

DANCING FOOLS

A Screenplay by Clayton Emery

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WGA registration I27436

FADE IN

PAN through the CITY to show DANCING TEASERS.

TITLE OVER

DANCING FOOLS

CREDITS ROLL.

In the PARK, KIDS KRUMP and BREAK DANCE.

In a STUDIO, COUPLES BALLROOM DANCE.

In a THEATER, BALLERINAS PIROUETTE, warming up.

In a HOUSE, GIRLS in SARIS practice TRADITIONAL INDIAN DANCING, but keep breaking into INDIAN POP.

In a STRIP CLUB, EXOTIC DANCERS bump and grind.

In a BAR, COWBOYS and COWGIRLS dance TEXAS SWING.

In the KITCHEN of a CHINESE RESTAURANT, a RIBBON DANCER rehearses her RIBBON DANCE.

INT. CLUB -- NIGHT

Wednesday night.

The place is FRIENDLY and BRIGHT. NOISE is tremendous. There are WINDOWS in the rear wall.

YOUNG PEOPLE DANCE or MINGLE. PROFESSIONAL DANCERS on platforms SHIMMY. Even the WAIT PEOPLE and BARTENDERS DANCE.

VONDA and ROSITA DANCE together.

ROSITA GONZALES is a 25 YO Hispanic woman in sassy club clothes.

VONDA LAROCHELLE is a 25 YO African-American woman also in sassy club clothes.

BOTH are having fun, but a little tired from day jobs.

PAN FURTHER and we see, amid all this happy dancing, TWO GUYS who SIT like LUMPS.

HECTOR DIAZ is a 25 YO Hispanic man in boring clothes.

SHAQUILLE WASHINGTON is a 25 YO African-American) also in uninspired clothes.

VONDA and ROSITA NOD and SHIMMY near their boyfriends.

SHAQ

I told you it was a stupid idea from the get-go.

HECTOR

You're the one's stupid, man. The plan was foolproof.

SHAQ

The proof is a fool fell for it. An on-line dating service for drunks? Who's gonna subscribe to that?

HECTOR

People who drink too much. OK, it's a niche market, but -

SHAQ

I should'a known it was sour when you started quoting statistics. "Studies show people find members of the opposite sex 25% better looking if they're smashed." Yeah, no kidding.

VONDA and ROSITA BUMP and GRIND for attention. HECTOR and SHAQ IGNORE THEM.

HECTOR

We're guaranteed 25% better returns. And people spend more money when they're drunk. 'Specially with a computer right there -

SHAQ
Speaking of which, I stopped by your
software guru's apartment. It's
empty.

HECTOR
Yeah, he said something about visiting
his mother -

SHAQ
His cell phone's disconnected too.

VONDA and ROSITA GIVE UP and DANCE AWAY.

HECTOR
Look, this scheme is honest. And
we're helping lonely people -

SHAQ
We're gonna be lonely once Boris
finds out we lost his money, man.
The loneliest ghosts in the graveyard.

HECTOR
You know what your problem is,
muchacho? You can't think big. If
you could -

SHAQ and HECTOR STARTLE as HANDS CLAMP their SHOULDERS.

HECTOR (CONT'D)
Girls, we told you -

Surprise. BORIS and THUGS have found them.

BORIS is a suave GANGSTER, 40 YO, any race. He has TWO THUGS.

HECTOR (CONT'D)
Boris. Hey. Didn't expect to see
you here.

BORIS
I own this place. Where else would
I be?

(MORE)

BORIS (CONT'D)

(beat)

It's Wednesday night. You owe \$5,000.
Let's have it.

SHAQ

You tell him, man.

HECTOR

Uh, the truth is, Boris, we hit a
little snag.

BORIS

A snag?

(to THUGS)

Snag them, guys.

TWO THUGS DRAG HECTOR and SHAQ out of the club.

HECTOR

You know what your problem is, Boris?
You can't think -
(is choked silent)

CLUB PATRONS ignore the hustle. ROSITA and VONDA roll eyes.

EXT. ALLEY -- NIGHT

An ALLEY behind the CLUB.

BORIS NODS. The THUGS slap HECTOR and SHAQ around, then
STUFF them in a DUMPSTER and slam the lid.

BORIS

(to closed dumpster)

You have till Saturday night midnight
to pay me, guys. And it'll be \$6,000
then.

(taps dumpster)

Have a nice night.

BORIS and THUGS exit.

INT. DUMPSTER

It's BLACK.

HECTOR

He didn't even say "Please".

SHAQ

Ask me, we got off lucky. Last guys
crossed them was eaten by dogs in
the park - what was left of 'em.

The DUMPSTER LID LIFTS. VONDA and ROSITA have found them.

VONDA

At least Boris is respectable, and
cleans up after himself.

ROSITA

What're you guys doing? Burying all
the money you made on this deal?

EXT. ALLEY-- NIGHT

HECTOR and SHAQ CLIMB out. The GIRLS RECOIL from the reek.

HECTOR

Aw, Rosey. We would'a made a ton of
money if only -

ROSITA

Zip it. I'm tired of "if this and
if that". People make their own
luck, Hector Diaz.

VONDA

And all the luck you two make is
bad.

ROSITA

And what happened to our evening?
We came to dance.

VONDA

Rosey and I been dancing together so long we got pointed to the dyke bar down the street.

ROSITA

Otherwise we'd be sitting on our rump roasts for hours while you wheel and deal -

VONDA

Only to end up smelling like you usually do, only worse. When's the last time you two got up on a dance floor?

SHAQ

Come on, Von. You know I ain't no dancer.

HECTOR

We dance with our heads. I mean, Shaq and me, we're -

ROSITA

Stupid?

VONDA

Damned fools?

SHAQ

Ideas men. Hector and me are ideas men.

ROSITA

Fine. You two Brainiacs stay out here and stink up ideas.

VONDA

Rosey and I are going back inside. You two clucks don't want to dance, there's plenty of fellas that do.

The GIRLS march back into the CLUB.

SHAQ

I got to admit, the girls are right.
Our ideas stink.

HECTOR

No, amigo. Our ideas are sound.
It's the - execution that trips us
up.

SHAQ

For now we're just stuffed in a
dumpster. Execution comes later.

HECTOR

We oughta march right back in there -

SHAQ

The door dog's gonna object to our
perfume.

Resigned, HECTOR and SHAQ climb on the DUMPSTER LID and PEEK
in the window.

SHOT: VONDA and ROSITA dance with SHARP GUYS.

SHAQ (CONT'D)

That didn't take long.

HECTOR

Sheesh. What'a those guys got we
ain't?

SHAQ

Money. Good looks. Sharp clothes.
Steady jobs. Fast cars. And our
girlfriends.

HECTOR

They dance lame. They dance like
crabs with eight broken legs.

SHAQ

Like chickens with their heads cut
off.

HECTOR
Like elephants with ingrown toenails.

SHAQ
Still better looking than us.

HECTOR
Get those guys in the spotlight,
they'd look sick.

SHAQ
This ain't a contest, Hec. It's
about them having and us not having.

HECTOR
What if it was a contest?

SHAQ
A contest of what? "Who stinks the
worse?"

HECTOR
A dance contest...

SHAQ
No, no, I was just kidding about a
contest, man. Don't go off half-
cocked.

HECTOR
We could host a dance contest and
make a fortune.

SHAQ
You mean like... We charge dancers
to enter the contest...

HECTOR
And charge people to come see 'em...

SHAQ
Hey, that works both ways.

HECTOR

Wait, now. We don't get it all for free. We got to rent a hall. Pay to promote it.

SHAQ

Print tickets and, what'd'ya call 'em, flyers? Got to hand out incentives, otherwise no one'd enter.

HECTOR

A cash prize to the best dancers. Don't have to be much. Still leaves a lot of skim.

SHAQ

(shakes head)

No, this is crazy. We don't know nothing about promoting a dance contest.

HECTOR

We didn't know anything about on-line dating either, and look how far we got.

The TWO GUYS look at the DUMPSTER they stand on.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

Never mind. "What's past is past," mi madre always says. If we pull off a dance contest, the girls will eating out of our hands.

SHAQ looks inside.

SHOT: VONDA, dancing and laughing.

SHAQ

She won't be hungry, man. She's chewing the buttons off'a that dude's shirt.

HECTOR
 For now. But we'll show 'em. We're
 ideas men. Great brains will win
 out over good looks any day.

HECTOR slaps SHAQ on the back. Both SMILE. And WALK OFF to
 meet glory -

- Forgetting they stand on a DUMPSTER. Both CRASH in the
 alley.

INT. CLUB

VONDA and ROSITA DANCE up a storm. MUSIC is LOUD.

ROSITA
 (dancing, over noise)
 Think we should look for the guys?

VONDA
 (dancing)
 Yeah.

ROSITA
 I mean, like now.

VONDA
 Now now?

ROSITA
 They might get into trouble.

VONDA
 You think?
 (dances)
 How 'bout when the music stops?

ROSITA
 (shrugs)
 OK.

INT. SHAQ'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

CLOSE ON: COMPUTER SCREEN

The words "DANCE CONTEST" are huge, but that's all on the page.

HECTOR (O.S.)

But what else, man?

SHAQ (O.S.)

There isn't any "else". This is all we got. One big fat balloon and no string.

The house is small, spare, neat, in the poor part of town. SHAQ lives with his GRANDFATHER.

The guys hunch over a crappy COMPUTER.

HECTOR

OK, put this. "Calling all great dancers." No. "Dancers, this is for you." No. OK, I got it. "See the best dancers in the city."

SHAQ

In the city? I thought this was local. You know, a block party sort of thing.

HECTOR

Shaq, if you wanna make big bucks, you gotta think big. The whole city. Bring in everybody.

SHAQ

In one place? Uh uh. It's been so damned hot, mayor's talking 'bout race riots and mobilizin' the National Guard.

(beat)

Think, man. We ain't hosting the Home Show at the Arena.

HECTOR

Hombre, you're a genius. The Arena.
Put that in.

SHAQ

We can't host no show at the Arena.
That'd cost like - millions.

HECTOR

I know. But we'll say the contest's
at the Arena. Then, when everyone
shows up, we'll - slide 'em down the
road to...

SHAQ

The High School gym? No, Riverside
Park.

HECTOR

Ooh, that works. Besides, everyone
knows where the Arena is. We won't
need directions.

SHAQ

(typing)

"At - the - Arena. See - the - best -
dancers - in - the - city." Hey,
what kind of contest is this, anyway?

HECTOR

Hello? Has Intelligence Presley
left the building? It's a dance
contest.

SHAQ

What kind of dance? There's lots of
kinds of dancing. Hip-hop. Krumpin'.
Dirty dancin'.

HECTOR

No, no. This'll be - salsa dancing.
Real dancing.

SHAQ

What the hell you talking about?
Krumpin' is real dancin'. Takes
more energy than swishing around the
floor to mariachi music.

HECTOR

Flopping around like a fish in a
boat? You call that dancing?

SHAQ

It takes strength. Takes talent.

