark rings under her eyes, her lips barely pink.

Nina stares at her friend and tears up, troubled by her state. She shakes her head, growing a little irritated at what Beth did to herself.

She looks around the room. It is already lined with large, EXPENSIVE-LOOKING BOUQUETS. The ballet community's outpouring of support.

She walks over to them, scanning the cards to see who they're from.

She looks at her own, cheap flowers, a little insecure.

She removes the card and surreptitiously SWITCHES IT with a card on a nicer bouquet.

Guilty, she glances to the door and sees the Fat Nurse in the hallway, watching her through the doorway.

Unsure if she's been caught, Nina quickly sets her "inadequate" bouquet down and exits the room.

She passes by the nurse, who just stares at her suspiciously.

EXT. THEATER - NIGHT

Nina approaches the theater, wearing the NEW DRESS and walking clumsily in HIGH HEELS, unused to them. She looks pretty, though uncomfortable, like a girl playing dress-up.

She sees other DANCERS and GUESTS entering the lobby, comfortably socializing.

She takes a daunted breath and presses on.

A GENTLEMAN opens the door for her as she approaches. She awkwardly glances at him and nods her thanks.

INT. THEATER LOBBY - NIGHT

The gala fund-raiser for the ballet. Filled with rich looking SPONSORS. Mostly old and crusty, dolled up in tuxes and Chanel.

Nina observes from the edge of the room.

Korolyevna spots Nina and comes, handing Nina a glass of champagne.

KOROLYEVNA

There you are.

She takes the champagne, but doesn't drink.

NINA

Hi.

She avoids looking at him.

KOROLYEVNA
Are you okay?

NINA
Yes. I'm fine.

KOROLYEVNA
Okay. I should introduce you
around. Try to look happy.

He offers his arm and she takes it, trying her best to smile.

He takes her to an elderly UPPER EAST SIDE COUPLE.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
Everyone, I want you to meet our
newest Swan Queen, Nina.

Nina curtseys.

The UES WOMAN, covered in makeup and jewelry, holds out her
bony hand. Nina takes it.

UES WOMAN
My, she's lovely Yevna.

Her husband, an equally OLD MAN, smiles his yellow teeth.

UES MAN
Indeed, what a treasure.

He takes Nina's hand and kisses it.

KOROLYEVNA
If you'll excuse us...

Yevna takes her around to more sponsors--a successful
investment banker and his wife, MR. AND MRS. GOLDMAN.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
Nina, allow me to introduce Mr. and
Mrs. Goldman.

MRS. GOLDMAN
Pleasure, my dear.

Nina curtseys.

MR. GOLDMAN
Nice to see a fresh face, Yevna.
How old?

NINA

26.

MR. GOLDMAN

Ah, good. You hit 30, almost time to retire. Wish I were that lucky. I have to work until I'm 65.

He chuckles at his own joke.

KOROLYEVNA

Yes, and then die shortly after.

This silences Mr. Goldman, but his wife smooths it over by raising her glass.

MRS. GOLDMAN

To our Odette.

Nina gently clinks her glass and takes a small sip.

INT. LOBBY, STAIRCASE - MOMENTS LATER

Korolyevna leads Nina up the staircase.

KOROLYEVNA

He is a pig. But one of our biggest donors. I apologize. Here, come up to the landing, so the world can see you.

She joins him at the landing overlooking the lobby. She sees the large crowd gathered below, mingling. Makes her nervous.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)

Drink up, my dear. For courage.

She takes a sip of champagne.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)

Stand up straight, chin high. You are a queen now, remember that.

She follows his instructions. He takes her hand, faces the room.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)

Everyone, please, your attention!

Everyone in the lobby turns towards them, hundreds of eyes gazing at Nina at once.

Her free hand starts to shake, nervous.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
Please excuse the interruption.
Dancers are not known for our
verbal skills, so I will be brief.

Polite laughter. Definitely heard this line before.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
None of us would be here without
your support, and for that I am
truly grateful.

He politely bows, gracious and humble when he needs to be.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
Undoubtedly, many of you have heard
the news about Beth Macintyre. She
is in our hearts. I'm sure we all
wish her a very speedy recovery.

He takes a pause, looking appropriately forlorn.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
But we are not here to mourn. We
are here to celebrate.

He looks at Nina, smiling warmly.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
You may have noticed this stunning
creature by my side. She is our
new star. Everyone, I present Ms.
Nina Sayers.

Restrained APPLAUSE. Nina steps forward and curtseys.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
Soon, you will all have the fortune
of seeing her perform. Tonight, we
toast her. Please raise a glass.

The room lifts a glass, as does Nina.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
To all of you, to Nina, to the
light and dark in all of us. Za
Vas.

He downs his drink.

Nina follows suit and downs hers as well. He smiles,
approvingly.

Korolyevna leads her down the stairs, and back into the fray. The sponsors swarm around her.

They offer their hands, lean in for kisses on the cheek. There are so many of them. Nina does her best to maintain a smile, but it's very overwhelming.

INT. THEATER AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

The cavernous space is empty and quiet.

A door at the rear cracks open and the MUMMURING of the party burbles in. Nina sneaks in carefully, trying not to be seen.

She closes the door behind her and takes a much needed deep breath.

She looks towards the stage and sees the closed velvet curtain hiding it from view.

She walks down the aisle until she gets to the orchestra pit. She looks behind her and sees all the rows and rows of vacant seats. She imagines all the seats filled with people watching her, and it's both exhilarating and unnerving.

She turns and walks through a side-curtain into the wings of the stage.

It's barely lit by house-lights, but she can see some of the half-built scenery for Swan Lake.

She walks onto the stage and studies it.

She slips off her high heels, presses her bare-feet into the cold surface of the stage. It's familiar and comforting.

She begins dancing.

But she hears the sound of polite CLAPPING and she stops suddenly.

NINA

Hello?

She stares into the dark wings and sees a shadow move.

NINA (CONT'D)

Who's there?

Footsteps approach and then Lily comes out of the shadows smoking a cigarette and holding a glass of red wine, drunk.

NINA (CONT'D)

Oh, hi.

Nina goes to pick up her shoes.

LILY

You don't have to stop. You looked good.

NINA

Thanks.

LILY

Needed to blow off some steam?

NINA

Yeah... But I should get back.

Lily holds out the wine glass.

LILY

(passive aggressive)

Here, we can finally have that drink.

NINA

That's okay.

LILY

You sure? It'll make that party less unbearable.

NINA

I'm sure.

Nina puts on her shoes.

LILY

You and Beth were pretty close, huh?

NINA

Yeah...we were.

LILY

It's fucked up.

NINA

She must have had her reasons.

LILY

I guess. Still a selfish thing to do.

NINA

Yeah...

LILY

Don't let it take away from what's happening. I mean, this is it. A dream come true.

NINA

Uh-huh.

Nina starts to walk away.

LILY

You know, if you need to blow off some steam, then really fucking do it.

Nina looks at her incredulously.

LILY (CONT'D)

Don't look at me like I'm retarded, I'm serious.

NINA

And how do you suggest I do that?

LILY

It's called "emotional expression." Gets what's inside out, and it's cheaper than therapy.

NINA

(skeptical)
Right...

LILY

Here, watch.

Lily downs the rest of her wine. Sets down the glass and demonstrates the last part of her Big Swan dance. It's pretty sloppy looking.

LILY (CONT'D)

Can you guess how I'm feeling?

NINA

You look...unsteady.

LILY

Ding ding ding. I've had way too much to drink.

Nina shakes her head, can't help but be charmed.

LILY (CONT'D)
Your turn.

NINA
No, thanks.

LILY
Come on. Show me one of your
dances, but let all your fucking
anger and sadness and muck come
out.

Nina hesitates.

LILY (CONT'D)
Come on, shake it up.

Nina removes her shoes and starts dancing part of the Black Swan's dance. Not taking it seriously, Nina just goes through the motions, hoping to satisfy Lily.

LILY (CONT'D)
Come on, that's not how you feel.
Show me how you feel!

Agitated, Nina starts dancing angrily, letting some of that pent-up energy out. It's sloppy, but intense.

LILY (CONT'D)
(clapping)
There you go.

Nina shakes her head, gives Lily a small smile.

NINA
Okay. That's enough.

THE AUDITORIUM

Lily follows behind her.

LILY
That was awesome.

Nina chuckles.

LILY (CONT'D)
Bet Yevna's never seen a Black Swan
like that before.

NINA
Probably not.

LILY
You should show him. I bet he'd
love it.

NINA
I don't think so.

LILY
Why not?

NINA
Well, he didn't come up with it,
for one

LILY
So?

NINA
Trust me, I know him better than
you do.

LILY
If you say so.

NINA
I should get back. But thanks, I
feel better.

LILY
Anytime.

Nina exits the theater, back into the lobby.

EXT. THEATER - NIGHT

Korolyevna escorts Nina out of the theater. It's a couple
hours later and he's a little tipsy.

NINA
Was I okay?

He takes both of her hands, looks at her affectionately.

KOROLYEVNA
They tried to eat you alive, but
here you are, in one piece.

NINA
Yeah...

KOROLYEVNA
Where are you going now?

NINA
Home, I guess. It's pretty late.

KOROLYEVNA
Why don't we go to my place?

She looks at him, noncommittal.

NINA
I don't know.

He drops her hands, frustrated. Stares at her.

KOROLYEVNA
Because of her?

She nods.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
Beth did it to herself. It's not
our fault.

NINA
It doesn't feel right.

KOROLYEVNA
Ah, so you're being the good
"friend?"

Nina shrugs.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
Why? Beth was not a very good
friend to you.

NINA
Yes she was.

KOROLYEVNA
Oh? You should have heard the
things she said about you.

Nina hardens.

NINA
What did she say?

KOROLYEVNA
Terrible things. Accused you of
seducing your way into the role.
Called you a whore.

Nina shakes her head upset.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
See? She was out of her mind.

NINA
I'm going home.

Nina turns, quickly walks towards the street. He chases after her.

KOROLYEVNA
Nina? Come on, stop.

She faces him.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
I apologize. I shouldn't have told you that. Forgive me.

