260224.Dancer One Script-FINAL.docx

Arc and Sound of Dance

Backstory Script 04: Dancer Anne-Marie de Felcourt-Morrison

FADE IN:

B-ROLL: KANSAS CITY - MORNING

A montage of Kansas City's skyline at dawn, transitioning to rush hour traffic. The timelapse camera moves from north to south and from early morning to late afternoon and early evening, ending up at the Kauffman Center's outdoor Arts District Terrace.

EXT. ARTS DISTRICT TERRACE – EVENING

Drone camera in real time, showing, alternatively, parents finding seats, their young children (mostly girls) carrying their ballet shoes and leotards, walking backstage behind curtains into the dressing room area.

EXT. CONTINUOUS - BACKSTAGE - EVENING

A group of excited children, 8, 9, 10 and 11 year olds, chatter and giggle in white tutus over black leotards. Teachers struggle at first to calm them down, finally getting everyone quiet. Camera pans to ANNE-MARIE (8, wide-eyed but stoic) seated cross-legged like her classmates, her stern face showing determination.

TEACHER (30s, kind but firm) kneels to the level of the children.

TEACHER

(Almost in a whisper) Remember, everyone, this is your very first chance to have fun on a real performance stage. It doesn't get any better than this. Don't worry about the bright lights. They're there so everyone in your family who's here tonight will see just how special you really are. And. You. Are.

FADE TO:

EXT. ARTS DISTRICT TERRACE OUTDOOR STAGE– EVENING

Cameras placed in front and two cameras in the wings focus on young dancers coming on stage, Tchaikovsky's "Swan Lake" heard in the background, moments of young children, some awkward, others quite polished, performing ballet steps, focus shifting back and forth from performers to teachers and staff in the wings watching as the performance unfolds.

EXT. ARTS DISTRICT TERRACE – AUDIENCE – EVENING

Drone camera descend from on high to focus more and more closely on two people, a man in his 50s and woman in her 40s, both elegant in their evening casual outfits, so far unidentified, agitated, whispering to one another, unheard but seen to say: "Where is she?". "I don't know."

EXT. ARTS DISTRICT TERRACE OUTDOOR STAGE– EVENING

Drone camera focused on children's performance, sweeping up and over them, turning down towards the wings, moving past staff and teachers to Teacher huddling backstage with Anne-Marie, who is now standing with a steely-eyed look, showing no emotion at all.

TEACHER

> Anne-Marie, you *are* ready for this. Don't be scared. We took you out of Swan Lake so that you could solo. You are *that* good because of the way you think, Anne-Marie, not just the way you perform. I didn't want you to tell your parents because I want them to see just how brilliant you are. I can't remember the last time we came upon such a talented young person, the one you are. This *will* work. I promise you.

Anne-Marie nods nervously, clutching her hands together.

EXT. ARTS DISTRICT TERRACE OUTDOOR STAGE– EVENING

EMCEE walks out to center stage from stage left, mike in hand, clicks it on. A young man, actually an instructor at Anne-Marie's ballet school.

EMCEE

> Hi, Ladies and Gentlemen. I'm Jacob McSweeney, one of the instructors at Kansas City Ballet School, hoping that you enjoyed the wonderful performance by the mid-level

class. Give it up for these great young children.

Applause as camera sweeps from Emcee to audience to the children who have come back onto the stage at first running hither and yon but finally lining up taking exaggerated sweeping bows, with the camera then focusing back on Emcee.

EMCEE

Now for a surprise. Ladies and Gentlemen, please welcome to the stage 8-year-old Anne Marie de Felcourt-Morrison who will perform her solo.

Applause. Camera zooms in on the two audience members earlier seem whispering who now are awestruck, a look of complete astonishment on their faces. Focus suddenly switches to Teacher and Anne-Marie in the wings stage left, camera centered from the top down onto them and then drifting down to their level.

TEACHER

(stretching out her hands to reach for Anne-Marie's)
Look at me, Anne-Marie. Are you ready?

