

ONE MEAN DANCER

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - CHEMISTRY CLASSROOM - DAY

Beakers and test tubes neatly stacked on the counters. Desks pushed to the side, clearing the floor. The room is empty except for two students facing each other in its center.

A portrait of President Dwight D. Eisenhower in full Army dress stares down at them, judging.

RICKY (17), a sad ringer for Benjamin Button in stature and hairline, fiddles with a record player stamped NATRONA COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL A/V DEPARTMENT. Classical music plays.

Ricky approaches his dance partner SOFÍA (17), a beautiful transfer student from Venezuela in high heels and a good nine inches over little Ricky.

RICKY  
Sofía, let's begin.

He hesitates.

SOFÍA  
I am not going to bite.

She takes his hands in hers. His knees buckle.

SOFÍA (CONT'D)  
Teach me, Ricky.

They begin the box step. She's clumsy. Ricky gestures towards her feet.

RICKY  
Do you mind?

She kicks off her heels and they start again. She struggles.

SOFÍA  
The prom is three weeks away. I'll never learn to dance.

RICKY  
I need you to trust me. Close your eyes and just listen to the music. I'll guide you.

Slowly she finds her rhythm and they begin to click. Rogers & Astaire would be proud.

SOFÍA

You are an amazing dancer. Where did you learn?

RICKY

After my grandfather passed away, my grandmother's memory diminished. I reminded her of him.

SOFÍA

Was it your receding hairline?

RICKY

When they were younger, they danced in competitions throughout Europe. I wanted her to relive those memories, so every Saturday I dressed in my grandfather's Army uniform and danced with my nana.

He wipes a tear from her eye. Ricky walks her to the door.

RICKY (CONT'D)

Next week, then?

SOFÍA

Next week. What are you up to this weekend?

Ricky freezes like Bambi on The 101.

RICKY

Um... stuff.

Not knowing what else to say he steps into...

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

DALE (18), a football player with a sculpted body and total shit for brains approaches. He only sees Ricky.

DALE

Richard! You got my paper?

Ricky walks to his locker, opens it and reveals a stack of term papers and blue books. Ricky hands one to the big lug.

RICKY

This should guarantee you a B, and your continued pilotage of the noble steeds.

DALE  
Say what now?

RICKY  
You'll stay captain of the  
Mustangs.

DALE  
Right.

Dale puts Ricky in a headlock, adds a helping of noogies.

DALE (CONT'D)  
It better or--

Sofía walks out. Dales frees the nerd.

SOFÍA  
I didn't know you two were friends.

RICKY  
I didn't either.

DALE  
He's kidding! We're buds. Hi ya,  
gorgeous.

Sofía blushes. Ricky stews.

SOFÍA  
Hi Dale. Bye Dale. Have fun with  
your "stuff" Ricky.

Sofía leaves with both boys staring in her wake.

DALE  
(yells towards Sofía)  
Hey, you got a date for prom yet?

Sofía pretends not to hear, quickens her pace and disappears.

DALE (CONT'D)  
Can't blame a guy for trying.  
(beat)  
Like you would know. Later, squirt.

Dale chases after Sofía. Ricky sighs.

RICKY  
"Stuff". Idiot!

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

Sofía saves a seat as Ricky walks toward her with a tray carrying two plates of Salisbury steak and mashed potatoes, and two cartons of milk (one chocolate). JASPER (16), a freckle-faced punk who is no fan of Ricky's, blocks his path, grabbing the chocolate milk off Ricky's tray.

JASPER

So, now you're down with brown, huh  
Pricky?

Frozen in fear, Ricky doesn't move. Jasper pours the chocolate milk on poor Ricky's head. Sofía sadly watches. Out of nowhere Dale shows up. He shoves Jasper.

DALE

We all bleed red, Jasper. Like the  
connect-a-dots on your face.

Dale, pulls a pen from Ricky's pocket protector and connects the freckles on Jasper's forehead into a penis. Humiliated, Jasper runs away.

RICKY

(towards Jasper)  
And it's Ricky!

Dale joins Ricky and a very impressed Sofía for lunch.

INT. CHEMISTRY CLASSROOM - DAY

Ricky and Sofía begin another dance lesson.

SOFÍA

Tell me more about your nana.

RICKY

She thought the world of me. Told  
me I could be anything I want.  
Except taller.

Sofía giggles.

SOFÍA

I wish my mother felt that way. I  
want to be an engineer. She says I  
should just find a husband.