NINA
From now on, I want to keep our relationship professional.

His face darkens.

NINA (CONT'D)
Whatever happened, happened. But that's over.

KOROLYEVNA
(cold)
Fine. Let me grab you a taxi.

He breaks from her and heads towards the street, raising his hand.

A cab to comes to a stop and he opens the door for her to step in.

NINA
Goodni-

He slams the door, cutting her off. She watches him walk back to the theater as the cab pulls away.

INT. NINA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Nina lies in bed, sleeping.

Her eyes flutter open and she looks at her clock:

6:59.

It turns to 7:00 and the alarm starts BEEPING.

She sits up in bed and notices that a very thin strip of RASH has spread from her right shoulder and onto the upper arm. She touches the new bumps, bothered.

INT. LARGE REHEARSAL SPACE - DAY

Korolyevna, David and Nina rehearse The Black Swan's pas de deux. Not surprisingly, Korolyevna is particularly harsh.

KOROLYEVNA

No...no...you are seducing him. Do you know that? I see little virgin up there. Odile is no virgin.

NINA

Okay.

KOROLYEVNA

Okay? Seduce him.

DAVID

I think she gets it.

Korolyevna gives him a sharp look. David holds his hands up and backs off.

KOROLYEVNA

Let's try it again.

They resume dancing. Nina finishes, out of breath, and looks at Yevna.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)

(cold)
Again.

The piano music starts up again, and she begins dancing.

When she finishes, she looks at him, eager for feedback.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)

Again.

The music starts up again. Nina stays still, frustrated.

NINA

Am I doing something wrong?

KOROLYEVNA

I don't know. Is there anything you want to change?

NINA

No...

KOROLYEVNA

You sure?

NINA

Yes, I'm sure.

KOROLYEVNA

I thought you maybe had some ideas,
a new interpretation.

NINA

Yevna...I'm sorry, I don't know
what you're talking about.

Korolyevna gets up from his chair approaches Nina.

KOROLYEVNA

Show me. Lily says you showed her
different version, show me.

Nina shakes her head, angry. She can't believe Lily told him.

NINA

I didn't, it's just, it's nothing.

KOROLYEVNA

She said I've never seen Black Swan
like it.

NINA

I was just messing around, it
wasn't great. She shouldn't have
said anything.

KOROLYEVNA

What are you afraid of?

Nina stares at him and composes herself.

NINA

Can we just move on with rehearsal,
please?

KOROLYEVNA

No. Not until you show me. She said
it was angry. Sexy.

NINA

Yevna...

KOROLYEVNA
 Why can't you be that way right
 now? For me?

She reads between the lines and breaks his stare, upset

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
 You still have so far to go.

NINA
 (sharp)
 Then let's keep working.

KOROLYEVNA
 Fine. Don't leave here until you
 move like the fucking Black Swan.

He walks out of the room, drawing looks from David and the
 piano player.

Nina takes a deep breath, before walking out after him.

BACKSTAGE HALLWAY

He angrily clips away further down the hall.

NINA
 Yevna! I'm sorry!

He ignores her and rounds the corner.

Furious, she storms down the hall in the other direction.

She approaches the soloists' dressing room and can hear them
 chatting in their usual manner.

Nina KNOCKS loudly at the door, interrupting them.

VERONICA
 Look who's gracing us with her
 presence.

NINA
 Lily, I need to talk to you.

LILY
 Okay...

NINA
 Now.

SOLOIST 2
 (you're in trouble)
 Ooooh.

The other girls giggle.

NINA
 Shut up.

And they do, startled by her assertiveness.

INT. BACKSTAGE HALLWAY - DAY

Nina and Lily argue in a private nook, filled with large wooden crates.

LILY
 I just thought what you did was
 fantastic.

NINA
 So what?

LILY
 You were too scared to tell him
 yourself, so figured I'd do it for
 you.

NINA
 What?! Why?

LILY
 I thought he'd like it.

NINA
 Well you don't know Yevna very
 well.

LILY
 Guess not. I'm really sorry, okay?

Nina shakes her head, still fuming.

LILY (CONT'D)
 Really, I was just trying to help.

NINA
 You should know your place a little
 better.

LILY
 (defensive)
 Hey, it's not a big deal.

NINA
I don't want you talking to him
about me!

LILY
Okay! *Relax*. I get it.

NINA
(exasperated)
Then don't act like a-
"Bitch," but Nina can't say it.

LILY
Like what?

NINA
Nevermind.

She walks away, avoiding a confrontation.

LILY
(yelling after)
Like what, Nina?

Nina doesn't respond, keeps walking.

INT. PRINCIPAL REHEARSAL SPACE - NIGHT

Nina practices the Black Swan after hours, alone with the
bitter PIANO PLAYER. They both look haggard, clearly having
been there for a while.

They finish the section and he stops playing.

NINA
Okay. Let's go back to the top.

Fed up, he shakes his head, closes the music book and stands.

NINA (CONT'D)
What are you doing?

PIANO PLAYER
I have to go. Sorry.

He walks out the room.

Annoyed, she watches him leave and faces herself in the
mirror.

She resumes dancing without music, her feet CLICKING on the
floor.

As she moves, she notices something strange out of the corner of her eye:

Her reflection seems to dance slightly different choreography.

Nina stops. Stares at the mirror...troubled.

Suddenly she's plunged into darkness.

She stumbles back, towards the door, and pushes out into the
BACKSTAGE HALLWAY

Where it's equally dark. Lit only by the red EXIT SIGNS.

NINA

Hey! Hey! I'm still in here.

No one responds.

She sees a shadow move at one end of the hallway. She chases after it.

NINA (CONT'D)

Hey! Turn the lights back on!

She gets to the end of the hallway, but it's empty in both directions.

NINA (CONT'D)

Hello?

No one answers.

She quickly runs back into the

PRINCIPAL REHEARSAL SPACE

And starts jamming her belongings into her bag.

A dark shape ZIPS past the doorway and she looks up, spooked.

NINA

Who's there?

Silence.

She grabs the rest of her things and shoves them in.

She stand, bag over her shoulder, and creeps back out into the

BACKSTAGE HALLWAY

She looks left and right. It appears empty.

She quickly walks down the hall, and goes to one of the doors with an illuminated EXIT.

She pushes on the door but it's LOCKED. She pushes harder, with both hands.

It doesn't budge.

She hears a CLICKING NOISE from somewhere else in the hallway, almost like footsteps.

She bangs her hands on the metal door, starting to panic.

NINA

I'm still in here! Open the door!

But no one comes.

She quickly runs down the hall towards another EXIT.

That door is also LOCKED. She throws her body against it, BANGS and BANGS with her hand.

NINA (CONT'D)

Please, please! I need to get out.
I'm trapped!

Finally, she hears the sound of CLINKING keys and the door opens. A SNEERING JANITOR glares at her.

NINA (CONT'D)

I was still in here! What's the matter with you?

He leers at her, doesn't answer. She pushes past him, anxious to leave.

INT. UPPER WEST SIDE APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Nina quickly enters, keeping her head down.

DOORMAN

Hey...I didn't see you go back out.

Nina looks up. The doorman stares at her with a puzzled expression.

NINA

Excuse me?

DOORMAN

Uh, nevermind. No worries.

Nina's face darkens, walks quickly to the elevator.

INT. UPPER WEST SIDE APARTMENT - NIGHT

Nina eases open the door. She can hear voices and polite laughter coming from the kitchen.

ERICA (O.S.)

Yes, she can be a bit high-strung.

LILY (O.S.)

That's putting it mildly.

Nina closes the door, purposefully interrupting the conversation.

ERICA (O.S.)

Nina, that you?

NINA

Who's here?

ERICA (O.S.)

A friend of yours. Come say hi.

Nina takes a breath and turns the corner.

KITCHEN

Erica and Lily sit across from each other, drinking wine. Erica looks uncharacteristically jovial and chatty, as we've never seen her.

LILY

Hey...

NINA

What are you doing here?

ERICA

Nina, that's no way to greet someone. Lily and I were just talking about that girl, what's her name?

NINA

Erica, I need to talk to Lily.

ERICA
Go ahead.

NINA
Alone. Please.

Erica's face sours. She gets up, hobbles out of the kitchen.

ERICA
Okay. I'll be in my bedroom, if
that's alright with you.

Nina waits for Erica to be out of ear-shot.

LILY
Hey...

NINA
Why are you here?

LILY
I just wanted to apologize.

NINA
(suspicious)
Uh-huh...

LILY
I was way out of line. I
overstepped, and I'm sorry.
Really, really sorry.

NINA
You could have just told me at
rehearsal tomorrow.

LILY
I know. But I felt beyond shitty,
so I came now.

NINA
Okay, well, I accept your apology.
You can go.

LILY
Can I make it up to you? Take you
out to dinner or something?

NINA
No thanks. Erica cooked for me.

LILY
Yeah, I can see that. Veggies and
rice...yummy. C'mon-

NINA
Maybe some other time.

LILY
You sure? You look like you could
use some cheering up.

NINA
I can't. It's late, I'm tired,
opening's only a few days away.

Tears start forming, the stress of the day taking its toll.

LILY
Hey, hey. It's okay.

NINA
I just can't. There's too much to
do.

Lily puts her hand on Nina's shoulder, to comfort her.

LILY
What's going on?

NINA
Nothing.

LILY
A couple drinks might do you good.

NINA
I don't think so.

LILY
Come on. I got two shoulders, both
good for crying on.

Nina smiles a little, but then shakes her head.

NINA
I'm sorry.

Frustrated, Lily withdraws her hand.

LILY
Okay. I'll leave you alone.

Lily starts to go.

LILY (CONT'D)
Just trying to be your friend.

Nina feels guilty.

NINA

Wait.

Lily turns back to look at her. Nina softens.

INT. CORNER BISTRO - NIGHT

A noisy bar and burger joint, packed to the brim. Lily and Nina sit at a small table.

A WAITER drops their orders on the table, in typical brusque fashion.

In front of Lily, a huge, greasy cheeseburger and fries.

In front of Nina, a chicken breast sandwich, no fries.

Lily takes a big bite of her burger, a little grease dripping down her chin.