ANNE-MARIE

(emotionless)
I think so. I practiced a lot.

TEACHER

No 'I think so' Anne-Marie. Remember, it's not just about movement. You know how to feel music. You have that magic. You know how to tell a story with your body. Let yourself go. You are going to be everyone's happy surprise tonight.

EXT. CONTINUOUS - THEATER STAGE

Anne-Marie takes a deep breath, nodding again. Camera follows her from stage left to center stage. A spotlight falls on Anne-Marie. Music begins, "#29, Cinderella's Arrival at the Ball" from Prokofiev's "Cinderella". A drone camera pans from the stage to the audience, quickly focusing on who we now assume are Anne-Marie's very excited if apprehensive mother and father, and then back to the stage where Anne-Marie begins her dancing,

camera staying with her, moving around her, then panning up through the Terrace's light bars to a very starry night.

FADE OUT.

FADE TO:

EXT. CANNES TRAIN STATION - DAY

Anne-Marie (15, nervous but determined) steps off the train, a large suitcase in tow. The vibrant Cannes station bustles with activity. She looks around, bewildered, looking at her phone, clicking on this or that to make sure she's headed in the right direction, people rushing past, often brushing up against her because she's in their way. She looks down at the phone screen showing a way to walk to the Academy, but no matter where she looks, she cannot find the street sign for Rue Jean Jaures that Google Maps says is her start point.

ANNE-MARIE

(in broken French to several passers-by)
Excusez-moi, where is…uh… où est Jean Jaurez Street…sorry…Rue…I am going … je vais to … une l'académie de danse Rue de Colmar?

Finally a passerby points her in the right direction, telling her in quite good English, and with a smile, every turn to make and, especially, where to find street signs in France. Anne-Marie nods in thanks and begins walking, her eyes wide both with awe and trepidation. She exits the station, stepping onto Rue Jean Jaures and into bright warm sun.

The camera lingers on her as she glances down at the address again, taking a deep breath before setting off.

FADE TO:

B-ROLL: EXT. CANNES - EARLY MORNING

The sun rises over the serene coastal city. It is a deep blue Mediterranean sky, a classic cloudless "ciel du Midi". A faint breeze carries the sound of gulls over the cobblestone streets. Market stalls are being set up, camera focusing on them and eventually on people at the boulangeries buying their morning croissants and coffees.

INT. CAFÉ – MORNING

A small, cozy café in a grand hotel. Anne-Marie (16, lean, poised) sits at a table with her MOTHER (Fanny de Felcourt, in her 40s, elegant, proud, born and raised in France, once a star ballerina herself) and FATHER (Walter Morrison, in his 50s, distant, American, born and raised in Chicago, and now a very successful Kansas City businessman). Anne-Marie sips a hot chocolate, excitement mixed with nerves evident on her face. Her Mother stirs her coffee, watching her daughter closely.

MOTHER

Anne-Marie, you haven’t touched your croissant. You’re not nervous, are you?

ANNE-MARIE

No, Mom. Just... focused.

MOTHER

Focused? Or something else? You’ve been quieter lately. Is something still wrong at the academy with the way those girls have been talking about you?

Anne-Marie shakes her head but avoids her mother’s eyes. Her father glances up from his phone, his tone clipped.

FATHER

If she’s quiet, she’s focused. That’s good. No need to coddle her.

MOTHER

Walter, she’s sixteen today. A little encouragement wouldn’t hurt. You didn’t have to live in another country when you were 15. She’s done a lot, she’s been *through* a lot. And look at her now.

ANNE-MARIE

(defensive)
It’s fine. I’m fine. Really. Dad’s just being the weird way he is when he’s even 5 miles from Kansas City. I don’t think he’ll

ever get that he’s sitting in a café in France.

Father looks up from his phone, starts to say something, then thinks better of it. He turns back to his phone. Mother leans forward, lowering her voice.

MOTHER

You can tell me, Anne-Marie. If you’re feeling inadequate, if the instructor is being too harsh...