RICKY

Hey now. It's 1958. A gal can be  
whatever she wants: a stewardess, a  
seamstress, a secretary...

SOFÍA  
Like Secretary of State.

RICKY  
Like a secretary for the Secretary  
of State.

Ricky dips Sofía. She's startled, then smiles. The dancing becomes a little more romantic. For Ricky.

INT. HISTORY CLASSROOM - DAY

Two podiums face a packed classroom. On the right, CHARLIE (15), a young Republican in a starched white shirt and red tie, looks utterly shattered. On the left stands Ricky, beaming like a thousands suns.

RICKY  
And that's why diplomacy, not war,  
is the best and only solution for  
spreading democracy across this  
diverse planet. La paz es  
alcanzable.

CAPTION DISPLAYS: Peace is achievable.

The classroom erupts in applause. Sofía claps the loudest.

INT. CHEMISTRY CLASSROOM - DAY

Ricky, in a powdered wig, waltzes with Sofía. She smiles, delighted in her own progress. His crooked smile grows to a mile-wide grin. Our boy is smitten.

INT. GYMNASIUM - DAY

Fifty desks form a circle in the middle of the basketball court. Behind each desk: a flag from a different country. Seated in front of each desk is a student representative. Ricky addresses his colleagues.

RICKY  
It has come to my attention one of  
our nations in this Model UN has  
accused another of storing  
dangerous contraband.

TRACY (15), a bookish girl in pigtails and braces, rises.

RICKY (CONT'D)

Chair recognizes the Kingdom of Iraq.

TRACY

Joey Bublialto put M-80s in my locker and then called the Principal.

JOEY (16), the representative from ITALY, a greaser and spitting image of Fonzie, jumps to his feet.

JOEY

Mr. Chairman! I request a rebuttal.  
(giggles)  
Rebuttal.

RICKY

The chair recognizes the representative from Italy.

JOEY

It was brought to my attention these explosives could cause massive destruction in the wrong hands. I alerted the principal.

TRACY

And I got detention. He was just mad because I wouldn't let him feel me up at Danny Poppodpolous' party.

JOEY

Over the sweater don't count!

TRACY

Get bent.

RICKY

What can this event teach us? It takes more than just the suspicion of danger to escalate into full conflict. Italy, apologize to Iraq.

Joey defiantly folds his arm.

RICKY (CONT'D)

Italy...

JOEY

Sorry. You wanna hang out Saturday?

Tracy pops her gum.

TRACY

Maybe.

With newfound confidence, Ricky winks at Sofía as she admires him from the seat of Venezuela. Or is it Dale representing Ireland directly behind him?

INT. CHEMISTRY CLASSROOM - NIGHT

Ricky wears a ruffled shirt, tight pants and black boots. He writes on the chalkboard: THE FORBIDDEN DANCE. The fluorescent lights go out as red lights swell. Sofía, in a form-fitting yellow dress, takes his hand then dips him low. And they Lambada!

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - FRONT ENTRANCE - NIGHT

After the lesson, Ricky escorts Sofía from the school all smiles. The stars twinkle. A cacophony of crickets sounds musical. Ricky stops abruptly and takes Sofía's hands.

RICKY

I think you're ready! For prom.

SOFÍA

I couldn't have done it without you. You are a wonderful partner.

RICKY

Thanks. Speaking of partners, I wanted to ask you...

A souped up 1956 Chevy Impala slaloms through the parking lot and skids to a halt in front of the school. Dale jumps out and opens the passenger door.

DALE

Your chariot awaits.

SOFÍA

(to Ricky)

I guess this was our last lesson.

RICKY

I guess so. You're definitely ready for prom.

SOFÍA

And I get to dance with the King!

Ricky releases her hands like two balloons. Sofía smiles at Dale and curtsies.

SOFÍA (CONT'D)

Ricky, what about partners?

RICKY

Oh. I was looking for a tennis partner and--

SOFÍA

That's a man's sport.

RICKY

Actually, quite a few women play.

SOFÍA

Not me. I bet Dale would love to.

RICKY

No, that's--

SOFÍA

Dale? Do you want to be Ricky's tennis partner?

DALE

That's a chick sport.

Sofía shrugs, then kisses Ricky on the cheek.

SOFÍA

Thank you for everything. See you Monday!

Ricky softly touches the spot where her sweet lips met his skin, then scowls as he sees Sofía deep-kiss her new beau Dale. They screech off into the horizon.