Nina watches, a little disgusted. She removes her chicken breast from the bun, eats it with a knife and fork.

LILY

Oh man, that is a good burger.
Here. You gotta try it.

NINA

No thanks.

LILY

They say it's the best burger in
the city.

NINA

I don't eat red meat.

LILY

Man, you don't know what you're
missing.

It's issued like a challenge.

NINA

Alright.

Nina leans forward, takes a small bite.

LILY

Isn't that, like, the most amazing
thing you've ever tasted.

NINA
It's pretty good.

LILY
Pretty good? It's like sex in a
bun.

NINA
I guess.

LILY
Speaking of sex...

NINA
What?

LILY
You fucking him?

NINA
Who?

LILY
Who do you think? Yevna.

Nina stiffens, shakes her head.

LILY (CONT'D)
I thought he fucked all his
ingenues. Least, that's the word
around the campfire.

NINA
Well, not me.

LILY
Hmmm, I wouldn't mind screwing him.
Perfect form, perfect rhythm...

NINA
(irate)
I don't want to talk about it.

LILY
Okay, chill. Just making
conversation.

Lily exhales a breath and casually digs in her purse. She pulls out a cigarette case and clicks it open. Inside, CIGARETTES and a couple GEL-CAP PILLS (ecstasy).

LILY (CONT'D)
Here, got just the thing.

Lily grabs one of the pills and slides it over.

LILY (CONT'D)
One for you.

Lily grabs another pill.

LILY (CONT'D)
And one for me.

She downs it with her beer.

Nina stares at her pill, too embarrassed to admit she doesn't know what it is. Lily notices.

LILY (CONT'D)
Try it. It'll just make
you...relaxed. No-ego. Happy.

NINA
That's okay.

LILY
You sure?

NINA
(curious)
How long does it last?

LILY
Couple hours. Tops.

Nina looks at the pill, thinks about it for a second...

NINA
I shouldn't.

Lily, shrugs, puts the pill back, and SNAPS the case closed.

Lily scans the bar, looking for action. Nina looks insecure, can tell she's failed Lily's friend test.

INT. GRUNGY BATHROOM - NIGHT

Filthy and cramped. Nina washes her hands. She presses the soap dispenser, but nothing comes out.

Annoyed, she turns the water off and looks at herself in the broken, graffiti and sticker covered mirror. One bright sticker says, "Seize the Day-glo."

She takes one last glance at her reflection and leaves.

INT. CORNER BISTRO - NIGHT

Nina heads back to her table, but when she gets there, Lily is gone and the table is cleared.

She looks around the crowded room, doesn't see her anywhere.

She heads towards the exit, and sees Lily at the bar, flirting with TWO ATTRACTIVE MEN. She's very touchy-feely.

Nina stays put, wanting to observe Lily from a distance.

The BARTENDER sets a drink down in front of Lily. The men compete to pay for it.

Lily takes out the CIGARETTE CASE from her purse, and removes the pill.

Nina looks on, suspicious.

Lily opens the pill, and dumps it's contents into the drink. She stirs it with her finger.

She holds out her finger to one of the men, they suck off the liquid.

Lily looks over and catches Nina watching. She waves for her to join them.

Nina reluctantly walks to her.

LILY
Heeey, thought we could use some drinks.

NINA
I think I'm gonna go.

LILY
No, no, you can't go.

NINA
It's getting late.

LILY
This is Tom and this is Jerry.

The guys laugh.

ANDREW
Actually it's Andrew.

TOM
Tom.

NINA

Hi.

LILY

You can't leave, I bought you a drink.

Lily holds out the doctored beverage.

NINA

I really shouldn't, early day tomorrow.

LILY

C'mon, just a couple more hours.

Lily gives her an impish grin.

LILY (CONT'D)

Go downtown...

Nina looks at her, puzzled.

LILY (CONT'D)

(explaining)

"Forget all your troubles, forget all your cares."

Nina eyes the drink, tempted to go down the rabbit hole...

NINA

Just a couple a hours?

LILY

Mmmm-hmmm.

NINA

Promise?

LILY

Cross my heart.

Nina takes the drink from her. Lily smiles.

LILY (CONT'D)

Let's go sit somewhere a little more comfortable.

She gets up and holds out her hands.

LILY (CONT'D)

Gentlemen.

They each grab a hand and she leads them deeper into the bar.

INT. CORNER BISTRO - MOMENTS LATER

The foursome sits snugly at a booth. Nina next to Andrew, shyly avoiding his gaze. She takes a tentative sip of her drink.

ANDREW
You haven't told me who you are.

NINA
Oh, I'm a dancer.

ANDREW
No, I mean your name.

NINA
Nina.

ANDREW
You two sisters?

Yes.	LILY	No.	NINA
------	------	-----	------

ANDREW (CONT'D)
Ha, well which is it.

LILY
Honorary sisters. Blood sisters.

NINA
We're in the same company.

TOM
(pleased)
Ahh, *ballerinas*. So that's why you look alike.

NINA
I guess.

LILY
Tom and Jerry are gay lovers.

TOM
No, we're not.

LILY
Oh, I just assumed...

TOM
Very funny.

ANDREW
I've never been to the ballet.

NINA
Oh, that's too bad.

TOM
Not really. It's pretty boring.

NINA
(offended)
No, it's not.

LILY
(flirty)
It's not for everyone. You might
not be sophisticated enough.

TOM
No?

LILY
Nope.

TOM
You've got some mouth, you know
that?

LILY
I'm aware.

NINA
You guys should come sometime. I
can comp you tickets.

Tom laughs, amused by Nina's earnestness.

TOM
Yeah...that'd be neat.

LILY
I think we all need another round.
Bottom's up.

She sucks down her drink. Nina takes a breath of courage, and follows suit, emptying her glass.

She waits for something to kick in. Lily watches her impishly.

LILY (CONT'D)
Tom, grab another drink with me at
the bar?

He nods, and he and Lily leave Nina and Andrew alone.

ANDREW
You feel okay?

She nods, starting to feel the initial tingles.

NINA
Yeah...

She smiles, looks around the bar. Until she finds Andrew again.

NINA (CONT'D)
Hey...

ANDREW
Hi.

Then, like a warm wave, her whole body relaxes. Perhaps for the first time in her life. It's a revelation.

ANDREW (CONT'D)
You're very beautiful, you know that?

NINA
Thanks. You too.

She giggles a little.

ANDREW
What's so funny?

She leans into him, and kisses him.

ANDREW (CONT'D)
Hello.

She pulls back, smiles at him. The world has soft edges, colors are vivid and bleed into one another.

She goes back in for more.

INT. DANCE CLUB - NIGHT

And then she's kissing him on the floor of a crowded dance club. She looks around, not quite remembering how she got there.

A hand grabs her arm and twirls her around. It belongs to Lily.

Nina attaches herself to Lily, hungry for the attention.

INT. DANCE CLUB BATHROOM - LATER

And then Nina and Lily are in the bathroom, kissing.

Nina looks out of the corner of her eye, sees their reflection in the mirror.

She pulls back, confused to find that she's kissing Lily. Lily blows a cloud of smoke in her face.

INT. DANCE CLUB - LATER

And then Nina's grinding against a guy on the dance floor. Her eyes are closed, she's shiny with sweat.

She opens her eyes and just sees a mass of moving bodies.

Lily is nowhere to be seen.

She panics a little, turns to look at the guy. It's not Andrew or Tom, just a STRANGE GUY.

She backs away. He reaches for her, but she swats him off.

She wanders the dance floor, looking for Lily.

She sees a girl that looks like her from behind. Nina grabs her shoulder and the GIRL spins around, but it's not Lily.

EXT. DANCE CLUB - LATER

Nina pushes her way out of the club, starting to panic. She looks around, trying to figure out where she is, but the city is dark and non-descript.

LILY (O.S.)

Nina!

Nina turns towards the voice and, with relief, sees Lily exit the club.

LILY (CONT'D)

Where you goin'?

INT. TAXI - NIGHT

Nina stares adoringly at Lily, who has her eyes closed, enjoying the cool air blowing in from her open window.

Lily opens her eyes and catches Nina staring. Lily smirks.

Using her index and middle finger as "legs," she "walks" her hand over the vinyl seat, all the way to Nina's leg and pokes it.

Nina watches her hand with a smile on her face, glances at Lily.

Lily smiles back, and then "walks" her hand up the leg, until it reaches the edge of Nina's dress.

Lily looks at Nina questioningly. Nina takes Lily's hand in hers, stopping its scandalous journey.

Lily snickers and looks out her window.

Nina looks at their clasped hands, then out her own window, happy.

INT. UPPER WEST SIDE APARTMENT BUILDING - LATER

Nina quietly opens the front door to her apartment, Lily standing behind her.

Lily GIGGLES and Nina SHUSHES her. They tip-toe inside.

UPPER WEST SIDE APARTMENT

Nina eases the door shut.

Lily taps her on the shoulder and points towards the living room.

Erica sits in the kitchen, watching them silently.

NINA

Erica. Why're you still up?

Erica gets up, walks towards them. Her face is cold.

ERICA

You have any idea what time it is?

NINA

I went to dinner with Lily. We're blood sisters.

ERICA

Have you been drinking?

NINA

Mmm-hmm.

Nina and Lily snicker. Erica keeps staring, clearly disapproving.

NINA (CONT'D)

Jesus, I just had some fun. It's not the end of the world.

ERICA

I won't let you throw this chance away.

Nina rolls her eyes and grabs Lily's hand.

NINA

C'mon.

They head towards the bedroom, Lily looking deeply uncomfortable.

ERICA

I'm not done.

NINA

I don't give a shit.

ERICA

Nina!

Nina ignores her.

Erica chases after her and grabs her wrist hard.

ERICA (CONT'D)

Do *not* walk away from me.

NINA

Let go of me!

Erica holds on.

ERICA

You're ruining it.

NINA

You don't know what you're talking about.

ERICA

Oh, yes I do.

Nina suddenly faces her, face red with anger.

NINA

No you don't! You never rose above
the corp.

Erica's stunned. Her daughter's never stood up to her this way before.