ANNE-MARIE

(defensive, interrupting Mother)
Mom, please. *Stop* ! Just *stop*! I’m doing fine. I’ve worked so hard. I just...Oh, just forget it. All I want today is for you to see how much I’ve learned.

Mother studies her for a moment, then nods.

MOTHER

Then make it perfect. You have everything you need to succeed. Don’t let anyone tell you otherwise. And don’t let your insecurity take control. You know that’s bad for you. Remember who you are.

Anne-Marie smiles faintly, but her grip tightens on the mug. Father sighs, impatient, then stares almost angrily at them both.

FATHER

For God’s sake, Fanny, let’s not make this a therapy session. Leave her alone. The bus will be here soon. Hurry up and finish. Let’s get going. She’ll do fine.

EXT. BUS STOP - LATER

Anne-Marie and her parents are in front of the hotel, waiting for the bus, surrounded by other academy students and their parents. Father scrolls through his phone, indifferent. Mother stands close to Anne-Marie, trying to reassure her with small smiles.

MOTHER

Remember, no matter what, we’re proud of you.

Anne-Marie’s eyes roll. She shakes her head slightly from side to side.

ANNE-MARIE (V.O.)

When will they ever get it?

FATHER

Just keep your head down and work harder. That’s how you succeed.

Anne-Marie’s eyes roll again. She says nothing, but her jaw tightens. The academy’s bus arrives, its doors hissing open.

INT. BUS - CONTINUOUS

The bus is bustling. Full. Anne-Marie sits next to her mother, silent now. Mother pats her hand. Behind them, two JEALOUS CLASSMATES (both 16, one from Rotterdam, the other from Milan, polished but catty, speaking in English to each other) whispering, barely hiding their smirks.

CLASSMATE 1

(stage whisper)
She thinks she’s so special.

CLASSMATE 2

(stage whisper)
What she is, Marta, is typical American. Clumsy. Always trying too hard. I don’t even know why they let her in.

Anne-Marie hears it all, glances grimly back at them, her confidence wavering.

INT. BALLET ACADEMY - LOCKER ROOM - MORNING

Anne-Marie changes into her ballet attire. Her FRIENDS (three diverse European teens, supportive, buddies) chatter around her.

FRIEND 1

Happy birthday, Anne-Marie ! Joyeux anniversaire ! C’est ton Sweet Sixteen, n’est-ce pas ?

ANNE-MARIE

Thank you. You’re right. How did you know about that? In the US, it’s a day that’s supposed to be special. I just wish I felt it was. And I wish my parents didn’t have to see this class.

FRIEND 2

(speaking in French-accented English) Anne-Marie, you are one of the hardest-working students. Your parents should see that. They will. Don’t worry about Monsieur Debinic. Your parents pay a lot for you to be here. He better be nice to you in front of them.

ANNE-MARIE

In your dreams, Lise. In your dreams. In *my* dreams. He *never* is nice to me. Never. Why is that?

FRIEND 3

T’inquiete-pas ! Don’t worry. You’ll see.

Anne-Marie smiles faintly as she is putting on her pointes, tying her ribbons tightly, but the tension in her shoulders is clear.

INT. BALLET STUDIO - LATER

The studio is grand, with mirrors lining the walls. INSTRUCTOR (Monsieur Dubinic, 50s, strict, French) stands at the front, calling out commands.

INSTRUCTOR

Première position ! Tendu ! Et un, deux...

The piano starts, and the dancers move to the rhythm. Anne-Marie’s movements are precise but visibly tense. Instructor watches her, hawk-like.

INSTRUCTOR

(in french)
Anne-Marie ! Non ! Tes bras sont trop raides. Pourquoi ne suis-tu pas la musique ? Recommence ! Encore une fois ! Faits un effort !

Anne-Marie adjusts, concentrating harder. Instructor interrupts again, this time switching to heavily-accented English.

INSTRUCTOR

Do you hear the music? Or are you just counting? Dance is not mechanics, it is art.