HECTOR

(mimicking salsa)

Salsa dancing you pull the girl close
and hang on tight. Or some Anglo'll
scoop her up and ferry her away in
his Ferrari.

SHAQ

(loud)

Unhand that woman. No one's gonna
pay to see pseudo-sex ooze across no
stage. It's hip-hop.

HECTOR

(loud)

Double click the brain icon. No
one's gonna pay to see guys wipe the
floor like they're having a seizure.
It's salsa.

Shaq's GRANDFATHER ENTERS.

GRANDFATHER is a weathered African-American. He's a janitor
at the Arena still in uniform.

GRANDFATHER

What's all this noise? I can hear
you two caterwaulin' a mile down the
street. Now hush or or I'll throw
you and that damned Scotch piano out
in the street.

The GUYS shut up. GRANDFATHER EXITS.

HECTOR

Never mind. Don't say what kind of dancing the contest is. People will know.

SHAQ

How they gonna know if we don't tell 'em?

HECTOR

A detail. We'll work it out later.

SHAQ

(typing)

How much we gonna charge?

HECTOR

\$5 admission. Anyone can afford that.

SHAQ

I'll mention the air-conditioning. People will come for miles just to get cool.

HECTOR

And the cash prizes. What else we need?

SHAQ

(reading)

It don't say when. We got a place - the Arena, ha! - but we need a time. And a date.

HECTOR

Put... 7:00. Saturday night.

SHAQ

This Saturday night? This is Wednesday. We ain't got time to prepare all this - whatever it is.

HECTOR

"Strike while the iron is hot," mi madre always says.

SHAQ

Don't hang out with guys who are loco in the cabeza, my granddad always says.

HECTOR

Saturday. We don't want anyone to steal our idea. And we make a quick profit.

SHAQ

\$6000 would be nice.

SHAQ AND HECTOR

(gulp)

HECTOR

Besides, you want Vonda back for the weekend, he?

SHAQ

I don't know 'bout that. It's shaping up to be one weird weekend.

HECTOR

(reading screen)

"Dance contest. Best dancers in the city. Cash prizes." Time, place, yeah. The details'll work out. FAX it.

SHAQ

To who?

HECTOR

Everybody.

SHAQ

(waits)

HECTOR
Uh, our churches.

SHAQ
Just in time for Sunday's bulletin?

HECTOR
The schools, man.

SHAQ
It's summertime. Hot?

HECTOR
The Community College. The Y. The
supermarkets. The newspapers.

SHAQ
There you go again. We can't afford
no newspaper ad.

HECTOR
They list Community Events for free.
Don't you understand PR?

SHAQ
Guess I can get the FAX numbers off
the Internet.

HECTOR
Then send a copy to Kinkos. We'll
print up a hundred flyers and post
'em all over.

SHAQ finds numbers.

SHAQ
I don't know 'bout this. Smells
like trouble. We could end up with
so many people mad at us -

HECTOR
You worry too much, amigo.

SHAQ

(typing)

You don't worry enough. If this
blows up, we gonna have to join the
Army so's we can get sent overseas.

(beat)

Least ways we'll get killed by
strangers then, not everyone we know.

HECTOR

(suddenly sober)

What the hell. Nobody's going to
take no notice any how.

SHAQ

Now who's a doubting Tomosito?

(finishes typing)

S'ready to go.

SHAQ AND HECTOR

(gulp again)

Putting their FINGERS TOGETHER on the KEY, they press FAX.

FAX after FAX after FAX goes sailing out.

INT. NEWSPAPER PRESS ROOM -- MORNING

Thursday morning.

PRESSES spin in the background.

An AD EDITOR frets over a computer screen.

A TYPESETTER runs up with a FAX.

TYPESETTER

Hey, boss. Did you see this ad? It
says there's a dance contest at the
Arena this Saturday.

AD EDITOR

(busy)

So?

TYPESETTER

So what happened to Rod Stewart? We ran a big ad he was playing the Arena Saturday.

AD EDITOR

Let me see that...
(reads FAX, checks
COMPUTER)

Yeah. Today's ad says Rod Stewart's on for Saturday... One of these is wrong. Call the Arena and find out.

INT. ARENA OFFICE -- MORNING

The ARENA OFFICE overlooks the entire arena. On the FLOOR, ROADIES set up a stage, lights, screens, speakers.

PHONES RING continuously. At a sloppy desk, a harried ARENA MANAGER fields phone calls.

A SECRETARY at her desk waggles the PHONE.

SECRETARY

Jack, the newspaper ad office is on Line 1.

ARENA MANAGER

(into phone)
... Fine, send me an email with the details.
(rings off)
Which is it? 1?
(into phone)
Hello? What's the problem?

SPLIT SCREEN shows the AD EDITOR and ARENA MANAGER.

AD EDITOR

(into phone)
I got a flyer here says you're holding a dance contest Saturday night.
What happened to Rod Stewart?

ARENA MANAGER looks down into the arena floor, sees ROADIES work.

LOOKS at a giant WALL CALENDAR jammed with events. ROD STEWART is marked on Saturday. RIVERDANCE is on Sunday.

ARENA MANAGER

(into phone)

There's nothing wrong with Rod Stewart. He's on for Saturday. Where'd -

SECRETARY

Jack? You better take this call. Rod Stewart's canceling. Line 2.

ARENA MANAGER

What? Hang on.

(switches lines, into phone)

What? Again? Hasn't that guy ever heard of Vitamin C? What am I supposed to -

(stops)

We got cut off. Must have gone into a tunnel.

SECRETARY

Line 1 is still waiting.

AD EDITOR

(into phone)

Hello? What's the deal? The Arts section is going to press in five minutes.

ARENA MANAGER

(into phone)

I don't know what the deal is. Rod Stewart just canceled, I think.

AD EDITOR

(into phone)

So what's up with this dance contest?

(MORE)

AD EDITOR (CONT'D)
 Something to do with Riverdance coming
 on Sunday? Like Plan B?

SECRETARY
 Jack? Rod's manager is back. Line
 3.

ARENA MANAGER
 What? Line 3?

AD EDITOR
 (into phone)
 Is it Plan B?

ARENA MANAGER
 (punching buttons)
 OK, right. Are we on? OK, we're
 on.

AD EDITOR
 (into phone)
 So the Dance Contest is on.

ARENA MANAGER
 (into phone)
 Right, yes, run it.
 (punches button off)
 Who's this? What? You're Rod's
 manager?

INT. NEWSPAPER PRESS ROOM

AD EDITOR HANGS UP.

AD EDITOR
 Looks like Rod's out and the Dance
 Contest is on. Run it. We've got a
 deadline.

TYPESETTER
 Is that hard? Maybe I should check
 the arena web site just to be sure.

AD EDITOR
You got three minutes.

INT. ARENA OFFICE

SECRETARY listens fretfully to the ARENA MANAGER.

ARENA MANAGER
(into phone)
So is Rod coming or is he not?
(listens)
What do you mean, you're not sure?

SECRETARY
Jack? Should I update the web site
just to be sure?

ARENA MANAGER
Uh, yeah. Pull the Stewart block
for a little while. Just leave it
blank.

SECRETARY jumps to the COMPUTER.

CLOSE ON: COMPUTER SCREEN

The announcement for Rod Stewart gets erased.

INT. NEWSPAPER PRESS ROOM

TYPESETTER accesses the Arena web site.

CLOSE ON: COMPUTER SCREEN

Rod Stewart announcement vanishes.

TYPESETTER
Looks like Rod's out, boss.

AD EDITOR
Just run what we got, OK? If there's
a mistake we'll correct it in the
morning edition.

TYPESETTER

Got it.
 (to him/herself)
I'd rather go to a dance contest
anyway.

Hurrying, TYPESETTER SCANS the FLYER -

- UPLOADS it to a NEWSPAPER PAGE -

- And HITS PRINT.

NEWSPAPERS roll off the presses. The DANCE FLYER fills an
ENTIRE PAGE.

HECTOR and SHAQ POST FLYERS on POLES and WALLS.

A KID READS a FLYER, TEARS it DOWN, and RUNS with it.

HECTOR

Hey, bring that back!

SHAQ

Damn. We only got a hundred of these.

HECTOR

Makes it hard to get the word out.

SHAQ and HECTOR move on, still posting.

A DELIVERY TRUCK TOSSES a BUNDLE OF NEWSPAPERS.

HEADLINE: "DANCE CONTEST TO LIGHT UP ARENA"

INT/EXT. VARIOUS LOCATIONS

QUICK CUTS show the news getting around:

A KID WORKING in a COFFEE SHOP sees the AD lying on a table.
Takes it outside to KIDS BREAK DANCING in the PARK. They
make signs for "Money." And bop through a KRUMP.

A WOMAN shows the AD in a BALLROOM DANCE STUDIO. Two DANCERS
break into a BALLROOM DANCE.

A SLENDER WOMAN goes through a STAGE DOOR to a DRESSING ROOM. BALLERINAS read the AD. ONE PIROUETTES with joy.

AN INDIAN MOM drops her DAUGHTER off at a HOUSE. The GIRL shows the AD. GIRLS SQUEAL and hop into an INDIAN POP DANCE.

In a STRIP CLUB, tired EXOTIC DANCERS taking a break read the AD. They signal, "Why not us?" ONE DANCER SHIMMIES.

At a HIGHWAY REST STOP, an IRISH WOMAN climbs on a tour bus with a newspaper. She shows the ad to RIDERS, who do quick CLOG STEP. On the side of the bus is a sign: RIVERDANCE.

In a BAR, COWBOYS read the SPORTS. One guy turns over the paper and shows the AD. They TUG DOWN their COWBOY HATS and do a quick TEXAS TWO-STEP.

In a SALON, a BLACK WOMAN in a SLIP comes out from under the HAIRDRYER. A HAIRDRESSER shows her the AD. She pulls on an AFRICAN DASHIKI. She takes the AD, DANCING out the door.

In a CROWDED PUB, SCOTTISH SOLDIERS in brown uniforms DRINK and SING. One soldier comes in with the AD. SOLDIERS CLUSTER. One proposes a TOAST and one SOLDIER DRAWS A SWORD.

MEXICAN-AMERICANS swelter outside a sweat shop. One guy brings in a FLYER, runs to his CAR, and brings an OVERSIZED BASS GUITAR. Despite the heat, the workers CLAP ALONG.

In an empty CHINESE RESTAURANT, a CHINESE-AMERICAN does HOMEWORK on a LAPTOP. An Instant Message pops up "Dance Contest". The girl grabs her BATON for a quick RIBBON DANCE.

INT. CLUB -- MORNING

Before opening hours, BORIS reads the paper. Re-reads. FLIPS open his CELL PHONE. CALLS.

TWO THUGS come in.

THUG ONE

Yeah, boss?

BORIS
You guys heard anything about this
dance contest?

THUG ONE
I seen a flyer for it. Din't say
much.

THUG TWO
"Cash prizes." I read that part.

THUG ONE
Lotsa people talkin' about goin'.