NINA (CONT'D)

I am what you could never be. It
must drive you crazy.

Nina shakes her hand loose and continues down the hall.
Erica's momentarily too stunned to follow.

Nina and Lily disappear into her bedroom. She SLAMS the door,
LOCKS it.

NINA'S BEDROOM

Erica begins POUNDING on the door.

ERICA (O.S.)

Nina, get back out here!

NINA

Go away!

ERICA

You're going to fail! You'll see!

NINA

(screaming)

Leave me alone, mom!!! I don't need
you!

The pounding stops. FOOTSTEPS walk away from the door and
down the hall. Erica's bedroom door SLAMS loudly, to make a
point.

LILY

That's your mom???

Nina is furious, breathing hard.

LILY (CONT'D)

What the fuck?

Nina just grabs Lily and kisses her, revved-up from the
confrontation.

Lily responds with equal force. They claw at each other,
passion exceeding coordination.

Lily finally pulls Nina's shirt off, revealing the rash. It's spread over both of her shoulder blades, unevenly creeping over her upper arms.

Lily doesn't notice, throws Nina onto the bed.

She straddles Nina, who looks up at her carnivorously.

Lily takes her own top off, plunges down and kisses Nina.

Lily pulls back and Nina opens her eyes. Lily now looks identical to herself. Her DOUBLE. She goes in and out of looking identical and like Lily as they continue to make love.

Nina flips Lily over, becomes the dominant one. (Although who is who becomes very confused.)

Lily rubs her hand along Nina's back, over some of the bumps.

There's subtle movement underneath the skin. Little pin pricks push up the flesh, trailing behind her hand.

Self-conscious about the rash, Nina grabs Lily's hand and holds her wrists down.

She bites her neck. Lily smiles, likes the violence.

Suddenly, Nina lies alone in bed, masturbating.

But then Lily's back, on top of Nina, the dark wing tattoos on her back, undulate, spread out.

She kisses down Nina's body. Further and further down...

Nina's fingernails dig into the her arm, in pleasure.

They kiss, lying side by side. Completely symmetrical and identical, almost like Nina is kissing a mirror.

CUT TO:

INT. NINA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Nina's eyes snap open.

She lies alone in bed, the sheets and comforter in disarray. No sign of Lily.

She sits up, clutches her head in pain.

Then her eyes drift to the alarm clock: 9:36.

She snaps out of bed.

NINA

Fuck!

INT. UPPER WEST SIDE APARTMENT - MORNING

Dishevelled, Nina races towards the front door. She sees Erica brooding at the kitchen table, watching her.

NINA

Why didn't you wake me up?

ERICA

You want to be left alone.

Exasperated, Nina whips open the front door and SLAMS it loudly on the way out.

INT. BACKSTAGE HALLWAY - DAY

Nina races. Muffled music and voices echo, rehearsal clearly in progress.

Nina gets to the closed doors of the rehearsal space.

Through the rectangular window, she sees another girl dancing the part of the Black Swan.

The girl spins and Nina sees her face. She looks exactly like her. Her DOUBLE.

Nina looks on, in horror. She tries to open the door, but it's locked.

She tugs violently. Finally, a CORPS DANCER opens the door, holds up her finger over her mouth to quiet Nina.

Nina pushes past her.

LARGE REHEARSAL SPACE

Nina looks again, and sees that the dancer is Lily, not her double after all.

She makes a beeline for Yevna, looking beyond apologetic.

NINA

Yevna...

The dancers and piano player stop at the interruption.

KOROLYEVNA
 (ignoring her)
 Keep going. We finish the act.

The piano music resumes, and the dancers pick up where they left off.

Nina meets Lily's eyes. She makes a sorry face, but then continues dancing the Black Swan.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
 Very good, Lily. Yes.

Nina watches the act from the sidelines, panicking.

Lily finishes with the Black Swan Coda, performing the 32 spins effortlessly.

When she finishes, the whole company applauds softly.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
 Okay, that was perfect, Lily. Make sure to learn white swan as well.

He turns to Nina, face stony.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
 I hope maybe you learned something by watching. Get warmed up. Company, take 10 minutes.

Korolyevna walks away.

NINA
 I'm so sorry I'm late-

But he continues out of the room, ignoring her.

The rest of the company files out, eying Nina as they pass. She makes a beeline for the barre, avoiding the stares.

Lily approaches, holds out practice tutu.

LILY
 Hey, sorry.

Nina snatches it, avoiding eye contact. She puts it on.

LILY (CONT'D)
 He wanted to mark-out the blocking and asked me to stand-in.

Nina ignores her, starts stretching.

LILY (CONT'D)
Where were you?

NINA
(loaded)
I overslept.

LILY
Oops...Least you had a good time,
right?

Nina doesn't answer.

LILY (CONT'D)
Look, I said I was sorry. It's not
a big deal.

NINA
You put something in that drink.

LILY
(perplexed)
Huh?

NINA
You drugged me and then took off
this morning without waking me up.

LILY
What are you talking about?

NINA
You knew he'd put you in. You did
all this on purpose.

LILY
What's your problem? You took off
from the club alone. I put you in a
cab and I went home with Tom.

NINA
That's bullshit, we spent the night
together!

LILY
Oh yeah? You have some kind of
lezzy wet dream?

Nina stares at Lily, her reality not adding up.

LILY (CONT'D)
(sarcastic)
How'd I look naked?

NINA
I thought...

LILY
Nina...I get you're upset, but
you're acting fucking crazy.

That line sounds familiar.

NINA
What'd you say?

LILY
You heard me.

NINA
Just leave me alone okay? I have to
get warmed up.

LILY
Fine. Fuck you very much.

INT. LARGE REHEARSAL SPACE - LATER

Nina dances as the Black Swan, with the rest of the company.

Korolyevna watches from his post at the center of the mirror,
his focus split between her and...

Lily, who dances her own role among the other ballerinas.

Fueled by the implicit competition, Nina pushes herself. Her
dancing becomes angry, aggressive.

She finishes the section, breathing deeply, covered in sweat.

She looks up to Korolyevna for a response. He seems
strangely pleased.

KOROLYEVNA
Better. Finally I see you desiring
something, since you felt it
slipping away.

She sneaks a glance at Lily who stares at her with a dark
expression.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
That's it for today. Remember,
final dress tomorrow. Last chance
to get it perfect before opening.

The dancers start filing out, curtsying to Yevna as they go.

Nina walks up to him.

NINA
I could stay late to keep working,
if you want.

He looks at her, reading between the lines.

NINA (CONT'D)
We could pick up from where we left
off. Before things got off track.

KOROLYEVNA
I'm sorry, but I have a prior
engagement.

NINA
Why don't you cancel it?

He shakes his head, put off by her desperation.

KOROLYEVNA
If you want to practice, practice
alone.

He walks away. Her face falls, rejected.

She watches him step out into the hall where he's met by Lily, chatting with him as they walk. She looks back at Nina, purposefully rubbing it in.

INT. PRESBYTERIAN HOSPITAL - DAY

Nina follows the same fat nurse towards Beth's room.

The nurse eases open the door.

FAT NURSE
You got someone here to see you.

The nurse gives Nina a nasty look.

Nina slips past into the room, ignoring her.

Beth has regained consciousness. She sits in a wheelchair, facing away from the door and looking out the window.

This time, Nina closes the door for privacy, shutting out the dubious nurse.

She watches Beth for a moment before getting the courage to speak.

NINA
Hey, Beth.

Beth doesn't turn to face her.

NINA (CONT'D)
How are you feeling?

Nina approaches her.

NINA (CONT'D)
I miss you so much. It's awful at
the theater without you.

Beth doesn't respond.

NINA (CONT'D)
I know what you went through. The
pressure, all the other girls, it's
horrible...

Beth finally glances at her, without any readable emotion.
Nina smiles.

NINA (CONT'D)
Hey...

Beth looks away.

NINA (CONT'D)
Please talk to me.

BETH
How dare you come here.

NINA
Come on, Beth.

Nina tries to hug her.

BETH
Don't.

NINA
Please, I'm so happy you're awake-

BETH
You're fucking him.

Nina halts, caught of guard.

NINA
No, I'm not.

BETH
You said you'd never do that to me.

Nina shakes her head, trying to deny it.

NINA
I didn't.

BETH
I hope you got what wanted.

NINA
Beth, please.

BETH
You did this to me, you whore.

NINA
No...

Nina tries to hug her again, but Beth bats her away, violently.

BETH
Get out of here!

Nina backs away.

BETH (CONT'D)
Nurse! Get this woman out of here!
She's trying to kill me!

Freaked, Nina flees the room.

BETH (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Whore! Whore!

In the hall, she quickly runs past the nurse, who glares at her.

FAT NURSE
(disparaging)
Trash.

Nina runs to the elevator, starting to cry.

INT. APARTMENT BATHROOM - NIGHT

Nina showers, aggressively washing.

The rash has now spread over most of her upper arms and starting to creep down her forearms. She looks at it, upset.

She reaches behind for her shoulder blade, to feel the origin spot. Those bumps are more pronounced and larger.

She touches them gingerly and feels something strange: small, pointed objects barely push out at the apex of each.

She prods into the flesh with her finger nails, pulling away bits of skin.

INT. NINA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Nina's eyes open, awaking from sleep. She takes a moment to get her bearings, but then looks at the alarm clock. 6:59am.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Nina goes through her usual stretching routine. She counts out the steps to herself in soft whispers.

There's something slightly frayed about her dancing. The movements are more tense and jerky than normal.

During one movement, her leg cramps. She winces, sits on the floor and rubs her calf muscle.

She looks up, realizes her mother isn't there. The apartment feels strangely quiet.

She slowly stands, walks down the hall, and passes the

KITCHEN

For the first time in her life, her mother is not there preparing breakfast.

She continues down the hallway, towards the closed door of her mother's bedroom.

She knocks softly.

No one responds. She opens the door.

ERICA'S BEDROOM

The walls are covered with newspaper clippings, programs and photographs chronicling Nina's career.

But Erica is no where to be seen.

Nina glances around the room sees an obsessive catalogue of Nina's entire life.