ANNE-MARIE

(frustrated, glaring at Intructor)
I *am* listening. I feel it. I've been working on this all week.

INSTRUCTOR

(scoffing)
You think one week erases months of mediocrity? You lack totally *any* articulation in your movements. Did you learn nothing in America? What do they teach there? Anything?

ANNE-MARIE

(protesting)
That's not fair. You always criticize me more than the others. It's because I'm not from Europe, isn't it?

The other dancers exchange surprised glances, a couple of them covering their mouths, none ever having heard someone talk back to Instructor. Camera sweeps over them, then travels back to Instructor, who steps closer to Anne-Marie, his voice icy.

INSTRUCTOR

Ooh la pauvre ! Do not play the victim, Anne-Marie. This has nothing to do with where you are from. It is about what you bring to the barre. You bring nothing. Your movements are clumsy. You lack refinement.

And you think passion can replace precision? It cannot.

ANNE-MARIE

(clearly angry, red in the face, shouting now)
Why are you saying that? I've improved. I know I have. *You* know I have. I've worked harder than anyone else here.

INSTRUCTOR

So you say, dear child. So what? Hard work is not enough. Artistry cannot be forced. You will never be a prima ballerina. I doubt that you'll even make it into a corps de ballet somewhere. You simply do not have it. Not at all. Pas. De. Tout !

Anne-Marie stands frozen, the words cutting deep. Camera spans the studio which has fallen silent, then pans to Anne-Marie's parents who look and feel thunderstruck, then fast back to Anne-marie first behind then in front.

ANNE-MARIE

(screaming)
You bastard! You fucking son of a bitch bastard!

We could hear a pin drop. Camera is back on her from behind. Anne-Marie turns and runs from the studio. Camera follows at a growing distance but at an ever more slowing pace, showing other dancers and parents completely flummoxed.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Anne-Marie grabs her coat, tears streaming down her face. Her FRIENDS call after her.

FRIEND 1

(in French)
Anne-Marie, attends ! Non. Non. Non. Ne pars pas. Reste ! Je te prie !

FRIEND 2

(in English with a heavy French accent)
Don’t go. Please please please!

Anne-Marie doesn’t stop.

EXT. BALLET ACADEMY - DAY

Still wearing her leotard, Anne-Marie runs out the front glass doors, her hoodie flapping behind her. She keeps running, down Rue Colmar onto Rue Louis Nouveau and across Boulevard d’Alsace without seeing the red light, cars screeching to a halt, a delivery van almost running into her, horns blaring, then onto the small streets all the way to the jetty at Plage Maré beach, with cameras following her closely and from a drone.

EXT. SEASIDE - DAY

Anne-Marie leans hands out front against the jetty wall, screams, turns, collapses to her knees, gasping for breath. Her sobs are muffled only a bit by the sound of an incoming tide. Then another scream. A very long scream.

ANNE-MARIE (V.O.)

Jesus *Christ*! Eleven years? Practice practice practice? Just to be told that by that idiot? On my birthday? In front of my parents? Dammit! Dammit! Dammit! *Dammit*!

Anne-Marie gets up. She’s facing the park, turns, looks out to the sea, raises her hands, clenching her fists, releasing them, smacks her temples, her arms then dropping suddenly, a look of confusion on her face as she realizes for the first time that she’s still in her leotard with any number of people looking at her.

ANNE-MARIE (V.O.)

(half-screaming, half wailing)
Oh my God! What am I going to do now? Oh. My. God! What am I going to tell Mom and Dad? Oh. My. *God*!

Her crying stops. She falls silent, pauses. She looks down, turns to look to one side, then the other, then stares out at the horizon for a long time.

ANNE-MARIE (V.O.)

(repeating herself)
What am I going to tell Mom and Dad? What am I going to tell them? There's got to be another way. There's just got to be.

Anne-Marie turns, stares at the buildings across from the park, then begins a slow walk back towards city center as the camera follows her from the front, then from her left side, and then from the back as she moves further away from the camera which has become stationary.