BORIS
Uh, huh. Keep Saturday night open.
Tell the rest of the boys.
(beat)
Go on, get out of here.

THUGS EXIT.

Alone, BORIS READS and THINKS.

INT. DIAZ HOME -- EVENING

Thursday evening.

The Diaz home is neat, clean, Spanish-influenced, lower middle
class.

MRS DIAZ cooks. MR DIAZ enters in GARDENER'S CLOTHES. Both
are middle-aged.

MR DIAZ
Any sign of Hector? I could have
used him today.

MRS DIAZ
And "Buenos Trades" to you, too,
Senor.

MR DIAZ
Oh, yeah, hi.
(MORE)

MR DIAZ (CONT'D)
 (kisses his wife)
 That boy will drive me to an early grave.

MRS DIAZ
 I'll see he mows the grass on it twice a week.

MR DIAZ
 That'll be a first. I'm serious, Perdita. That boy -

MRS DIAZ
 Is just like his father was at his age.

MR DIAZ
 He is not. I worked hard every day of my life.

MRS DIAZ
 Hector works hard too, with his head. He'll do fine once he finds his way.

MR DIAZ
 I'll show him the way. I'll send him down the right path with my boot.
 (beat)
 And you're no help. Sometimes I wonder if he's really my son at all.

MRS DIAZ
 Oh, no doubt about that. He's stubborn as a mule with his shoes nailed to the street - just like his father.

MR DIAZ
 I am not -

MRS DIAZ unfolds a NEWSPAPER, showing the AD.

MRS DIAZ

Did you see this ad in the newspaper?
There's a dance contest at the Arena
Saturday. Only five dollars.

MR DIAZ

So?

MRS DIAZ

So, when was the last time you took
your wife dancing?

MR DIAZ

The last time I took you dancing -
you got pregnant that night with
Hector, the boy who may or may not
be my son.

MRS DIAZ

Verdad. And it's about time you
took me dancing again.
(tickles his neck)
We used to burn the floor, you and
me.

MR DIAZ

We sure did. But that was a long
time ago.

MRS DIAZ

So let's see if you still got it.

MRS DIAZ drags MR DIAZ to SALSA DANCE. They dance well.

MR DIAZ gets carried away, swings his wife for a dip -

- And DROPS HER. CLUNK!

MR DIAZ

Perdita!

MR DIAZ disappears behind the table to pick up his wife.

MRS DIAZ (O.S.)
(giggling)
Why, Mr Diaz, how strong you are,
but nimble.

HECTOR bursts into the KITCHEN unannounced. STUMBLES over his PARENTS smooching on the floor.

MORTIFIED, he tries to scramble out of the room.

HECTOR
Madre de dios!

LAUGHING, MR and MRS DIAZ get up.

MRS DIAZ
(laughing)
No, no, hijo. We were just, uh,
practicing for the dance contest.

Halfway out of the room, HECTOR FREEZES.

HECTOR
D-dance contest? How did you hear
about that?

MRS DIAZ
It's right there. In the newspaper.

HECTOR looks at the NEWSPAPER AD, goes PALE, and FALLS to the FLOOR.

His PARENTS look confused.

INT. PIZZA PARLOR -- EVENING

SHAQ eats PIZZA alone. He reads the SPORT section of a newspaper.

Someone's hand (VONDA'S) snatches the MAGAZINE away.

SHAQ
Hey, what - Vonda, baby.

VONDA

Don't you "baby" me, you lazy skunk.
You and your Frito Buddito left me
and Rosita high and dry. We had to
take the late bus home.

SHAQ

Well, ba- honey, we figured you were
so busy dancing with those sharpies
you din't need us anymore.

VONDA

Well, I don't need you now after
leaving us stranded, that's for sure.
Not now, not ever. And 'specially
not Saturday night.

SHAQ

Saturday night?

VONDA

Rosita and I are going dancing along
with everyone else in town. The
only ones left out will be no-good
you and Greedy Gonzales.

SHAQ

Vonda, you know Hector and me are
ideas men. We've got big plans.
Why just last night we -
(beat)
What d'you mean you're going dancing
"along with everyone else in town?"

VONDA FLIPS the NEWSPAPER.

VONDA

I knew you only looked at the
pictures. Look. It's all over town.

SHAQ

(speechless)

VONDA

They's a huge dance contest goin' on
at the Arena. Everyone's going.
'Cept you, 'a course.
(takes a breath)
Not that I care, but just exactly
what will you be doing that night?

Horrified, SHAQ reads his own ad.

SHAQ

Wh-where will I be? Vonda, baby
honey sugar, I'll be breaking down
the door of the nearest Army
recruiting office.

VONDA

Even the Army's not that desperate.
Hey, where you going -

SHAQ RISES and RUNS.

SHAQ

Out. Way way way out.

INT. ARENA OFFICE -- MORNING

Friday morning.

PHONES RING continuously. Two ARENA WORKERS field many
incoming calls.

ARENA MANAGER TALKS on PHONE. He holds the full-page AD in
one hand. Nervous SECRETARY hovers.

SECRETARY

Jack...

ARENA MANAGER

(into phone)
Who authorized this fiasco? 'Cause
whoever they are, their head's gonna
decorate a platter.
(MORE)

ARENA MANAGER (CONT'D)
Because I'm telling you unequivocally
there is no dance contest happening
this Saturday night.

SECRETARY
Jack...

SPLIT SCREEN shows PHONE CONVERSATION.

INT. NEWSPAPER PRESS ROOM

AD EDITOR
(into phone)
We called yesterday to verify that
ad. You stated clearly that Rod
Stewart was canceling. And your web
site took him down. That's
confirmation from two sources -

INT. ARENA OFFICE

PHONES keep ringing.

ARENA MANAGER
(into phone)
I confirmed no such thing. OK, Rod
canceled. But where this Dance
Contest ad came from - I have no
idea, but it didn't originate here.

SECRETARY
Jack, there's something you should
know...

AD EDITOR
(into phone)
Look, I'm sorry if you're upset.
There was obviously some
miscommunication. Since the ad listed
the Arena as the venue, we assumed -

ARENA MANAGER

(into phone)

You assumed? You know what they say about assumptions, don't you -

SECRETARY

Jack, it's important that you know -

AD EDITOR

(into phone)

Save it. Send us a copy of the corrected ad. We'll run it tonight with a clarification and give you a partial refund -

ARENA MANAGER

(into phone)

Partial refund? Do you know what the Arena pays for advertising in your lousy rag every week? It comes to -

SECRETARY

(yelling)

889 calls so far. 16,400 hits on the web site.

ARENA MANAGER

What are you talking about?

SECRETARY

The dance contest, Jack. We've fielded 900 queries so far. That's all the phone lines can handle. And the web counter is going crazy, even though we don't have anything posted for Saturday night.

ARENA MANAGER

So that means...

SECRETARY

It means the Dance Contest will probably be a bigger splash than Rod
(MORE)

SECRETARY (CONT'D)

Stewart and Celine Dionne and 50 Cent put together. We've got calls from all over the state asking for details - except we don't have any.

ARENA MANAGER

But we can't -

SECRETARY

There's no one else to book on such short notice.

ARENA MANAGER

An empty arena on a Saturday night in the summer?

SECRETARY

Corporate's not going to like that.

ARENA MANAGER

But who?..

SECRETARY

(shrugs)

ARENA MANAGER

(into phone)

You still there? OK, listen. The Dance Contest is on.

AD EDITOR

(into phone)

Oh, now it's on? Sure you don't want your second cup of Prozac to think this over?

ARENA MANAGER

(into phone)

Don't be funny. I'm telling you, here and now, the dance contest is unequivocally on.

SECRETARY

(clears throat)

ARENA MANAGER

(into phone)

With one stipulation. You find out who organized it.

AD EDITOR

(into phone)

Us? Why us?

ARENA MANAGER

That FAX came to your office. You put faith into it, you find out who sent it in. Or we'll pull every inch of advertising for the next ten years and sue you for running false claims about our venue. So get busy.

(almost hangs up,

stops)

And when you do find the organizers, let us know.

INT. ARENA OFFICE

ARENA MANAGER HANGS UP.

ARENA MANAGER (CONT'D)

Kathy, update the web site. Post all the information we have.

SECRETARY

We don't have any information. Just the ad. Time and place. It doesn't even list the producers.

ARENA MANAGER

Well, whoever they are, they're going to catch holy hell...

INT. NEWSPAPER PRESS ROOM

AD EDITOR chews out TYPESETTER.

AD EDITOR

OK, kid, this is your big chance.

TYPESETTER

Uh, my big -

AD EDITOR

You plugged in the ad without confirming the source. So we ran an anonymous ad, contrary to company policy and every newspaper ethic I ever learned.

TYPESETTER

Chief, I -

AD EDITOR

Don't interrupt. The Arena owners are breathing down my neck, and I'm breathing down yours. Find out who ran that ad - pronto.

AD EDITOR EXITS.

TYPESETTER

(to him/herself)

How'm I supposed to find the sender of some anonymous FAX that came in on the... computer...

TYPESETTER grabs the PHONE and DIALS an internal number.

TYPESETTER (CONT'D)

Chick? It's me, down in Ads. Hey, if I email you a document, can you trace the originating PI?

INT. PET SHOP -- MORNING

Friday morning.

VONDA cleans fish tanks.

ROSITA ENTERS.

ROSITA

Chiquita, you hungry? Or have you been swallowing goldfish all morning?

VONDA
Just gimme a minute.

ROSITA
No hurry. You, uh, seen the guys
around?

VONDA
Saw Shaq at the pizza parlor last
night. Told him off him we wouldn't
be needing his sorry services Saturday
night because we're going to the
Dance Contest.
(sighs)
He din't know anythin' about it, 'a
course, the dodo.

ROSITA
S'funny thing about this Dance
Contest. I was checking the web
site? There's usually links and
stuff, but it's got just the one
page and nothing else. Didn't even
say what kind of dancing.

VONDA
S'gotta be modern dancing, don't it?
You know, hip-hop. What else is
they?

ROSITA
Rock 'n roll?
(beat)
Still, it's weird nobody knows much
about it. Like it was some big scheme
somebody tossed together at the last
minute without thinking it through.

VONDA and ROSITA look at each other in HORROR.

VONDA AND ROSITA
Oh, no...

EXT. SHAQ'S HOUSE

Behind the house, in an ALLEY or TINY YARD.

HECTOR skulks. He wears a hastily-packed BACKPACK. At a CORNER, he BUMPS into SHAQ.

HECTOR

Shaq. It's good I found you, man.
We gotta get out of town.

SHAQ

You telling me? This crazy dance
contest of yours, everyone's talking
'bout it. When all those people -
and they's hundreds - collect at the
Arena and find out there ain't no
contest -

HECTOR

What you mean, "my crazy dance
contest"? It was your idea.

SHAQ

No way, bro. You pulled the idea
out'a that wooly head'a yours.

HECTOR

Hey, amigo, I was there, eh? You
first called it a contest.