Snapshots of her as a young girl, programs with star-stickers next to Nina's name, newspaper pictures with her face circled with marker, etc.

Nina looks at it all, with a mixture of regret and chagrin.

She backs out of the room and eases the door shut again.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Nina steps back inside the empty kitchen.

She goes to the fridge, determined to take care of herself.

She looks at the all the ingredients and is lost.

She digs, a little agitated, and hastily removes a carton of eggs.

It slips out of her grasp and drops a short distance to the floor.

She picks it up and opens it. Inside, a few of the eggs have been cracked. Yellow goo oozes out.

Disgusted, Nina closes the carton and returns it to the fridge. Closes the door. She'll forgo breakfast this morning.

INT. COSTUME SHOP - DAY

Nina stares at herself in the mirror, wearing the finalized White Swan costume.

COSTUMER
(irritated)
You've lost weight.

Costumer stands to the side of her, looking displeased.

COSTUMER (CONT'D)
I'm going to have to take it in.

NINA
That's your job.

Irked, Costumer pulls the costume taut.

Then she notices the larger, irritated rash on Nina's back.

COSTUMER
My god, this looks much worse.

Nina turns to face Costumer, hiding the back from view.

COSTUMER (CONT'D)
Have you gotten it checked out?

NINA
It's fine. It's nothing.

COSTUMER
You need to see a doctor. It's really not fine.

NINA
I will.

COSTUMER
And with opening tomorrow.

She goes and digs through some swatches of material.

COSTUMER (CONT'D)
I'll need to cover it with something. It's disgusting.

She holds the material up over Nina's back. Nina stares straight ahead, silently ashamed.

INT. BACKSTAGE HALLWAY - DAY

As Nina makes her way down the hall towards the stage, MEMBERS OF THE ORCHESTRA open their cases and remove their instruments, preparing for the final dress rehearsal.

INT. STAGE - DAY

Rehearsing on the stage for the first time, Nina dances the end of the ballet in front of the nearly completed scenery.

A few PAINTERS and TECHNICIANS complete last minute touch-ups. Down in the pit, the ORCHESTRA plays.

Every dancer except Nina wears a costume, since hers isn't ready. Makes her look plain, more haggard amidst all the white swans.

KOROLYEVNA
This is the moment. The prince has chosen another.

Nina climbs the stairs of the set and arrives at the "cliff," stopping at the precipice.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
Only way to break the spell, to end
the pain, is to end your life.

Nina looks down, it's a short drop to a stack of pads. She stares at it, worried.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
You look at the Prince, to say good
bye. And then...Jump!

With a little trepidation, Nina leaps in a swan dive.

She falls.

And lands in the pads, unhurt.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
Okay. Fine. Let's start again at
the top.

Exhausted, Nina takes a moment lying on the pads.

KOROLYEVNA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Come on. Quick. Vit, vit.

She gets up with a sigh.

INT. STAGE - LATER

David and Nina dance the Pas de Deux from Act 4.

Nina catches glimpses of Lily watching from the sidelines.

It could be the distance, but Lily looks like her DOUBLE again.

Nina blocks her out, decides to focus on David.

David prostrates himself in front of her, with performed melancholy. Nina looks at him, distraught, but it's more genuine, not just a performance.

She leans forward, propped up by his hand on her stomach, and lifts one leg straight up in an arabesque penchée.

KOROLYEVNA
Fine. Yes. 1 and 2, come up David,
yes, and lift...

David launches Nina into the air, hands around her waist...

But his grip SLIPS.

And Nina falls, SLAMMING HER KNEE into the stage.

Everyone gasps. The music grinds to a stop a few instruments at a time.

She grits her teeth in pain, trying to hold back tears.

She looks up around her, sees the faces of the other ballerinas. They look more hopeful than worried.

She notices Veronica practically salivating.

She finds Lily in the crowd. She looks at her with a cold, inscrutable expression.

Then she notices Korolyevna standing in place. She's bothered that he's not coming to her aid.

DAVID
Are you okay?

NINA
(faking it)
Yes, I'm fine.

Snapping to, Korolyevna finally approaches her and kneels.

He pulls her leg straight.

KOROLYEVNA
Does this hurt?

Nina winces.

NINA
No.

DAVID
I am so sorry, my hands slipped.
That T-shirt, it's loose. I
couldn't get good grip.

KOROLYEVNA
You should be in your costume.

NINA
I know.

KOROLYEVNA
Okay, help me lift her.

Korolyevna and David raise Nina off the ground.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)

Can you dance?

She tests her knee, but can't help but limp, still sore.

NINA

Yes.

KOROLYEVNA

Go ice it. We need to make sure you're okay for tomorrow night.

NINA

I can dance, it'll be fine, I just need a second.

KOROLYEVNA

Go ice it.

(to MALE CORP MEMBER)

Help her.

Nina reluctantly wraps her arm around the MALE CORP MEMBER and limps off stage with his help.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)

Okay, Lily, step in until she comes back.

Nina's face darkens, as she limps out through the wings.

INT. PHYSICAL THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY

Nina sits on an examination table with a thick ICE PACK on her knee. A PHYSICAL THERAPIST kneels in front of her.

PHYSICAL THERAPIST

Okay, let me see.

She lifts the ice back, he studies her knee. He places his hand on her calf and gently pulls.

PHYSICAL THERAPIST (CONT'D)

Extend.

She hesitates before straightening her leg, the physical contact making her uncomfortable.

PHYSICAL THERAPIST

Any pain at all?

NINA

(lying)

No.

PHYSICAL THERAPIST
 You sure? Don't want a flare up
 during the performance tomorrow.

NINA
 It's fine.

He gently lowers her leg back onto the table, but keeps his
 hand on her thigh.

PHYSICAL THERAPIST
 Good. Probably just a bruise then.
 Doesn't look like you did any
 damage to the joint.

She eyes his hand warily. He withdraws it.

He turns his back to her, fills out some paperwork.

PHYSICAL THERAPIST (CONT'D)
 You're very lucky. That fall could
 have been a lot more serious. Like,
 end of your career serious.

She gets up and walks out of the room without a word.

BACKSTAGE HALLWAY

Nina emerges from the trainer's office, heads back towards
 the stage.

An EAGER CORP MEMBER passes her.

EAGER CORP MEMBER
 We broke. 10 minutes. You okay?

Nina keeps going, without answering her.

She nears the soloists' dressing room, hears voices of a few
 gossiping dancers.

SOLOIST 2 (O.S.)
 So I guess Lily will step in?

SOLOIST 1 (O.S.)
 She'd do a better job.

VERONICA (O.S.)
 Anyone would do a better job.

SOLOIST 2
 Sucks for her.

VERONICA (O.S.)
You kidding? Nina deserves it.

Nina walks into the doorway, the soloists look at her.

NINA
What do I deserve?

VERONICA
Excuse me?

NINA
Say it. What do I deserve?

Veronica rolls her eyes and takes a swig of water.

SOLOIST 2
(sympathetic)
You okay?

NINA
Why? You also want my spot?

SOLOIST 2
I just wanna make sure you're
alright.

NINA
Well I'm fine.

Nina walks away towards.

BACKSTAGE

And she enters the wings.

Across the stage, in the wings opposite her, Nina sees Lily chatting with someone. Nina can't see who from her current position.

She walks further in and sees that it's David. Lily laughs girlishly, touches his arm. They are definitely flirting.

Nina watches, bothered. Seeing her double act so chummy with him, right after he dropped her makes Nina suspicious.

She whispers something in David's ear. He cracks up.

INT. KOROLYEVNA'S OFFICE - DAY

Nina barges in, upset. Korolyevna looks up from his desk.

KOROLYEVNA

Nina?

NINA

(agitated)

Yevna, she's trying to sabotage me.

KOROLYEVNA

What are you talking about?

NINA

She got David to drop me, that happened on purpose.

KOROLYEVNA

Who?

NINA

(obviously)

Lily.

Korolyevna studies her for a second, processing.

NINA (CONT'D)

She's been doing things ever since she got here. She wants to replace me.

KOROLYEVNA

This is an ugly thing you're saying.

NINA

No, no, she needs to be fired.

KOROLYEVNA

Calm down, Nina.

NINA

She wants my role. She's trying to hurt me.

KOROLYEVNA

Stop! What are you saying? Can you hear yourself?

NINA

You don't believe me?

KOROLYEVNA

I realize you are under a lot of pressure.

NINA
No, that's not it.

KOROLYEVNA
Nina...

NINA
It's the truth.

KOROLYEVNA
(snapping)
Lily is excelling. You've been
struggling. That is the truth.

NINA
Are you fucking her?

KOROLYEVNA
Nina...If you cannot stop this
nonsense...

NINA
You did it to Beth. Why wouldn't
you do it to me?

KOROLYEVNA
You're losing your head.

NINA
No I'm not.

KOROLYEVNA
(snapping)
Nina, stop!

She's stunned silent.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
I'm not sure you're fit to dance.

She approaches him, frantically.

NINA
No. I take it back. I'm sorry.

She throws herself on him, desperate for his approval.

KOROLYEVNA
No, Nina.

He pushes her away, even though she fights against him.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
Listen to me. Listen to me!

Nina backs away, stung.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
You need to go home. Get some
rest.

NINA
Yevna...

KOROLYEVNA
Go home and forget about all of
this.

NINA
Are you replacing me?

He looks at her with sad eyes, considering...

NINA (CONT'D)
Tomorrow is opening.

KOROLYEVNA
Yes. It would be very, very
disappointing.

She looks confused.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
(clarifying)
An embarrassment for the company.
After all that's happened...it
would be very bad.

He puts his hands on her shoulders and looks into her eyes,
firmly.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
After what happened to Beth, I can
understand why you'd be upset. But
listen to me...

He pauses for effect.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
No one is after you. Not Lily. No
one.

He stops to let that sink in.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
Do you understand me?

It's meant as a test, and she knows it. She hardens her
face...and says the right answer.

NINA
Yes. It was the fall. I got scared,
that's all.

KOROLYEVNA
So you will forget about this?

She nods.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
Good, then I will forget about it
as well.

INT. BACKSTAGE HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Still reeling, Nina emerges from Korolyevna's office.