FADE TO:

B-ROLL: EXT. KANSAS CITY – MID AFTERNOON

Drone camera from high over city finding its way to LOOSE PARK.

EXT. KANSAS CITY LOOSE PARK BY THE BASIN – MID AFTERNOON

Camera hovers over Loose Park, eventually picking up a lone woman seated at a bench beside the park's round basin. It is Anne-Marie, sitting on one of the benches, hands gripping the bench front. It's a summer day, she's wearing a light blue-and-white striped summer dress, her backpack and laptop alongside her, her bright blue Cannes water bottle with the white logo to her right. A look of half-confusion, half worry on her face. She opens the laptop, begins typing, camera focusing on her from the front and, staying focused on her, coming around the bench to her right to look over her shoulder as we see what she is typing.

ANNE-MARIE

(typing)
Lauren, thanks for waiting. It's been so tough being back here. As awful as the Cannes academy was, and God knows it was awful, living in France opened my eyes to another world, really another way of living.

The camera shifts slightly as her voice takes over from the sound of the laptop keyboard. The camera blurs, then focuses on Anne-Marie, moves around her, above her. We hear her voiceover as B-Rolls of her time in Cannes play out.

ANNE-MARIE (V.O.)

The intimacy of how they interact, especially in their family, their ease in expressing themselves, the way they even say “hello” to each other by the way the embrace, how I wish that all of that had been a part of *my* upbringing. How does it come to them so easily, why does it count so much for them, things that we don’t even know about, sitting at a café for hours just talking, watching the people. Those amazing croissants. Nothing that they call a croissant here remotely resembles the real thing. Nothing. And that’s just for starters. The French girlfriends I had there were wonderful. One lived right there in Cannes and invited me to her home. Her parents were SO nice. It’s just another way of living. You feel it the minute you walk inside. You know I love Mom and Dad. But their existence here is SO Kansas City. And there’s nothing here for me as a dancer. *Nothing*. And as much as I love ballet, and you know that I do, there’s nothing new about it here. Same old. Same old. The sameness here is crushing me. I’ve got to get away, and everything online says New York City. I don’t know a soul there. But it’s in my head and it won’t stop. Don’t be mad at me, Lauren. My mind’s made up. I fly there next Tuesday. And I’m scared.

Camera focus comes back to Anne Marie, then moves away and to the right eventually at a distance as Anne-Marie closes her laptop, stuffs it into her backpack along with her water bottle, gets up off the bench, and starts walking away to the left.

FADE TO:

B-ROLL: EXT. NEW YORK CITY - MORNING

The city comes to life in a montage: the skyline, a beautiful late Spring morning, the Brooklyn Bridge is crowded with pedestrians heading into Manhattan, cars are exiting the Midtown Tunnel into the city, people are waiting at the 57th and Lexington Avenue bus stop, a bus pulls up, and commuters board.

EXT. CHAMBERS STREET SUBWAY STATION - MORNING

Anne-Marie (22, confident) emerges from the subway, dance bag slung over her shoulder. She pauses for a moment to glance at the map on her phone, then strides purposefully toward Gibney Studios at 58A Chambers Street.

INT. GIBNEY STUDIOS - STAIRWELL - MOMENTS LATER

Anne-Marie climbs the narrow stairs to Studio 4, her steps echoing slightly. She reaches the door, takes a deep breath, and enters. The room is spacious and filled with light. A WOMAN CHOREOGRAPHER (40s, poised, commanding) stands near the mirrors, reviewing notes on her tablet. She looks up and smiles faintly as Anne-Marie enters.

CHOREOGRAPHER

You must be Anne-Marie. I've been looking forward to this.

Anne-Marie nods, setting her bag down carefully.

ANNE-MARIE

Thank you for the opportunity. It's an honor to meet you.

They shake hands, then sit facing each other, cross-legged.

CHOREOGRAPHER

Let's skip the formalities. I want to know who you are. Why New York? And why did you leave Hightower before you even finished your second year?