SHAQ

Did not. It was you - Never mind.
We can't stop it now. We gotta grab
our stuff and get outa town.

HECTOR

I came to get you. But why are hiding
behind your own house?

SHAQ

(peering out)
Thought I saw Vonda on the street.
(MORE)

SHAQ (CONT'D)
 Don't see her now... Must'a been
 nerves. Coast is clear. Let's get
 so's I can grab a bag.

Tripping over each other, GUYS creep into SHAQ'S HOUSE.

INT. SHAQ'S HOUSE

The GUYS bolt for Shaq's room.

SHAQ
 Good thing Granddad's at work. I
 don't want to get slowed down making
 up no explanations -

SHAQ and HECTOR push into SHAQ'S ROOM.

INT. SHAQ'S ROOM

SHAQ and HECTOR rush into the room -

- And find VONDA and ROSITA FROWNING.

SHAQ AND HECTOR
 Ahhh!

VONDA
 Door was unlocked.

GUYS FREEZE. GIRLS GLARE.

SHAQ
 Vonda, baby, my you're looking fine.

HECTOR
 Rosita, perdita. Did I ever tell
 you how beautiful you look -

VONDA
 Stuff it. What are you two hiding?

SHAQ
 Hiding?

HECTOR

Us?

SHAQ

We ain't hiding nothing. We were just, uh, grabbing my stuff. We, uh, got job offers, you see -

HECTOR

Si. Big money. But we gotta go now if we're going to nail 'em down -

ROSITA

Job offers? Where?

SHAQ

California.

HECTOR

Texas.

GIRLS GLARE.

SHAQ

That is, uh, the job starts in Texas and then moves to California. Ain't that right, Hector?

HECTOR

Si, si, is. Starts in California and ends up in Texas.

SHAQ

That's it. I had it backwards.

HECTOR

(John Wayne accent)

Tha's right, ill' fillies, we're saddlin' up and movin' out for longhorn country -

VONDA

What jobs?

SHAQ
Scuba divers.

HECTOR
Oil riggers.

SHAQ
Uh, that is, we're scuba diving off
oil rigs.

HECTOR
Very difficult jobs. That's why
they pay so good.

VONDA
Like all your previous damned fool
get-rich-quick schemes?

ROSITA
Or scams? Like the one where you
say there's going to be a dance
contest at the arena involving the
whole city, when you two bozos
couldn't organize a cockroach race
in a school cafeteria?

SHAQ and HECTOR look at each other, silently agree - to lie.

HECTOR
Rosita, Vonda. Darlings. We SWEAR -
(hand over heart)
- SWEAR we know nothing about any
dance contest.

SHAQ
Just as Hec says. We're only grabbing
our stuff to "head 'em up, move 'em
out".

GIRLS snort.

VONDA
If that's the truth, we're real proud
of you boys, taking dangerous jobs
(MORE)

VONDA (CONT'D)
diving off oil rigs into the desert
and all.

ROSITA
We're so proud of you, we'll show
you off as we walk you to the bus
station.

SHAQ stuffs CLOTHES in a BACKPACK.

SHAQ
You don't have to see us off -

GIRLS GLARE.

HECTOR
Maybe they do, man.
(stage whisper)
They can, you know, protect us?

SHAQ, HECTOR, VONDA, and ROSITA go to the FRONT DOOR.

SHAQ
I just hope you don't miss us too
much, girls.

HECTOR
And I hope you remember us fondly
when we're sweating in the oil fields
underwater.

SHAQ
(reaching for doorknob)
Mostly, though, I hope you tell
everyone we had nothing to do with
organizing any dance contest -

SHAQ OPENS the FRONT DOOR -

- And is SWAMPED by REPORTERS shouting QUESTIONS.

REPORTERS
Mister Washington? Mister Diaz?
(MORE)

REPORTERS (CONT'D)

A FAX announcing Saturday's dance contest has been traced to a computer at this address. The whole city is dying to know. What can you tell us about the biggest event of year?

SHAQ AND HECTOR

(exchange looks)
("We're dead.")

INT. ARENA OFFICE -- AFTERNOON

Friday afternoon.

SHAQ and HECTOR are SHOVED into the ARENA OFFICE by VONDA and ROSITA. ARENA MANAGER and SECRETARY greet them.

ARENA MANAGER

Here they are, our famous promoters. Come in, sit down. Kathy, get them something to drink, will you?

SHAQ

(to HECTOR)
What'd he call us? Promoters?

HECTOR

Go with the flow, man.

HECTOR and SHAQ accept SOFT DRINKS and pretend to SETTLE IN. The GIRLS perch and watch.

ARENA MANAGER

We've got a lot of business to transact before this little shindig of yours comes together, guys. But let me tell you, the way you've built buzz for this event with word-of-mouth advertising is astounding.

SHAQ

Buzz?

HECTOR
Word of mouth?

ROSITA
The "mouth" part is right.

ARENA MANAGER
All in all, I think it's a wonderful
thing you boys have pulled off.
This dance contest has electrified
the city.

SECRETARY
Everyone's talking about it. And
it'll go a long way to soothe tempers,
what with this heat wave.

ARENA MANAGER
It'll generate positive publicity
that will benefit the city for years
to come. You should both be very
proud.

Relaxing, HECTOR and SHAQ TOAST with SOFT DRINKS. The GIRLS
look BEMUSED.

ARENA MANAGER takes the FIRST CONTRACT off a TALL STACK.

ARENA MANAGER (CONT'D)
So. Down to business. Rental for
the arena for one night will cost
you a base rate of \$60,000.

SHAQ and HECTOR SPIT-TAKE and COUGH.

ROSITA
Sixty - thousand - dollars?

ARENA MANAGER
You are?

ROSITA
Rosita. This's Vonda. We're, uh -

VONDA

Administrative assistants to Misters
Washington and Diaz.

(beat)

But I got to tell you, these lugs
don't have \$60, let alone \$60,000.

ARENA MANAGER is not surprised. Still, he proceeds by form,
taking more CONTRACTS from the stack.

ARENA MANAGER

That's... unfortunate. Because the
\$60,000 is just the base rental fee.
For this size event, you'll need to
show proof of insurance, which will
run you upwards of \$20,000.

SECRETARY

There's a standard bond against
damages of \$8,000. And a business
license with the city, price to be
determined.

ARENA MANAGER

You need to guarantee the unions at
least \$10,000's worth of work.

SECRETARY

The concessions stand can't operate
without \$16,000 worth of start-up
money.

ARENA MANAGER

And, unless you provide your own
equipment, you'll need to rent our
staging, lights, speakers, sound
boards, and so forth.

SECRETARY

Cost for a single-stage performance
runs around \$44,000.

ARENA MANAGER

Security will cost you, for a crowd
of 10K, huh...

(MORE)

ARENA MANAGER (CONT'D)
 (to Secretary)
 What are we up to so far, Kathy?

SECRETARY
 \$158,000.

SHAQ and HECTOR are SPEECHLESS with HORROR.

ARENA MANAGER picks up their FLYER.

ARENA MANAGER
 A lot of money. And, reading your
 flyer, here, I see one potential
 glitch. You're charging five dollars
 for admission?

SHAQ AND HECTOR
 (nod)

ARENA MANAGER
 General admission, one price fits
 all?

SHAQ AND HECTOR
 (nod)

ARENA MANAGER
 Hmm. The arena capacity for a concert
 is around 10,000 seats. Ten times
 five is -

SHAQ
 (barely breathing)
 We, uh, thought we'd charge the
 dancers an admission fee.

HECTOR
 (squeaking)
 To compete, you know...

ARENA MANAGER
 (looks at flyer)
 I don't see any fee listed. Too
 late to throw it in now.
 (MORE)

ARENA MANAGER (CONT'D)
 (to Secretary)
 Uh, Kathy, where were we?

VONDA AND ROSITA
 \$50,000.

ARENA MANAGER
 Right, that's intake. Which means
 you have a shortfall of -

SECRETARY
 \$108,000 so far.

ARENA MANAGER
 But that's just a number, right?
 Obviously smart operators like you
 have some angels in the wings. Who've
 you lined up for corporate
 sponsorship?

SECRETARY
 And concessions? And retails sales:
 T-shirts, posters, souvenirs? Those
 should have to be ordered months in
 advance. A year is better.

ARENA MANAGER
 It's really not my business, but how
 much profit were you hoping to make?

SHAQ
 P-p-profit?

HECTOR
 Us?

ARENA MANAGER
 (looking at flyer)
 Oh, I forgot. You're offering cash
 prizes to the best dancers. That's
 going to cost you a few thousand.

SHAQ
 (groans)

HECTOR

Wait a minute, man. Maybe we need to think this over. Like, uh, could we maybe put the dance contest off for a while?

SHAQ

Like maybe forever?

ARENA MANAGER

You mean - cancel?

HECTOR

That's an ugly word, man. Couldn't we say, uh, "rethink" -

ARENA MANAGER

Cancel, cancel... Let's see. You'd still be liable for the rental fee of \$60,000.

SECRETARY

You'd also incur a 25% penalty for short-term cancelation.

ARENA MANAGER

You'd forfeit the bond and still owe the unions their guaranteed share. Our legal department would press charges and insist on damages.

SECRETARY

Realistically, you'd probably spend more money defending yourself in court than you'd lose on the concert.

ARENA MANAGER

That's if the local DA doesn't prosecute you both for fraud and send you to prison for, oh, 15 years.

SHAQ and HECTOR GIBBER with FRIGHT.

ARENA MANAGER (CONT'D)

So? What's it going to be?

PHONE RINGS. SECRETARY takes the call.

SECRETARY

Jack? It's Penny from the floor.
Some dancers are here to audition.

ROSITA

Audition?

VONDA

(to guys)
You guys called for auditions?

SHAQ AND HECTOR

(shake heads)

ARENA MANAGER

You didn't -

ROSITA

We'll see 'em. Dance or whatever.

VONDA

Audition. Take us down the - floor -
you call it?

ARENA MANAGER shrugs. SECRETARY GESTURES.

SECRETARY

This way, please.

INT. ARENA HALL

SECRETARY leads SHAQ, HECTOR, VONDA, and ROSITA down a HALL.

VONDA

(whisper to Rosita)
Why are we doing this?

ROSITA

(whisper)
We're stalling till the boys think
of something.

VONDA and ROSITA look at SHAQ and HECTOR. They're in SHOCK.

VONDA
Hey, guys? Idea men? Time to put
your brains in gear.

SHAQ AND HECTOR
60,000... 44,000. 8,000...

INT. ARENA FLOOR

The ARENA FLOOR looks VAST and EMPTY.

SECRETARY leads SHAQ, HECTOR, ROSITA, and VONDA toward the
distant STAGE.

ROD STEWART'S ROADIES DISMANTLE SPEAKERS and LIGHTS.

Waiting nervously are MEXICAN-AMERICAN SWEATSHOP WORKERS,
male and female. They wear T-SHIRTS with mismatched logos.

MEXICAN DANCER, a woman, bustles up.