She looks up and sees Lily leaning against the opposite wall,
staring at her maliciously.

NINA
What are you doing here?

LILY
I needed to talk to him about
something.

NINA
About what?

LILY
None of your business.

Lily pushes past her, into the office, and closes the door
behind her.

The door CLICKS shut and locks.

Nina turns and stares at the closed door, seething.

She goes to it presses her ear up against the wood.

Nina hears muffled talking and some laughter.

She quickly walks down the hall, around a corner, and comes
to a small window that looks into Yevna's office.

She stands on a bench to be able to peer inside, through the
slits of a venetian blind.

INT. KOROLYEVNA'S OFFICE (NINA'S POV) - CONTINUOUS

Her worse fears come true. Korolyevna and Lily embrace. Unrestrained, they claw at each others' clothes, pulling them off.

Lily looks up towards the window...she looks IDENTICAL to Nina once again.

The double smiles, rubbing it in.

Nina drops out of view.

EXT. THEATER - NIGHT

A Row of posters outside the theater announce the OPENING NIGHT GALA performance.

It shows an image of the Black Swan in silhouette, her identity anonymous. A white strip has been tacked across it, which reads: INTRODUCING OUR NEW SWAN QUEEN: NINA SAYERS.

Nina studies the posters, nervously waiting in the dark outside the theater.

She hears a DOOR OPEN and FOOTSTEPS.

Nina sinks deeper into the darkness, hiding from view.

From around the side, where the stage door is located, a lone ballerina emerges.

Lily.

She passes by Nina's hiding spot. Nina follows her with her eyes.

Nina comes out of the shadows and heads in the same direction.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Lit by streetlights, the distant figure of Lily heads home.

Safely behind her, Nina follows.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Lily approaches her apartment building. It's a hell's kitchen walk-up, no doorman.

She flings the door open, and enters.

Once inside, Nina runs out of the shadows and grabs the door just before it closes.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Nina creeps up the stairs. Above her, she hears footsteps.

After another flight, the footsteps stop suddenly.

Nina stops to listen for a door, but can't hear anything.

She continues up, faster now.

She rounds the next landing, running up the stairs until she gets all the way to the top floor.

Out of breath, she spins, looking in all directions, but no one's there. She's lost her.

Defeated, Nina starts back down, turns at the landing...

And the DOUBLE suddenly jumps out in front her and SLAMS her into the wall.

DOUBLE

Why the fuck are you following me?

Nina stares at her, too scared to speak.

DOUBLE (CONT'D)

Huh? What the fuck!

NINA

You've been planning this, from the beginning.

DOUBLE

Planning what?

NINA

You're trying to fuck your way into the role.

The Double laughs at her.

DOUBLE

Yeah? So what?

NINA

I won't let you.

The double's expression darkens and she grabs Nina by the hair and pulls her down to the ground.

She pushed down on Nina's head, grinding her into the filthy floor.

DOUBLE (O.S.)
What are you gonna do?

Nina squirms to get free but her double's too strong. We stay on Nina as her face contorts with pain and fear.

DOUBLE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
I'm gonna rip your face off and
break your fucking legs. You won't
be able to dance tomorrow. Or ever
again. And then it's my turn.

The double gives her one last push and then releases her. Nina scrambles to get up, her face red and covered in dirt.

The double shoves her, hard. Nina stumbles back.

The double pushes her even harder and Nina trips on the top stair. She barely manages to grab the handrail to stop herself from falling.

The double picks up Nina's dropped purse and whips it at Nina's head.

Nina smarts from blow, recovers and scrambles down the stairs.

The double close on her heels.

DOUBLE (CONT'D)
You better fucking run.

Frantic, Nina trips down stairs, barely keeping upright.

She finally gets down to the first floor and escapes out into the

STREET

Nina reaches the sidewalk, checks behind her shoulder to see the double chasing after her.

And doesn't notice a DELIVERY GUY on a bike headed towards her.

DELIVERY GUY
Hey, hey, hey!

He nearly knocks into her, but she jumps out of the way at the last second.

But then her foot misses the curb and she falls into the street.

She quickly pushes herself back on her feet and keeps running with a limp, a bleeding scrape on one of her knees.

She finally makes it to the avenue.

She gets to the corner and begins frantically looking for a cab, still sneaking glances over her shoulder. She catches a glimpse of her double coming towards her.

She walks into the street, to wave a cab down.

A cab pulls over and Nina jumps inside.

INT/EXT CAB

NINA
Go! Please! Hurry!

The SHADY DRIVER gives her a suspicious glance but pulls away.

As they drive, Nina starts to cry. She wipes off the smeared makeup and dirt with the back of her hand, trying to clean up. She looks up and notices the SHADY DRIVER watching her in the rearview.

SHADY DRIVER
Where you going?

NINA
Upper West Side...Fuck!

SHADY DRIVER
You okay?

NINA
I don't have my purse.

He doesn't respond.

NINA (CONT'D)
I'm really sorry. I don't have any money.

He exhales a frustrated sigh and shakes his head.

NINA (CONT'D)
Please take me home? I need to go
home.

He continues driving.

SHADY DRIVER
Lucky you're a pretty girl.

She turns her gaze out the window, avoiding his stare.

SHADY DRIVER (CONT'D)
Gimme a little smile.

Tears continue to fall out of her eyes, but she quickly wipes
them away.

SHADY DRIVER (CONT'D)
C'mon. Just a little smile.

EXT. UPPERWEST SIDE APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Nina gets out of the cab and slams the door. But the taxi
doesn't drive away. She can see the driver still staring at
her.

She quickly walks towards the safety of her building, pushing
through the revolving door as quickly as possible.

INT. UPPERWEST SIDE APARTMENT - NIGHT

She makes her way down the darkened corridor towards her
apartment, still nervous about being followed.

She juggles her keys at the door, finally manages to get the
right one in and opens the door. Escaping inside.

INT. UPPER WEST SIDE APARTMENT - NIGHT

Nina locks the deadbolt and the chain, not taking any
chances.

She turns away from the door and sees a dark figure standing
in the living room, waiting for her. She jumps, startled.

NINA
Erica?

The figure doesn't answer.

She turns on the nearest light and sees that the figure is her own reflection in the large, wall-mounted mirror.

Still, she backs away from the mirror, bothered.

NINA (CONT'D)
(desperate)
Mom?!

She runs down the hall towards Erica's bedroom.

ERICA'S BEDROOM

Nina flings open the door, hoping to find her mom.

But Erica is nowhere to be seen.

She sees the closet door open and looks inside.

All of Erica's clothes are gone.

Stunned, Nina faces the room. Sees all the collaged photographs and articles, covering every inch of the walls.

She starts to hear whispering.

The voices are incoherent at first, but as she listens closely, she hears snippets repeating familiar phrases.

"Wanted to be left alone." "Whore," "How dare you come here," "I hope you fail," "then it's my turn."

She looks around her at all the photographs mounted to the wall, trying to figure out where the voices are coming from.

She notices a newly added article:

NYBT ANNOUNCES NEW SWAN QUEEN.

It features a picture of Nina from the benefit gala. It looks very similar to the picture of Beth from earlier.

The picture seems to move a little, the frozen smile unfreezing. The eyes blinking. The mouth whispering:

"Backstabbing Bitch."

She tears down the article, bothered.

She looks at the other pictures. They too seem to move slightly. Blink. Mouths move, whispering to her. The movement is subtle, just barely perceivable, but then morphs in and out of live-action.

Trying to silence the voices, Nina starts ripping down all the photos and articles.

With both hands, she frantically tears them off the wall, not taking care to preserve any of them.

When she's done, the walls are completely bare except for shredded bits and pieces still stuck to the plaster.

And the whispering has stopped.

She slowly rotates, staring at the blank walls, making sure she's gotten every last image of herself.

The only one remaining is her reflection in a hanging MIRROR.

She violently yanks it down from the wall, SMASHING IT on the floor.

HALLWAY

Nina exits her mother's room and runs through the apartment.

She enters her

BEDROOM

Closes and locks the door behind her.

Nina sees her reflection in the vanity mirror.

She grabs the nearest heavy object--her music box--and hurls it at the glass.

The mirror spider-webs with cracks.

She stares at her fragmented reflection for a moment, before noticing the half-open music box lying on the ground, emitting a broken, pathetic song.

She picks the wooden box from the ground, worried.

She discovers that the ballerina has been snapped off and only a single, amputated leg remains attached to the base. It spins around morbidly.

Unnerved, Nina suddenly feels a sharp, painful sensation on her back, causing her to drop the box back onto the floor.

She reaches towards the pain on her shoulder blade, but can't get to the source through her clothing.

She hastily pulls off her shirt. Reaches for her shoulder and touches it.

Feeling something, she races from her room, across the hall and into the

BATHROOM

She flicks on the light and runs to the mirror. Both her arms and shoulders are fully covered with the rash.

Frantic, she opens the medicine cabinet and retrieves some tweezers. Jabs them into one of the bumps on her right shoulder blade, and tries to pluck out the strange spines.

But it's too deeply embedded and the pain is too great. She winces and drops the tweezers, CLANKING in the sink.

She retrieves a pair of SCISSORS from the cabinet, contorts to reach behind her back. A trickle of blood flows from the wound, down her back and leg.

She takes hold of the growth and snips with her other hand.

She looks at the cut object held in her fingers: a sharp, TINY BLACK SPINE. Like that of a sea urchin.

She starts to feel the weird sensation spread over more of her body. She looks down at her arms.

Something moves underneath the rash-covered skin, as though similar tiny points are trying to poke through.

She rubs at her skin, trying to make it stop.

She slams the medicine cabinet shut to see her REFLECTION.

In it, her face and neck stretch and morph, becoming swan-like.

She SCREAMS and stabs the SCISSORS at the monster.

SMASH TO BLACK.

There's a loud BUZZ in the darkness.

FADE IN:

INT. APARTMENT BATHROOM - MORNING

Nina flutters her eyes open, awakened by the sound. She lies on the floor of the bathroom, disoriented. She must have passed out.

She slowly stands, and gets her bearings. She notices the mirror. It is SMASHED, presumably from the scissors which lie on the floor, among broken shards.