Anne-Marie hesitates, then speaks with quiet intensity.

ANNE-MARIE

Hightower was gonna be a dream. A real dream. I thought that I had what it took. But not Monsieur Debinic, the instructor in my last class there. I actually ran from the place when he berated me for not having any ballet talent at all, shouting at me not just in front of the whole class but with my parents right there in the same room. End of dream. And a hard end. But my parents were

amazing. They stayed with me and my dream of dance, especially my mom who had been quite the star of ballet in France and who I thought would be hard on me for wanting to turn my back on *her* craft. The amazing thing? She was the exact opposite. "Try contemporary," she said. "We'll get you to New York, get you set up there with my sister-in-law, and you can start doing classes." I applied and got into NYU Tisch and couldn't believe the world I was in. Nonstop awesome. I got my BFA and now I'm freelancing.

CHOREOGRAPHER

(intrigued)
That was a bold move to come here at 17. NYU Tisch? Not bad. And now? Freelancing here isn't for the faint of heart, especially with all the competition you have to be facing right now. And I assume all the auditions, too. But what first brought you to Steps on Broadway?

ANNE-MARIE

A friend recommended it to me when I first got here. She said that I needed to keep training and that even with Tisch, I ought to take classes there. Steps has such an awesome range of classes, and it made a lot of sense once I started. So I take classes there at least once a week. Some ballet, but mostly contemporary and a little jazz. That's where you saw me, wasn't it?

CHOREOGRAPHER

(nodding)
Quite by chance, Anne-Marie. I was scouting someone else, but you caught my attention. There's rawness to your movement. And you always seem to be telling a story just by the way you move, without your saying a word. But why contemporary? Why not neo-classical?

Anne-Marie takes a deep breath, her passion evident.

ANNE-MARIE

Contemporary speaks to me. It's limitless. I've been inspired by companies like NDT and here in New York City, more by the downtown than the uptown, like Alison Cook Beatty Dance, YYDC, Mark Morris, and there's even a really small one called Dual Rivet, two women dancers who have this thing for highly physical dance.

CHOREOGRAPHER

(interrupting)
How interesting! I know all about Alison's company and Dual Rivet.

ANNE-MARIE

(continuing)
Seeing all this firsthand, not just online, made me realize that dance could be so much more than following form. It could take me way beyond the horizon. I mean, this is New York! Once I got here, it felt like I'd found my place. And for sure it's true: if I can make it here, I can make it anywhere.

The Choreographer studies her, impressed but measured.

CHOREOGRAPHER

You've done your homework. Let's agree to that. And let's also agree that your passion alone doesn't tell the whole story. Now it's time: show me what you've got. Let's see if your fire and drive translate to the floor.

Choreographer turns away, walks over to a laptop, and then turns back to look at Anne-Marie with a very hard stare.

CHOREOGRAPHER

(in a totally silent room)
What does this music say to you, Anne-Marie? Don't say a single word. Tell me something by the way you move that gets your story across. Whatever story you want to tell. But watch the second hand on the wall clock and let it count off a minute or so while you

just listen to what you're gonna hear. Let that minute go by and *then*, Anne-Marie, only then start telling me that story.

Choreographer swivels and leans down towards the laptop, starts a recording of David Lang's "Cheating, Lying, Stealing", reaches for the slider switch on the wall to lower the lights, and turns once again to face Anne-Marie.

A spotlight falls on Anne-Marie who steps into the center of the studio, her focus sharpening. She adjusts her posture, preparing to dance, listens as the music plays, camera focusing on her hands, her slightly swaying body, the back of her head, her feet that cannot stop moving ever so slightly. We hear her breathing. In. Out. In. Out. All the while, momentary flashbacks to a very young 8-year-old Anne-Marie in dance class.

A minute passes. The music plays. Anne-Marie starts to move through the initial phases of an improv, slowly at first, then with cameras focused on her (short shots) and from her (shots retaken when she is wearing a body cam), her movements become rapid, highly articulated.

FADE OUT.