MEXICAN DANCER
(nervous)
Mister Washington? Senor Diaz? We
didn't know if you were holding
auditions but - We're a mariachi
band. We didn't have time to change -
we're on our lunch break - but we
thought...

MEXICAN DANCER WAITS. SHAQ and HECTOR are mute.

ROSITA
Our bosses are uh, preoccupied with
last-minute details. But go ahead.
Audition. Please.

Nervous but game, the MARIACHI BAND takes the STAGE. The
ROADIES break to WATCH.

After some TUNING and FALSE STARTS, the MARIACHI BAND strikes
up a Mexican Hat Dance. They enjoy dancing.

VONDA and ROSITA FRET. SHAQ and HECTOR are paralyzed.

ROSITA (CONT'D)
I just realized I know nothing about
judging a dance contest.

VONDA
I just realized I know nothin' 'bout
nothin'.

ROSITA
We better learn. Quick.

The Mexican Hat Dance gets faster then -

- BONG! A bass guitar STRING SNAPS. The DANCE STOPS.

AWKWARD SILENCE.

TWO ROADIES, Hispanics, CLAP WILDLY. OTHER ROADIES APPLAUD.

MEXICAN DANCER approaches.

MEXICAN DANCER
We're sorry. We'll be ready Saturday.
Our costumes are so bright and lively.
We'll -
(beat)
I'm sorry. Are we acceptable?

ROSITA
Uh, yeah. Best I've ever seen. But -

VONDA
Be here Saturday night - Wow, that's
tomorrow! - by, uh, 6:00 and we'll
fit you in.

MEXICAN DANCER
Oh, thank you. We'll practice till
then. You'll be so proud. God bless
you.

VONDA
Uh, yeah, God bless you too, ma'am.

MARIACHI BAND PREPARES to go.

To one side, SECRETARY points out ARENA FEATURES to SHAQ and HECTOR, who look shell-shocked.

ROSITA

Why'd you slot them in? That's not the kind of dancing we want. That's what my grandmother calls dancing.

VONDA

Those two fools never did spell out the style. What we get is what we get.

ROSITA

Are you loco? If we put these fossils on the stage, the audience'll tear the arena down.

VONDA

You're doing a lot of worryin' about a dance contest that's not gonna happen.

MEXICAN DANCER RETURNS.

MEXICAN DANCER

I'm sorry to bother you again, but Manuel wants to know if there'll be a sound check -
(sees their distress)
Is something wrong?

ROSITA

No, no, not really.

MEXICAN DANCER

No, please, tell me. You've been so kind. Not many appreciate this kind of dancing. We so seldom get to share it with people.

ON STAGE, a ROADIE OVERHEARS.

VONDA

Well, there's one little snag. Our -
bosses been so busy lining up acts
they forgot some extra revenue
thingies -

ROSITA

Like renting stage equipment. And
bringing in food and printing programs
and ordering T-shirts -

The ROADIE SPEAKS to another ROADIE.

MEXICAN DANCER

You need T-shirts?
(calls to others)
Hey, amigos! These ladies need T-
shirts!

Grinning, MEXICANS DISPLAY their VARIOUS T-SHIRTS.

MEXICAN DANCER (CONT'D)

Our factory makes them. How many do
you need?

ROSITA

How many can you make in 24 hours?

ROSITA and MEXICAN DANCER talk business in Spanish.

ROADIES APPROACH VONDA.

ROADIE

Excuse me. Didn't mean to eavesdrop,
but you need to rent stage equipment?

ROSITA

We do. But the last number we heard
was \$44,000.

ROADIE

This a community event? Non-profit?

VONDA

Poor as a new-born child.

ROADIE

Don't hold me to this, but... With Rod laid up sick, we don't need this gear until Thursday. And since we're losing a bundle already, Accounting probably wouldn't mind a tax write-off...

VONDA

And?..

ROADIE

(waves a hand, "Why not use this gear?")

VONDA

That'd be great.

(digs in purse)

Here, get my cell phone number. No, gimme yours.

ROADIE

Business card?

VONDA

I, uh, just handed out the last one. Here. I'll write my number.

ROSITA RETURNS.

VONDA (CONT'D)

(fishing in purse)

We're gonna need a notepad.

ROSITA

A dozen notepads.

VONDA

(scribbling with a dead pen)

And a fistful of pens...

A CHINESE-AMERICAN GIRL, a RIBBON DANCER, and her MOTHER APPROACH.

The GIRL is shy, but her Mother, with no English, is shyer.

RIBBON DANCER
Is this where the auditions are held?

ROSITA
It's shaping up that way, yes.

RIBBON DANCER
Is Ribbon Dancing allowed?

VONDA
What - dancing?

The RIBBON DANCER unwinds a BATON with a RIBBON. Suddenly she JUMPS and SPINS like a bird -

- Until she TRIPS and SPRAWLS.

VONDA and ROSITA PICK HER UP. She CRIES.

RIBBON DANCER
(crying)
I'm sorry. I'm a little nervous.

ROSITA
You're in good company.

VONDA
Don't fret, darlin'. You did just fine.

ROSITA
And good news. Ribbon Dancing fits right into the schedule.

RIBBON DANCER
Oh, good. My family will be so pleased.

VONDA
Speaking of family, child. What do they do for a living?

RIBBON DANCER

We run a Chinese restaurant and
catering service. Why?

VONDA and ROSITA exchange LOOKS.

Off a ways, SHAQ and HECTOR confer.

SHAQ

What are we gonna do, man? We'll be
so far in debt we'll be paying for
this disaster in future lives.

HECTOR

We're going to get gone. Don't look
around. Just walk out of the building
calm as nuns, get on a bus, and go
anywhere it takes us.

SHAQ'S GRANDFATHER, a JANITOR, APPROACHES.

GRANDFATHER

Shaq? What are you doing here?

SHAQ

Granddad. Uh, nothing. I'm just
chillin' with Hec, my main man.

GRANDFATHER

This is no place to be "chillin'",
chillun. 'Less you lookin' for a
job here, you better git. Or they'll
haul you away for trespassin'.

SHAQ

(bites his tongue)

HECTOR

Don't be so hard on Shaq, Mister
Washington. He's already working
here, and so am I.

SHAQ

(signals "Hush up.")

GRANDFATHER

Anytime Shaq puts in a hard day's work, I expect to see the moon fall out'a the sky. This no-acccount can't even finish a video game.

SHAQ

Granddad, don't you use me for no whipping boy. I am too working here. Me and Hec are gonna accomplish great things -

GRANDFATHER

Don't smart-mouth me 'bout no accomplishments. All your daddy ever tried to "accomplish" was robbin' a bank with a empty gun -

SHAQ

That's not fair, man. And that's not me. I never took so much as a candy bar in my entire life -

GRANDFATHER

S'fair enough. Empty hands and an empty head are a dangerous combination -

ARENA MANAGER ARRIVES. Takes SHAQ and HECTOR by the arms, ignoring GRANDFATHER.

ARENA MANAGER

There you are, guys. C'mon back up to the office. We need you to sign a few more contracts, then we can crack a bottle of champagne.

(to Grandfather)

Oh, Mister Maintenance Person? There's a burned-out bulb in the office Men's Room. Fix it, will ya?

ARENA MANAGER leads SHAQ and HECTOR away. GRANDFATHER is left STUNNED.

SHAQ looks back with regret.

EXT. ARENA

SHAQ and HECTOR BOIL out the door to escape.

HECTOR

Man, I thought he'd never shut up.
Let's grab our gear and get.

But SHAQ LOOKS UP at a HUGE MARQUEE. (We see only a corner.)

SHAQ

I ain't going.

HECTOR

What? Are you crazy? We signed a
hundred contracts, man. We owe money
with so many zeroes the numbers
wouldn't fit on a check.

SHAQ

I don't care. I'm going the distance.

HECTOR

Going to jail, you mean.

SHAQ

I don't care 'bout that, neither.
Hell, they'll probably put me in the
same cell as my old man. It'd serve
him right.

HECTOR

I don't get it. We gotta skip town -

SHAQ

Are you listening? I said no. I'm
gonna run this dance contest if it
kills me -

HECTOR

We're not that lucky.

SHAQ

I'm gonna show my grandfather I'm
not - what he thinks I am.

(MORE)

SHAQ (CONT'D)

(beat)

After that, I don't care what happens.

HECTOR finally SEES the MARQUEE.

CLOSE ON MARQUEE:

"SATURDAY. 7:00 PM. DANCE CONTEST. SEE THE BEST DANCERS
IN THE CITY! SPECIAL ADMISSION \$5. A WASHINGTON-DIAZ
PRODUCTION."

SHAQ (CONT'D)

Is that awesome or what?

HECTOR

How come not "a Diaz-Washington
Production"?

SHAQ

What? You got a nerve. You tried
to blame this whole thing on me.

HECTOR

I did not. But I don't want you
hogging all the credit.

SHAQ

You don't mind saddlin' me with all
the debt. You're skipping town,
remember?

HECTOR

I'm smart, remember?

SHAQ

If you were smart, you wouldn't be
in this mess.

HECTOR

I'm smart enough to cut my losses
and get out.

SHAQ

That just makes you a quitter.

HECTOR
At least I'm not a simp.

SHAQ
Simp? Listen, Taco-Breath -

HECTOR
Watch it, Mister Fried Chicken and
Malt Liquor -

They YELL in JIVE and SPANISH until out of breath.

SHAQ
Never mind. I don't like you enough
to argue wit' you. Go chase a bus.

HECTOR
Say hi to your padre.

HECTOR EXITS.

SHAQ looks at the BLAZING MARQUEE, but finds NO JOY.

INT. DIAZ HOUSE -- EVENING

Friday evening.

HECTOR'S PARENTS and SIBLINGS eat DINNER.

HECTOR storms in and SLAMS the DOOR.

MR DIAZ
Easy on the door, muchacho.

MRS DIAZ
(gingerly)
Uh, hello, Hector. You're just in
time for dinner -

HECTOR
(hurrying)
I'm not hungry. I have to go out.
I won't be back for a while.

MRS DIAZ
Where are you going?

HECTOR goes into his ROOM, SLAMS that DOOR too.

MR DIAZ
(rising)
I'll talk to him.

MRS DIAZ
Honey, don't, please. You'll just
aggravate him.

MR DIAZ
I can't help if I "aggravate" him.
It's my job as a father to tell him
what's right and wrong behavior.

MRS DIAZ
But there are right and wrong times
to tell children that.

HECTOR comes out with a BACKPACK. MR DIAZ BLOCKS HIM.

HECTOR
What do you want, viejo?

MR DIAZ
We want to know where you're going.

HECTOR
Out.

MR DIAZ
That's no answer. Haven't I told
you a million times -

HECTOR
Yes, yes. You've told me a million
things a million times over.

MR DIAZ
I'll tell you a million more times
if necessary. You never listen to
anything I say.

HECTOR

I do so.

MR DIAZ

You do not. If you listened to me -

HECTOR

I do listen to you. I listen to every word you say. Always.