Another BUZZ startles her. The sound of someone at the front door.

In a daze, Nina picks up the scissors and exits the bathroom.

HALLWAY

And makes her way towards the front door, wielding the scissors like a weapon.

She notices the light coming through the windows, realizes it's the next day.

There's another BUZZ. She slows for a second, and then continues walking towards it, stepping softly so as not to make a sound.

When she gets to the door, she leans in...and looks through the peep-hole.

Sees a distorted Beth staring back at her.

She steps back from the door, bothered.

BETH (O.S.)
Nina, are you there?

Nina remains frozen.

BETH (O.S.) (CONT'D)
C'mon, I heard you. I really need to talk to you.

NINA
Go away.

BETH (O.S.)
Could you open the door?

NINA
No.

BETH (O.S.)
Come on, Nina.

NINA
Say what you want to say.

Beth takes a pause.

BETH (O.S.)
Okay. I just wanted to tell you
that I forgive you.

NINA
You forgive me?

BETH (O.S.)
Yes. Yevna tells me you've been
really upset. He told me to come
talk to you. To make sure you were
alright.

Nina softens, knowing that Beth's been sent by him.

She unlocks the door, but leaves the chain engaged. She
peers out.

Beth looks much calmer and recovered since last we saw her.
Probably a little medicated as well.

BETH (CONT'D)
Hey...

She's a little unsettled by Nina's haggard appearance.

BETH (CONT'D)
You okay?

NINA
I'm fine. What about you?

BETH
I'm better. Been out of the
hospital a few days.

NINA
Good for you.

BETH
Look, I know I went out of my head.
Said some...unnecessary things.

NINA
Mmm-hmm.

BETH
I just wasn't ready for everything
to come to an end.

NINA
I know.

BETH
Not just him. My whole career
really.

Nina nods, sympathetic.

BETH (CONT'D)
I don't blame you for what
happened. I really don't. I might
have done the same thing.

Nina suddenly closes the door, disengages the chain and then re-opens it. Facing Beth, hiding the scissors behind her back.

BETH (CONT'D)
Hey.

NINA
So...you forgive me?

BETH
Yes. Tonight is your night. Enjoy
it.

NINA
Thank you.

BETH
You shouldn't feel guilty.

That last word rubs Nina the wrong way.

NINA
I don't.

Beth's a little taken aback.

BETH
Excuse me?

NINA
I have nothing to be sorry for. I
did what I needed to do.

BETH
What?

NINA

We were never friends, Beth. You
just tolerated me.

Nina shuts the door in her face before Beth can muster a
response.

Nina walks away from the closed door.

BETH (O.S.)

Nina!

Nina ignores her, notices the living-room mirror.

BETH (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Nina!

Nina keeps her eyes on her self-image. Intent.

She comes face to face with it. They stare at one another.

EXT. THEATER - EVENING

Nina approaches the theater with determined steps. She looks
hardened and confident, a far cry from the innocent girl we
first met.

She passes the posters announcing the OPENING NIGHT GALA. The
strip of paper with Nina's name is no longer there.

She stops and looks at it, a little troubled, but doesn't let
it ruffle her. She heads towards the stage door.

A GROUP OF SOLOISTS stands outside, smoking and talking.

They stop their chatting as she gets closer.

VERONICA

Look who decided to show up?

Rebecca whispers something in Veronica's ear and they
snicker. Nina eyes them warily.

JITTERY FAN (O.S.)

Nina! Nina!

A group of ECCENTRIC FANS have spotted Nina and come up
behind her, holding various ballet programs, posters, etc.

One JITTERY FAN, wearing overly large, wire-frame bifocals is
particularly adamant.

JITTERY FAN (CONT'D)
 Here. Sign this. By your picture.
 But not over your face. On the
 bottom, there.

He points to a headshot of Nina in the calendar. He holds out his pen, staring at Nina hungrily.

She signs her autograph.

NINA
 There you go.

She looks up at Veronica with a smile, to rub it in.

JITTERY FAN (O.S.)
 Oh, thank you, thank you.

Annoyed, Veronica stamps out her cigarette and goes inside.

Nina finishes signing. The jittery fan stares at the autograph, beaming.

She leaves him and enters through the stage door.

INT. BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Nina stands in the wings, not yet changed into her costume.

She peeks through the curtain to see the AUDIENCE. An enormous crowd has shown up, dressed to the nines, and the seats are filling up.

The tuning of the orchestra's instruments tells us that the ballet is about to begin.

She scans the faces of the crowd and spots her mother. Of course she wouldn't miss her daughter's opening.

Erica looks jittery, looking at the crowd all around her.

KOROLYEVNA (O.S.)
 You're here.

Surprised, she turns and finds Korolyevna standing inside the wings staring at her.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
 How are you feeling?

NINA
 I'm fine.

He approaches her.

KOROLYEVNA
Did Beth come and see you?

Nina nods.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
And you two...made peace?

NINA
Yes.

KOROLYEVNA
Good. Perhaps we can put all that
behind us then.

NINA
We can.

He holds out his hands and she takes them.

KOROLYEVNA
I believe in you, okay?

She nods.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)
Everything is in you. All you have
to do is let it out.

NINA
I know.

He nods, not entirely convinced that she's up to it.

KOROLYEVNA
Well...Nothing more to say. You
should go change.

He takes one last look at her and leaves.

Once he's gone, she takes a breath, relieved.

INT. BACKSTAGE HALLWAY - EVENING

Nina steadily makes her way down the bustling hallway,
chaotic with dancers. Excitement in the air.

Nina stares straight ahead on her direct trajectory. Dancers
try to give her well-wishes but she ignores them.

Up ahead, she sees a familiar girl walking towards her. The Double.

She spots Nina, gives her a cold stare as she approaches.

Nina puts on a brave face, stares back.

As they pass each other, their gazes are locked, staring each other down. They don't exchange a word.

An echo of when Beth and Nina's friendship ended.

The double finally passes.

Nina's eyes follow her. She sees the black wing tattoos on her back.

Nina quickly walks into the

PRINCIPALS' DRESSING ROOM

She locks the door. Leans against it, afraid.

Sets her stuff down and looks at herself in the mirror, trying to compose herself.

Nina opens the wardrobe and sees her two costumes hanging. One for the White Swan, one for the Black Swan.

Through the PA, we hear the music from ACT 1 already in progress.

She undresses and we see her shoulders and arms covered with patches of body makeup, hastily applied over the rash. On her knee, a dark SCAB from last night's fall.

She slips on her unitard and White Swan costume, which thankfully hide most of her ailments.

The STAGE MANAGER'S voice comes through the PA speaker:

STAGE MANAGER (V.O.)
Act 2 starts in 10. Places
everyone.

Nina sits down at her vanity, smears a thick layer of white makeup on her face and her chest. Every bit of exposed skin.

She applies eye-shadow and dark eye-liner. Some dark-red lipstick. Her hands tremble with nerves and the skin on her arms starts to push up again, like exaggerated goosebumps.

She rubs it and takes breaths, trying to calm down.

She pulls her hair back into a bun and pins it in place, a little difficult with shaky hands.

Once she's done, she places the White Swan's FEATHER CROWN around her head.

She studies herself in the mirror, in full White Swan regalia. She looks pale and fragile, like a scared porcelain doll.

There's a KNOCK on her door.

STAGE MANAGER (CONT'D)

Nina? We need you in places. We're about to start.

Nina takes one last look at herself and gets up.

INT. STAGE - NIGHT

Nina watches from off-stage as Veronica and her double dance as big swans. It's the same dance she first spied Lily doing.

When their dance finishes, they take a bow and the audience warmly receives them.

Nina's face stiffens, envious.

Her entrance cue is played and she walks onto the stage to begin her solo as the White Swan. The applause dies down in anticipation.

Nina turns in the center of the stage, the music light and whimsical.

On either side of the stage, all the other ballerinas form two rows of identically dressed little swans.

She approaches one row, and finds all of the nearly-identical dancers staring at her. It's unsettling.

She looks at her arms, sees the little pricks pushing up, trying to break through.

Freaked out, she flubs a few moves.

As she mimics a bird's flapping, her arms and fingers elongate, become more and more wing-like. She watches them, both mesmerized and deeply disturbed.

The other swans hastily make their exit, leaving Nina alone with Prince Siegfried.

In the background, the dark hand of Von Rothbart summons her, transforming her back into a swan.

She stares at her percolating, elongating flesh and makes a couple more mistakes before disappearing off stage.

Once she's gone, there's a few polite claps, but not enough to merit a curtain call.

INT. BACKSTAGE - CONTINUOUS

Nina quickly pushes past all the other dancers, frantically seeking refuge in her dressing room. She looks at her arms. But the skin is now still, smooth.

She's suddenly confronted by Korolyevna.

KOROLYEVNA

What the hell was that?

She quickly continues towards her dressing room. He chases.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)

Just...unbelievable. Where did that come from? You were awful.

NINA

I'm sorry.

KOROLYEVNA

I don't care how, but you better pull yourself together for the second half. Or this is it. Understand?

She stops and looks at him, upset.

He shakes his head and walks away, leaving her alone in the dark.

She looks around, sees the other dancers staring at her with repulsion.

NINA

What are you all looking at?!

She makes haste to her dressing room.

INT. PRINCIPALS' DRESSING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

She flings open the door of her dressing room and slams the door behind her.

DOUBLE (O.S.)

Hey...

She looks up, and finds her double casually sitting on the edge of her vanity. Dressed in a little swan costume, the only slightly discernible difference between them.

DOUBLE (CONT'D)

Not much of a start, huh?

NINA

What are you doing in here?

DOUBLE

I hope the audience sticks around.
After that last act...not so sure.

NINA

Get out.

DOUBLE

Or what? You gonna tell Yevna to
fire me?

NINA

Leave me alone!

The double smiles, stands from the counter and begins looking around the room.

DOUBLE

I could get used to this.

NINA

Please leave me alone.

The double makes her way to the wardrobe closet and opens the door.

NINA (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

She retrieves the Black Swan costume.

DOUBLE

I have an idea...

She looks at Nina mischievously.