INT. BASEMENT - DAY

Army men, model ships and tanks cover three card tables. Diagrams and charts are plastered across wood paneling. A game of Risk has every piece shoved into Venezuela. Ricky furiously paces, mumbling to himself. His parents' cellar has become his war room.

RICKY

All that time. All that effort. All that... touching. And she chose Dale?!

MOM (O.C.)

Ricky! Time for dinner!

Ricky takes a deep breath, counts to three.

RICKY  
 Not hungry, Mom.  
 (continuing his rant)  
 I mean sure he's tall, handsome,  
 athletic, has hair. But Dale? She's  
 so smart and beautiful and  
 caliente. And he's so... Dale!

Ricky walks further back where dozens of black & white photos  
 on a clothesline show Dale in compromising situations.

RICKY (CONT'D)  
 Mess with me? It's time for jock  
 and awe.

MOM (O.C.)  
 You have to eat, sweetie.

RICKY  
 (from the bowels of Hell)  
 I. SAID. NO!

He could really use a Snickers.

INT. SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY

Prom decorations adorn the hallways. This year's theme:  
 International Love. But something dark is in the air. Ricky  
 finds a visibly upset Sofía.

RICKY  
 What's wrong?

SOFÍA  
 Everyone's talking about Dale.  
 They're so mean!

RICKY  
 What are they saying about my  
 friend?

SOFÍA  
 Lies. Stupid dweebs. They're all  
 dweebs. Or duck butts. Or squares.

They head toward class. Incriminating photos of Dale are  
 plastered everywhere. First up: Dale in a swimming pool with  
 the cheerleading squad.

RICKY  
 Are those BIKINIS?!

SOFÍA

Only promiscuous sirens would dress that way. He may be ministering to them. He told me he has counseled many, many girls.

RICKY

No doubt.

They pass pictures of Dale taking money from freshmen.

RICKY (CONT'D)

He must be some kind of bully. I didn't write that paper for him out of the kindness of my heart.

SOFÍA

You wrote it for twenty bucks.

RICKY

But these guys. Their lunch money.

SOFÍA

They owe him that money. He protects them. From the real bullies, like Jasper.

A poster of Dale in a Halloween costume, as a Klansman.

SOFÍA (CONT'D)

So embarrassing.

RICKY

Right? I'm offended. I can only imagine--

SOFÍA

I know. His mother bleached his executioner's costume. Who would try so hard to discredit Dale?

RICKY

It's a mystery.

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Prom night. More floor-length hoop skirts and powder blue tuxedos than you can shake a polio brace at. Ricky simmers in hate as he watches Dale and Sofía glide across the floor like descendants of Arthur Murray.

Dale spots Ricky. A needle slides across a record. A KID just slammed into the DJ. A TEACHER grabs the kid by the collar.

TEACHER

This is why I said no horseplay.

Music starts again. Sofía pleads with Dale to keep dancing but he's got a score to settle and makes a beeline for Ricky.

DALE

I know it was you that put those pictures up.

RICKY

I can neither confirm nor deny--

DALE

Deny all you want. I know the truth. And I want an apology.

RICKY

I have nothing to be sorry for.

DALE

Then there's only one way to settle this.

RANDO STUDENT

A dance off!

DALE

I have no idea what that is. I'm just gonna kick his ass.

Sofía steps between the boys.

SOFÍA

Come on, Dale. He's not worth it.  
(to Ricky)  
You were such a nice boy, Ricky.  
What happened to you?

RICKY

Love. That's what happened.  
Unrequited, unreciprocated, who-the-fuck-was-I-kidding love.

A needle slides across a record. An F-bomb? In the '50s? A collective GASP. Same kid, same DJ, teacher loses his shit.

Shoulders down and heart broken, Ricky slinks away.

INT. CHEMISTRY CLASSROOM - DAY

Final exams. Students frantically write in their blue books. A knock at the door. Two FEDS in dark suits speak with the TEACHER. They head straight for Sofía.

FED ONE

Pencils down, sweetheart. You need to come with us.

SOFÍA

I don't understand.

TEACHER

Apparently they received an anonymous tip. About your father.

FED TWO

Commie sympathizer.

FED ONE

It's back to the 'Zuela for you and your family.

FED TWO

No one calls it that.

SOFÍA

My father teaches Macroeconomics in Competitive Markets. He's a capitalist! Teaching capitalism! To other capitalists!

As Sofía is hauled away she catches Ricky's crooked smile. So does the teacher.

TEACHER

Mr. Cheney!

SOFÍA

Your nana lied. You'll never be anything special Ricky.

RICKY

Call me Dick.

FADE OUT