(beat)

I just don't do what you tell me. There's a difference.

MR DIAZ is STUNNED. But the FAMILY NODS.

Giving up for now, MR DIAZ SITS and EATS.

MRS DIAZ

(gently)

Hector, mi hijo. Are you in some kind of trouble?

HECTOR

No. Yes. Maybe. I'm not sure.

MR DIAZ

The "Ideas Man" is not sure.

MRS DIAZ

Shhh.

(to Hector)

Son, what's the problem?

HECTOR THROWS his BACKPACK DOWN. He SITS.

HECTOR

You know the Dance Contest at the Arena?

MRS DIAZ

Yes, but?..

HECTOR

I set it up.

MR DIAZ

Impossible.

HECTOR

(hot)

I did so. Me and Shaq, that no-good -
no-good. If you don't believe me,
check the web site. My name is down
as one of the producers.

Hector's brother PAULO RUNS to his room. A KEYBOARD TAPS.
A PRINTER PRINTS.

PAULO ENTERS with a PAPER.

PAULO

Hector's not lying - for once. Look.

MRS DIAZ

(reading)

Dance Contest... 7:00... Cash
prizes... Best dancers in the city...
Madre de Dios. "Produced by Shaquille
Washington and Hector Diaz."

MR DIAZ GRABS the PAPER.

MR DIAZ

This can't be right.

HECTOR

It's right. That part, anyway.

MRS DIAZ

Hector, how did you manage such a
thing?

HECTOR

(a little cocky)

It... wasn't easy. There are still
a few bugs to work out. A few -
hundred thousand bugs. But it's on.

EVERYONE CLAMORS IN SPANISH.

MR DIAZ

Big plans.

HECTOR

Bigger than laying out a bed of
petunias and zinnias with a hydrangea
stuck in the middle.

MR DIAZ

There's nothing wrong with being a
gardener.

HECTOR

No, there isn't. But there's nothing
wrong with wanting to be something
else, either.

MR DIAZ

But you're not an anything.

HECTOR

Not yet, but I'm working on it.

MR DIAZ

(shaking paper)

You could never pull this off. It'll
be a disaster.

HECTOR

Yeah, it might be. It might be the
worst disaster in history. It might
make the Titanic look like a rowboat
in a pond.

(beat)

But I'll tell you this. It'll be
the biggest most spectacular disaster
this city's ever seen.

HECTOR RISES.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

You come down to the Arena tomorrow
night, viejo. You see what kind of
a disaster I put together.

HECTOR CHARGES out the DOOR.

MRS DIAZ
You forgot your backpack.

HECTOR (O.S.)
I don't need it.

SILENCE.

MRS DIAZ
(sighs)
Maybe he's not your son.

MR DIAZ LOOKS at the DOOR.

MR DIAZ
(oddly proud)
Maybe he is.

EXT. STREET -- EVENING

Friday night.

HECTOR STRIDES along, still furious.

HECTOR
(to himself)
I'll show him. I'll show all of
them -

A LIMO OPENS. A HAND DRAGS HECTOR into the LIMO.

INT. LIMO

BORIS has TWO THUGS PIN HECTOR.

BORIS
Senor Diaz. I hope you're not running
away from home. You still owe me
some money.

HECTOR
(still angry)
I know that. I'd just forgotten
about it - for a while.

BORIS
Forgotten about \$6000? You win the
lottery since I saw you last?

HECTOR
(mimicking)
No, I didn't win the lottery.
(slapped by a THUG)
But I've put together a big deal.
You heard about the Dance Contest at
the Arena? I put it together, with
a little help.

BORIS
A little help from Rastus? He owes
me that money same as you.

HECTOR
Don't call Shaq that. There's no
need to be insulting.

BORIS is nonplussed. What happened to the naive kid?

BORIS
I don't care what he's called, or
you either, patron. I just want my
money.

HECTOR
You'll get it. Tomorrow night. The
arena manager figures the take at
\$50,000. Maybe more. That's, uh,
before expenses.

BORIS
50 large, hunh? Did you tell this
manager I'm first on the list of
creditors?

HECTOR
Your name didn't come up.

BORIS
Don't mention it, then. Just make
sure I get that \$6000 before midnight
tomorrow.
(beat)
Or you won't be entering any dance
contests for the rest of your sorry
life. Not unless you walk on your
hands.

BORIS NODS. THUGS PITCH HECTOR onto the SIDEWALK. The CAR
PULLS AWAY.

EXT. STREET

HECTOR RISES.

HECTOR
(dusting off)
Small timer.

WALKING, HECTOR passes KIDS BREAKDANCING to a BOOMBOX.

BREAKDANCER
No, man. Not the same old moves.
We need something different if we're
going to win this dance contest.

Shaking his head, HECTOR WALKS ON.

In a BALLET SCHOOL, BALLERINAS tilt and swirl. The INSTRUCTOR
CLAPS.

BALLERINA
Ladies, some musicality, please. We
want to look good at the Arena
tomorrow.

Shaking his head AGAIN, HECTOR MOVES ON.

HECTOR
 (to himself)
 I don't get it. This whole town has
 gone dance crazy.

HECTOR PASSES OUT OF SIGHT.

PAN BACK to show SPOTS OF LIGHT all over the city: DANCERS
 PRACTICING their various arts.

INT. ARENA HALL -- AFTERNOON

Saturday afternoon.

The halls are JAMMED with DANCERS in COSTUMES. VENDORS with
 TRAYS OF FOOD. MUSICIANS with INSTRUMENTS.

VONDA and ROSITA are swamped by PEOPLE with QUESTIONS.

VONDA and ROSITA have LARGE SHOULDER BAGS, HEADSETS, PENS
 stuck in their HAIR.

ROSITA
 All this wonderful food, and us not
 a second to sample any.

VONDA
 Diet, girl. We'd just go crazy anyway
 tryin' to decide. Chinese, Tex-Mex,
 Indian, Thai, German...

ROSITA
 And all at cost. Incredible.

VONDA
 (into headset and to
 people)
 Yes, you go on at 7:30. What? Set
 up at the back of the arena. A lost
 child? I'll get them to announce
 it.

ROSITA
 (into headset and to
 people)
 See the security guard. To the
 office. I'll try to find more power
 strips. 8:00. Por nada.

HECTOR ENTERS, GROGGY and DISHEVELED.

ROSITA (CONT'D)
 Hector. Where have you been?

VONDA
 The show goes on in three hours, bo.

HECTOR
 I slept in the park. Overslept. I
 had a fight with my father. Again.

VONDA
 Fine time.

ROSITA
 Help us with this schedule, Hec.
 Read this list, make sure there's no
 duplications -

HECTOR
 No worries, amiga. I'm ready to
 take charge.

ROSITA
 Take charge?

VONDA
 You're gonna take charge.

HECTOR
 Si. I got something to prove to -
 everyone.

ROSITA
 Is it that men are stupid or stubborn?

VONDA

Equal mix of both. Look, Hec-tor.
Rosey and I have been up all night
organizing this gig -

ROSITA

We've lined up caterers from all
over the city to feed an army -

VONDA

Some krumper's father came through
on the electricity charges in return
for screen banners -

ROSITA

The cowboys, the Texas Swing Dancers -
Who knew? - Are insurance gurus.
They floated a bond to cover the
insurance -

VONDA

We got a bank to donate some cash
prizes. The mayor's going to award
'em. The cops and firefighters
volunteered for security duty -

ROSITA

The unions too. And -

HECTOR

I don't care about little details,
girls. I'm looking at the big picture -

VONDA

It's little details make up the big
picture, butt-head.

ROSITA

Whyn't you just go home, Hector Diaz?
We don't need you here.

HECTOR

Hey, I'm not going to argue with
you. I got work to do.

HECTOR pushes off through the crowd.

Breathing fire, VONDA and ROSITA resume answering questions.

INT. ARENA FLOOR

DANCERS of every stripe REHEARSE, all having fun. DANCERS also share the stage, taking turns and applauding each other.

HECTOR finds the SECRETARY. She wears a headset and carries a CLIPBOARD.

SECRETARY

Mister Diaz. Good to see you. I have your ID -

HECTOR

Right, right. Gimme.

SECRETARY GIVES HECTOR a LANYARD with ID.

HECTOR commandeers her CLIPBOARD.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

Is this the schedule? Let me see.

(reads)

No, this won't work. We need to open with a bang.

SECRETARY

Sir? That schedule was set up by your administrative assistants. And verified by Mister Washington - I think.

HECTOR

Shaq is still here? That traitor?

SECRETARY

I - don't have any knowledge of his personal failings, Mister Diaz. I just know he's -

(looks around, points)

- Way up there.

Up on a BALCONY, SHAQ talks to an USHER. Seeing Hector, the TWO SNEER.

HECTOR

Don't listen to that bozo. I'm in charge.

SECRETARY

Sir, you really should coordinate with the other organizers -

HECTOR marches off.

TWO BLACK WOMEN in DASHIKIS see HECTOR's BADGE and APPROACH.

The WOMEN are from the traveling National Dance Troupe of Senegal. They have cultured British accents.

SENAGALESE DANCER

Sir, good day. Are you an organizer?

HECTOR

I sure am. Who are you?

SENAGALESE DANCER

We represent the National Dance Troupe of Senegal. We're touring the USA and read of your contest. We'd like to perform if there's room on the schedule -

HECTOR

(turning on the charm)

We'd love to have you perform. And we want to open the show with a bang. How about 7:00?

SENAGALESE DANCER

We're to be the opening act?

HECTOR

Hey, lots of bright colors and lots of noise, right?

SENAGALESE DANCER

That's - a quaint way of putting it,
but yes, we're loud like a
thunderstorm.
(laughs)

HECTOR

7:00. See that guy to fill out the
forms, then get ready to boogie.

Bewildered but game, the WOMEN EXIT.

Smug, HECTOR spots someone OS.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

Hey, you. With the leopard skin.
You want to go on at 7:20? OK.

HECTOR moves on.

INT. ARENA FLOOR

BORIS and his GANG MINGLE.

BORIS

Everyone ready?

THUGS pat their sides: THEY'RE ARMED.

BORIS (CONT'D)

Good. Spread out. Take in the
sights. But when the music starts,
meet at that column there.
(points)
Go on.

THUGS SPLIT UP.

BORIS (CONT'D)

(to himself)
All these people bringing in all
this money, just for me...

INT. ARENA BALCONY

SHAQ has a LANYARD and CLIPBOARD. He consults with an USHER.

Nearby, BALLET DANCERS WARM UP.

SHAQ

I can see the whole operation from
up here. Now, let's throw a schedule
together. I figure for the first
act -

(sees BALLERINAS)

Yeah, that'll work.

SHAQ APPROACHES the BALLET COMPANY.

SHAQ (CONT'D)

'Scuse me. You're what they call
ballerinas, right?

BALLERINA

Um, yes.

SHAQ

Would your gang mind going on first?
At 7:00? I figure we'd - open the
show with a little class.

BALLERINA

That'd be - fine. We'd love to start
off.