DOUBLE (CONT'D)

How about...I dance the Black Swan
for you?

NINA

No.

DOUBLE

Oh come on. You know I'd do it better.

Nina grabs the costume, tries to pull it away.

NINA

Let go.

DOUBLE

Nina, don't be so selfish. I'm just trying to help you.

NINA

You're going to rip it.

DOUBLE

Noooo, you're going to rip it.

Nina grabs her arm angrily

DOUBLE (CONT'D)

Get your hands off me.

NINA

I won't let you take it.

The double erupts, shoves Nina all the way against the wall, slamming her against it. Nina grabs the back of her hair, and yanks.

The double WAILS and digs her finger-nails into Nina's hand, trying to get her to let go.

They scuffle, knocking things over, bumping into walls.

Who is who becomes very confused.

The double gets the upper hand and wraps her hands around Nina's neck, squeezes...

Nina tries to pull the hands free, but the double's too strong.

DOUBLE

No one will miss you. A fucking psychotic failure.

Nina's eyes bulge, running out of oxygen. She frantically scratches at her hands, but they're gripping too tightly.

DOUBLE (CONT'D)

You know what they'll say? "She had it coming." "She got what she deserved." "Couldn't have happened to a nicer girl."

Enraged, Nina's eyes turn completely black. Like those of a swan. Her face and neck start stretching, turning her into the monster.

Her double's eyes widen, frightened.

Nina SCREAMS and plows into her at full speed...driving her into the vanity mirror, smashing it. Shards fall everywhere.

The double releases her grip, stunned.

Nina grabs a sharp shard of mirror.

Her double looks up just in time to see the shard pierce into her stomach.

Blood begins to soak through the swan costume. She looks at Nina, surprised.

Nina breaks off the mirror shard, so that the point remains lodge inside the flesh. She looks at her double, full of malice.

She coughs up some blood, before collapsing onto the floor.

Nina stares down at her, breathing heavily, high on adrenaline. Her eyes slowly turn from black back into their normal, human color.

She grabs the body and heaves her across the floor into the wardrobe closet. With a lot of effort, she manages to get the body inside and the door shut.

INT. PRINCIPALS' DRESSING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Nina zips up the back to the Black Swan costume.

She deliberately applies the Black Swan makeup. Dark eye shadow and rouge, maroon lipstick.

Dressed in black and wearing the dark make-up of the Black Swan, she looks fierce.

INT. BACKSTAGE HALLWAY - LATER

Nina exits from her dressing room, carefully closing the door behind her and making sure no one has seen inside.

She takes slow, steady steps towards the wings.

Dancers whisper to each other and snicker as she passes, but she presses on, unaffected.

She arrives at the wings, Act 3 already in progress on stage.

She stares with an unwavering gaze.

Her cue approaches, and she leaps onto

STAGE

As the Black Swan.

She looks powerful, intense. The skin on her arms starts to effervesce once more, but she ignores it.

She locks eyes with David. She moves towards him with newfound confidence, if a little crazed.

David's face shows his surprise.

Nina dances the pas de deux with him, and exits into the wings hand in hand when they're finished.

DAVID

Wow. What's gotten into you?

She catches her breath, and looks up to see Korolyevna staring at her from the other side of the stage.

He gives her a small, contented nod.

She looks back down.

Nina's second entrance cue is played, and she goes back on.

It is time for the Coda. She completely lets herself go, spins with ferocity.

As she spins, her eyes turn back into opaque black beads.

And Shiny BLACK FEATHERS burst out from her shoulder and back. Start erupting through the skin on her arms.

More and more, until they cover them completely.

She truly embodies the Black Swan, finally.

She finishes the coda, punctuating her last spin with a sharp step that echoes through the theater.

The audience looks on, mesmerized. Too stunned to clap at first.

Nina looks down at the stage, her face glazed with sweat. She has returned to normal. No feathers. Normal eyes. A woman.

She finally looks up at the audience, and they ERUPT in a standing ovation.

Nina walks to the front of the stage, takes her bow.

Nina looks up at the MASS OF FACES filling the immense auditorium.

Nina smiles and keeps bowing. Again and again.

She finally runs off stage, the applause still going strong.

BACKSTAGE

Nina enters the wings, other dancers cheer loudly. She pushes past all the smiling faces. It feels very surreal.

She sees Korolyevna who clapping and shaking his head. Blown away.

KOROLYEVNA

Get back out there! Get back-

She stops his mouth with a kiss. The kind of kiss that you can't stop. Not desperate, but adamant. He succumbs to it, against his discretion.

The other dancers titter and back away.

Finally she disengages, staring at him in the eyes, but before he can say anything.

She turns and leaves him, without another look. He's stunned. Like he's been run over by a truck.

BACKSTAGE HALLWAY

She walks towards her dressing room, a satisfied smile on her face. As she gets closer, the smile fades. Remembering what's inside.

She gets to the door, makes sure no ones looking, and enters quickly.

PRINCIPALS' DRESSING ROOM

She closes the door behind her, locks it. Turns and sees the broken glass all over the floor.

She eyes the closed wardrobe, knowing what's inside. A pool of blood drips out from under the door.

She takes cautious steps towards the vanity, being mindful of the broken pieces of mirror. She picks up a small towel and lays it over the blood, hiding it from view.

She unzips the Black Swan Costume and steps back into the White Swan Costume, which sits discarded on the floor.

She sits down in front of her vanity mirror and removes her Black Swan makeup with cold-cream.

She begins re-applying the White Swan makeup. She stops, sees that her hands are shaking. She stares at them and starts tearing up. The reality of what she's done starting to sink in.

There's a KNOCK on the door. She looks towards, her face only halfway made-up.

NINA

One second.

She goes to the door, opens it just a crack.

She peeks through and finds...

Lily looking back at her.

She does not look like Nina's double, but like herself.

LILY

Hey.

Nina is petrified.

LILY (CONT'D)

You were amazing.

Nina barely nods.

LILY (CONT'D)

I know things got fucked up between us, but I wanted to tell you that.

Nina just nods again.

LILY (CONT'D)
I've never seen anything like it.
I didn't know you had it in you.

Nina can't get out a single word.

LILY (CONT'D)
Okay...well...I should let you
finish.

Lily turns and walks away. We can see the dark wing tattoos on her back, just to confirm it's actually her.

Panic setting in, Nina swiftly shuts the door.

She turns around, stares at the wardrobe.

She steps cautiously towards it, her face repeated countless in all the reflective shards.

She lifts the towel from the ground and looks at it.

It is clean. No blood. She looks down at the floor. No blood there either.

She drops the towel back on the ground.

Worried, she slowly opens the door to the wardrobe...

And finds it empty. No body whatsoever.

She looks over at the broken mirror. Sees her reflection staring back at her.

She stares at it for a long beat, and realizes something.

She touches her stomach and winces a little. Pulls back her hand. It's coated with red liquid. Blood.

It's started to soak through the costume, creating a faint red spot. The fabric is ripped at the center of the stain.

She takes it off, to confirm her fear.

And discovers a stab wound, in her own stomach.

She feels inside and pulls out the sharp tip of mirror still stuck inside. Blood begins flowing more rapidly from the wound.

She drops the mirror. It shatters on the floor.

STAGE MANAGER (V.O.)
(On the PA)
White Swan on in 5.

In a daze, Nina zips the costume back up.

INT. BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Nina emerges from her dressing room, pale and weak.

The stage manager immediately grabs her wrist and whisks her towards the stage.

STAGE MANAGER
Come on, come on. It's almost your
cue.

She follows, in a daze. Glances onto stage through the wings. He looks back at her.

STAGE MANAGER (CONT'D)
Jesus, what's with your makeup?

She doesn't answer.

STAGE MANAGER (CONT'D)
Hello?

She just shakes her head. He rolls his eyes.

STAGE MANAGER (CONT'D)
Well, nothing we can do about it
now. No time.

He pushes her into the wings and she looks onto stage.

Little and big swans dance around David, performing the storm scene of Act 4.

The music crescendos and the stage manager pushes Nina on

STAGE

She's frozen for a second, confused and unsure.

David takes her hand, and the music reminds her of what she's supposed to do. Even in her daze, her body remembers.

She starts to dance the final pas de deux as the White Swan. Everything is woozy and blurry.

She can't do all the steps, but her performance is frightened, full of melancholy.

The music turns ominous, and VON ROTHBART, the evil sorcerer, comes onto stage.

Nina dances away from him, back upstage, towards the cliff. It's time for her final leap.

Her energy fading, she teeters up the stairs of the set. One step at a time...

She gets to the top, takes one last look around, at all the eyes watching her.

In the front of her costume, a dark circle has started to form. Her blood fully seeping through.

And Nina leaps...

INTO BLACKNESS

Nina falls through space, her eyes closed.

Falling through an endless void.

She hears something. Soft and muffled, as though she were under water.

The faint sound of applause.

She opens her eyes, and finds herself:

LYING ON TOP OF THE PADDING PLACED BEHIND THE SCENERY.

The sound of applause is now loud, uproarious.

Other ballerinas surround the mattress, looking at her with concerned expressions.

Korolyevna pushes through the group to get to her.

KOROLYEVNA

Nina! That was amazing! Amazing!!!

Nina is too weak to move.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)

You were superb. Absolutely superb.
Come on, get up! What are you
waiting for? Go take your bow!

Nina smiles slightly, but still can't get up.

He realizes something is wrong and kneels by her side.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)

Nina?

She doesn't answer. Concerned, he rolls her over onto her back.

Revealing the spot of blood, which has grown in size, staining most of her costume red.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)

Oh my god.

He looks at her, sees the life almost gone.

KOROLYEVNA (CONT'D)

What did you do?

More and more dancers join the growing circle surrounding her body, each one dressed as a WHITE SWAN.

Nina looks up at the circle. Finds Lily, who looks at her with concern. With fear.

They lock eyes as the APPLAUSE grows more and more faint.

Until everything goes SILENT.

Nina eyes glaze over as the blood drains out of her.

Lily puts her hand to her mouth, upset.

But a slight smile remains frozen on Nina's face. Triumphant.

FADE TO BLACK