SHAQ

(noting on schedule)

Good. 7:00 then.

SHAQ and USHER move away.

USHER

You're scheduling everything? Got
time to squeeze all these acts in?

SHAQ

I'm it, baby. The show stops here.
And frankly -

(MORE)

SHAQ (CONT'D)
 (looks around)
 I put them ballerinas on first
 because, what with concerts I've
 been, most people show up an hour
 late.

USHER
 From the looks of the crowd outside -

SHAQ
 And we'll find out what kind of crowd
 we got. If they gonna boo and throw
 eggs, might as well get it over with.
 (beat)
 OK, who's going on at 7:20? Where's
 that kid?..

INT. ARENA HALL

VONDA and ROSITA consult their own schedule.

ROSITA
 That Hector. I'm still steamed. If
 he crosses my path between now and
 midnight, I'll skin him alive.

VONDA
 Save some for me. I can use a new
 pair of shoes. Now, are we final on
 our schedule?

ROSITA
 You still want the Ribbon Dancers
 first, smack on 7:00?

VONDA
 That little girl with those puppy
 dog eyes, she could charm a biker
 bar. And it'll show this dance
 contest is the real thing. Dancers
 from ALL over, get it?

ROSITA
S'OK with me. Just watch nobody
steps on 'em. So, who's on at 7:20?

VONDA LISTENS to her HEADSET.

VONDA
Better be somebody good...

PAN OUTSIDE:

Where HUNDREDS of PEOPLE wait to get in.

INT. ARENA FLOOR

CLOSE ON:

A CLOCK at 6:50.

The ARENA is PACKED. 10,000+ plus people jam the floor and
seats. All ages and colors ready for a good time.

INT. ARENA BALCONY

7:00

SHAQ sweats over his schedule.

INT. BACKSTAGE

7:00

HECTOR sweats over his schedule.

INT. ARENA FLOOR

7:00

VONDA and ROSITA double-check their schedule.

The CROWD BEGINS CLAPPING in UNISON.

ARENA MANAGER comes on STAGE carrying a CARD.

ARENA MANAGER

Welcome, welcome. To the 1st Annual
City Dance Contest. Yes, I said
"Annual", because it's already a
rousing success. So, is everyone
ready to see some spectacular dancing?

AUDIENCE CHEERS.

ARENA MANAGER (CONT'D)

Then, ladies and gentlemen, I present -
(seeing card is blank,
smiles bravely)
- The first act.

INT. ARENA BACKSTAGE

HECTOR signals the SENEGALESE DANCERS. Their ORCHESTRA gets
ready.

HECTOR

Ladies, you're on. Orchestra, hit
it.

INT. ARENA BALCONY

SHAQ waves on the BALLET COMPANY.

SHAQ

Girls, time to strut your stuff.

INT. ARENA FLOOR

VONDA and ROSITA signal the CHINESE RIBBON DANCERS to hop on
the stage.

VONDA

Go get 'em, darlings.

MUSIC: CHINESE BELLS CHIME. So does "Swan Lake". Then
THUNDEROUS AFRICAN DRUMS.

All THREE TROUPES ENTER at the SAME TIME. The tiny RIBBON
DANCERS spin and swirl. Puzzled BALLERINAS tip-skip in.
Then come the SENEGALESE, clapping and stamping.

Befuddled, the three troupes share the stage awkwardly. Things heat up. The SENEGALESE sway, BALLERINAS leap and get tossed, CHINESE ribbons flit in between. Then -

DISASTER. BALLERINAS and SENEGALESE COLLIDE and SQUASH RIBBON DANCERS.

MUSIC STOPS. SILENCE.

AUDIENCE MUTTERS.

INT. ARENA BACKSTAGE

HECTOR slaps his forehead.

INT. ARENA BALCONY

SHAQ covers his face.

INT. ARENA FLOOR

VONDA and ROSITA are HORRIFIED.

VONDA

Maybe the boys were right to get out of town.

ROSITA

There's no place in the world we could hide.

VONDA

How 'bout another planet?

DANCERS pick themselves up on stage. Sadly they TURN TO LEAVE the stage. But a RIBBON DANCER starts CRYING.

RIBBON DANCER

(sobs)

A BALLERINA and SENEGALESE BANG HEADS to PICK HER UP.

SENAGALESE DANCER

Oh, child, do not cry.

AUDIENCE STARTS APPLAUDING.

Smiling, DANCERS WHISPER.

BALLERINA

Dear, why don't you start over?

RIBBON DANCERS START OVER. BALLERINAS and SENEGALESE APPLAUD,
as does AUDIENCE.

RIBBON DANCERS finish.

BALLERINA (CONT'D)

You first.

SENAGALESE DANCER

No, we are guests. We insist you go
first.

BALLERINAS strike up BALLET. Finish a SHORT SET. FLIP HANDS.

BALLERINA

Hit it!

DRUMS POUND. SENEGALESE DANCE. BALLERINAS and RIBBON DANCERS
JOIN IN.

CROWD CLAPS ALONG.

INT. ARENA BACKSTAGE

HECTOR wipes his brow.

INT. ARENA BALCONY

SHAQ sits rather than faint.

INT. ARENA FLOOR

VONDA and ROSITA exchange High Fives, then FRET AGAIN.

VONDA

We're not out of the woods yet.

ROSITA
Not with -
(quick count)
- 17 acts to go.

VONDA
Let's get one of 'em on stage. Uh,
oh.

MUSIC: WILD TEXAS SWING.

COWBOYS and COWGIRLS SWEEP on stage. Laugh, eye-haw, stamp
boots, swing skirts.

ROSITA
That don't look right.

VONDA
It sure don't. We scheduled the -

MUSIC: WILD MEXICAN MUSIC

MEXICAN MARIACHIS burst onto the stage in a Mexican Dance.

The MEXICANS CIRCLE the COWBOYS.

On the BALCONY, SHAQ bangs his head with a clipboard.

SHAQ
This's gonna be the Battle of the
Alamo all over again.

INT. ARENA BACKSTAGE

HECTOR flips pages. CRANES to see the ARENA FLOOR.

HECTOR
Where're MY guys?

INT. ARENA STAGE

MEXICANS and COWBOYS circle. CHALLENGED, they try to OUT-
DANCE each other. TOES GETS STAMPED -

- a BRAWL ERUPTS.

AUDIENCE CHEERS.

INT. ARENA FLOOR

VONDA and ROSITA toggle headsets.

VONDA
Where's Security? This's supposed
to be a dance contest.

ROSITA
How about a Tex-Mex hockey match?

COMICAL FIGHT rages. GUYS fall into ORCHESTRA PIT. Now
TEXAS MUSICIANS and MARIACHIS FIGHT.

NOT FAR OFF...

BORIS keeps his GANG close.

THUG ONE
Now, Boss? All this confusion, no
one'll know if we hit the ticket
office -

BORIS
Stick to the plan. After
Intermission, when everyone's spent
their money. Now act casual.

INT. ARENA BALCONY

SHAQ yells into a PHONE.

SHAQ
C'mon, Security. What's taking so
long?

INT. ARENA BACKSTAGE

Someone OS signals HECTOR.

HECTOR DASHES through the FIGHT to the FRONT of the STAGE.

HECTOR
Hey, everyone, split up. Make way.
They're coming -

HECTOR gets SHOVED OFF-STAGE -

- to FLOP in the ORCHESTRA PIT.

INT. ARENA FLOOR

DOORS CRASH OPEN.

WILD DRUMBEAT and WAIL OF BAGPIPES. AUDIENCE PARTS.

In MARCH SCOTTISH HIGHLANDERS, the ROYAL BLACK WATCH with kilts, bagpipes, drums. DRUM MAJOR LEADS.

AUDIENCE MARVELS as HIGHLANDERS MARCH toward stage. COWBOYS and MEXICANS PAUSE fight.

HIGHLANDERS HALT before the ORCHESTRA PIT.

DRUM MAJOR
Hoop hip, hop horp! Hod-up!

HIGHLAND DANCERS TROT on STAGE.

INT. ARENA STAGE

COWBOYS and MEXICANS are suddenly surrounded. As HIGHLANDERS DRAW SWORDS.

DRUM MAJOR
Horp, hop! Hip! Hup - DOO!

MUSIC: HIGHLAND SWORD DANCE.

HIGHLANDERS perform HIGHLAND SWORD DANCE with clashing steel, leaps, and battle cries. They also HERD flustered COWBOYS and MEXICANS apart.

INT. ARENA FLOOR

VONDA
Ought'a shish-ka-bob those yahoos.

ROSITA
 (not listening)
 Hunh? You know, I always wondered.
 What do they wear -

HIGHLANDERS CRASH to a HALT. They GLARE at COWBOYS and MEXICANS, daring them to start something.

COWBOYS retrieve hats. MEXICANS straighten clothes.
 Unspoken, ALL agree to SHOW UP the Highlanders.

COWBOYS and MEXICANS dance a saucy SQUARE DANCE. CROWD CHEERS.

HIGHLANDERS JOIN IN, swords and all.

INT. ARENA BALCONY

SHAQ checks his schedule. GRANDFATHER, in janitor's uniform, APPROACHES.

GRANDFATHER
 Looks like you got yourself a success,
 grandson.

SHAQ
 (cool)
 Oh, hey, Granddad.

GRANDFATHER
 You could have knocked me over with
 a feather when they said you produced
 this shindig.

SHAQ
 Looks like I'm good for something
 after all, you're saying?

GRANDFATHER
 I always knew you could succeed,
 son. I just worry - you might've
 strayed from the straight and narrow,
 is all.

SHAQ
Cursed by birth to be jail bait?

GRANDFATHER
(lame joke)
You know I don't believe in cursing.

SHAQ
(no reaction)

GRANDFATHER
You know, your grandmother and I
used to dance. Won us a cake or
two.

SHAQ
A cake?

GRANDFATHER
The old days, nobody had no money,
so the prize was a cake. You took
the prize with a cakewalk. Or a tap
dance.

SHAQ
You was a dancer?

GRANDFATHER
Taps. Nobody even knows what that
is nowadays, but -

SHAQ'S PHONE RINGS.

SHAQ
'Scuse me, Granddad. Got work to
do.

GRANDFATHER
(hurt)
That's all right, son. Me too.

GRANDFATHER EXITS.

SHAQ looks REGRETFUL.

SHAQ
 (into phone)
 Right, right. Send in the Indian
 dancers.
 (listens)
 Say what?

INT. ARENA FLOOR

VONDA and ROSITA check their SCHEDULE.

ROSITA
 We've been lucky so far.

VONDA
 There's nothing our men can't mess
 up.

ROSITA
 Should be safe with Polka Dancers,
 right?

MUSIC: STRIPPER MUSIC

ROSITA (CONT'D)
 They wouldn't.

VONDA
 They would.

INT. ARENA BACKSTAGE

HECTOR SIGNALS someone OS.

HECTOR
 You're on, girls. And, uh, guys.

INT. ARENA STAGE

EXOTIC DANCERS, male and female, slither on stage. They
 stayed dressed, but they're LEWD.

AUDIENCE REACTION is mixed: CATCALLS, CHEERS, LAUGHS.

An USHER pokes HECTOR.

USHER
Did you sign them on?

HECTOR
Yeah. Why not? It's - an American
art form.

USHER
So is shooting someone at dawn.

INT. ARENA FLOOR

VONDA
It's disgusting. When I find out
which bozo invited them, I'll -
(to Rosita)
Rosey!

ROSITA
Look at the buns on that blonde.

VONDA
Oh, fudge.
(into headset)
Send in the next act. Yeah, now.

MUSIC: STRIPPER MUSIC takes on a POLKA BEAT.

INT. ARENA STAGE

POLKA DANCERS SKIP on STAGE. They snub the EXOTICS who just
GRIN and also sassily POLKA DANCE.

Offended, POLKA DANCERS DANCE HARDER. EXOTICS jiggle harder.

INT. ARENA FLOOR

VONDA
We thought the last fight was ugly.

ROSITA
I hope no one starts tearing clothes.
We'll get shut down by the Vice Squad.

VONDA
Somebody better break it up - Uh,
oh.

MUSIC: EAST INDIAN SING-SONG

INT. ARENA STAGE

EXOTIC and POLKA DANCERS are PARTED by EAST INDIAN DANCERS.

INDIANS START a TRADITIONAL FORMAL DANCE. Then PAUSE...

MUSIC: SHIFTS to INDIAN POP.

Laughing, INDIANS perform an INDIAN POP DANCE. BELLS JINGLE.
They INVITE the EXOTIC and POLKA DANCERS to join. ALL DANCE
EXUBERANTLY.

FINISHING, they HOLD HANDS and TAKE A BOW -

- And are BRUSHED ASIDE as HIP-HOPPERS and KRUMPERS in CLOWN
MAKEUP explode onto stage.

AUDIENCE CHEERS.

Then THREE JAZZ DANCERS ADD IN a FREE-STYLE DANCE.

INT. ARENA BACKSTAGE

HECTOR frets over his schedule. An USHER HANDS him a PHONE.
Puzzled, HECTOR takes it.

HECTOR
(into phone)
Hello? Who knows I'm here?

PAULO
Me.

HECTOR
Paulo? Where are you?

SOMETHING catches HECTOR'S EYE. PAULO HOPS in the AUDIENCE,
yakking on a CELL PHONE.

HECTOR (CONT'D)
(squinting)
Is that you hopping around like a
monkey? What are you doing here?

PAULO
We're all here, Hec. The whole
family. And wait'll you see what
Mom and Dad have for you.

HECTOR
(snorts)
What, a one-way bus ticket to Alaska?
Little brother, I don't want anything
they have - Hello? Hello?

INT. ARENA FLOOR

Jumping, PAULO SLIPS and BREAKS the CONNECTION.

INT. ARENA BACKSTAGE

HECTOR tosses away the PHONE.

INT. ARENA FLOOR

VONDA and ROSITA check their schedule.

VONDA
I know what we scheduled, but what
will the guys spring on us next?

ROSITA
If it tops that last act, I hate to
think.

VONDA
It says, "Morris Dancers". You ever
find out they do?

ROSITA
What one said was, they walk on stilts
and hit each other with sticks.

VONDA
Hit each other with what?

INT. ARENA BACKSTAGE

SHAQ'S GRANDFATHER leans on a BROOM, watching the dancers.
With him is SECOND JANITOR.

SECOND JANITOR
Those kids really know how to dance,
don't they, Clarence?

GRANDFATHER
(sniffs)
If you like that sort of thing.

SECOND JANITOR
You used to dance back in the day,
right?

GRANDFATHER
I was a tap dancer. Real dancing.
Took talent.

SECOND JANITOR
Still got them old shoes?

GRANDFATHER
No.

SECOND JANITOR
(grinning)
Yes. I seen 'em in your locker.
Old shoes with metal toes. Whyn't
you go try 'em on?

GRANDFATHER
I - Nobody cares 'bout that old style
of dancing.

SECOND JANITOR
So... you don't got it any more?

GRANDFATHER
I still got it, kid. I just -

SECOND JANITOR takes his BROOM.

SECOND JANITOR
Go on, get your old shoes. Show me
you still got it.

Rather than argue, GRANDFATHER GOES.

INT. ARENA STAGE

HIP-HOPPERS, BREAK DANCERS, and INTERPRETIVE DANCERS BOW.
AUDIENCE CHEERS.

The ARENA MANAGER comes out.

ARENA MANAGER
Wow. Hey. How d'ya like that?

AUDIENCE ROARS.

ARENA MANAGER (CONT'D)
And that's just the first half.
We're gonna catch their breath and
take a short intermission. You can
try some of the terrific ethnic foods
we've brought in. And check out the
merchandise. T-shirts, programs,
and lots of places to sign up for
DANCE LESSONS.

AUDIENCE LAUGHS and CHEERS.

ARENA MANAGER (CONT'D)
So we'll see you all in about twenty
minutes.
(points up)
And for those of you staying on the
floor, we'll run some highlights of
the show.

Above the stage, The BIG SCREEN REPLAYS earlier DANCING.

INT. ARENA OFFICE

SECRETARY sits at a bank of MONITORS. Flipping switches, she REPLAYS earlier DANCING scenes.

INT. LOCKER ROOM

GRANDFATHER OPENS his LOCKER. Pulls out a WORN PAIR OF TAP SHOES. LOOKS at the faded NEWS ARTICLE on the locker door.

CLOSE ON ARTICLE:

Faded, GRANDFATHER and his WIFE years ago. Headline "UPTOWN COUPLE WIN CITY-WIDE DANCE CONTEST".

GRANDFATHER

(to photo)

We had us some times, din't we, girl?

Hands trembling, GRANDFATHER pulls on his TAP SHOES.

GRANDFATHER takes a FEW STEPS, then BEGINS TAP DANCING. He's frail but plucky, and he's still got it.

INT. ARENA BACKSTAGE

SECOND JANITOR looks around for GRANDFATHER but doesn't find him. Pressing his HEADSET, he calls the ARENA OFFICE.

INT. ARENA OFFICE

SECRETARY sits at a bank of COMPUTER MONITORS.

SECOND JANITOR

Kathy? Can you monitor the locker room? Clarence Washington went down there to, uh, change his shoes, but he didn't come back. I have to stay up here.

SECRETARY

Sure, no problem.

SECRETARY switches a MONITOR to VIEW the LOCKER ROOM. She SMILES in SURPRISE.

INT. LOCKER ROOM

Seen ON CAMERA, SHAQ'S GRANDFATHER TAP DANCES, reliving old times.

Smiling, SECRETARY FLIPS SWITCHES.

Above the stage, unbeknownst to GRANDFATHER, his tap-dancing is BROADCAST to the AUDIENCE.

AUDIENCE STARES. The old man's dancing is fabulous.

INT. ARENA BALCONY

SHAQ looks at his schedule. USHER watches the BIG SCREEN.

USHER

Would you look at that?

SHAQ

(glancing at screen)

Don't bug me, man. I've seen enough dancing to last me a lifetime...

(double-take)

Granddad?

INT. ARENA FLOOR

In the AUDIENCE, KIDS and GROWNUPS PLAY-DANCE, skipping like Highlanders, break dancing, tiptoeing like ballerinas.

DANCERS hand out FLYERS for their schools. Many AUDIENCE MEMBERS SIGN UP on the spot. DANCERS give quick LESSONS to smiling PEOPLE.

BORIS signals his GANG close.

BORIS

The crowd's spent their money and now they're filtering back in. The hall'll be clear enough to move soon. Let's go.

BORIS and GANG head for the ARENA HALL.

INT. ARENA BALCONY

SHAQ watches his GRANDFATHER TAP-DANCE. HANDS USHER his schedule.

SHAQ
'Scuse me, I gotta see a man about a horse.

SHAQ heads for the STAIRS leading down to the FLOOR.

INT. ARENA BACKSTAGE

HECTOR PANTS with thirst. He sets down his schedule.

HECTOR
(to himself)
Man, I'm dry as a camel.

HECTOR jumps off the STAGE to the ARENA FLOOR.

INT. ARENA FLOOR

HECTOR PUSHES through the CROWD. PEOPLE CONGRATULATE him. At first he's confused, thinking this has been a disaster.

HECTOR
(to admirers)
Say what? Oh, no, man. I been
messing it up something fierce. No,
no, I got everything wrong. It's
the girls fixed everything up.
(coming around)
Well, OK, if you insist. Thanks.
I'm glad you're having a good time.

HECTOR passes a BIG CIRCLE laughing and applauding. Tries to go around.

Hector's brother PAULO intercepts him.

PAULO
Hermano. Did you see?

HECTOR

See what?
(recalling)
Hey, what was that big surprise?

PAULO points to the CIRCLED CROWD. HECTOR SQUEEZES in.

MR and MRS DIAZ, all dressed up, SALSA DANCE. Even middle-aged and fat, they SPIN and TWIRL and DIP, VERY SEXY.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

I never knew they could do that.

PAULO

They didn't do it, man. You did.

HECTOR

Me?

PAULO

Didn't you set up this whole dance contest?

HECTOR

Oh, I tried, but... everything I started fell through. It's really the girls and Shaq -
(saddened)
I gotta get something to drink.

HECTOR TRUDGES OFF.

INT. ARENA HALL

HALLS are PACKED with DANCERS and AUDIENCE, chatting, laughing, buying.

LIGHTS DIM to announce Intermission is almost over. PEOPLE TURN for the arena floor.

Towering over the crowd are MORRIS DANCERS.

MORRIS DANCERS (all male) wear FRUITY COSTUMES with short STILTS strapped to their feet, and carry CLUBS.

SHAQ WADES against the CROWD. He also gets slowed by PEOPLE CONGRATULATING him.

SHAQ
You serious? I mean, thanks. Sure.
Glad you like it. Etc.

SHAQ BUMPS into HECTOR.

SHAQ (CONT'D)
Excuse - Oh, it's you.

HECTOR
Yeah, me.

The TWO GLARE, ready to fight.

SCREAMS.

CROWD
They've got guns! They robbed the
ticket office!

PEOPLE YELL and PUSH. HECTOR and SHAQ RUN toward trouble.

BORIS and GANG wear STOCKING MASKS. They have GUNS and SACKS OF MONEY. They SHOVE PEOPLE ASIDE.

SHAQ
It's Boris and his gang.

HECTOR
We gotta stop 'em.

SHAQ
You crazy? They got guns.

HECTOR
We gotta do something. Come on.

With no plan, SHAQ and HECTOR race toward the GANG. The CROWD SURGES.

BORIS and GANG, even clubbing and shoving, have a tough time slogging for the exit.

SHAQ
They're getting away with the money.

HECTOR
Let 'em go, amigo. Better they get
away than kill someone.

MUSIC: BAGPIPES

DRUM MAJOR
Hip-horp, hop! Hip-dorp!

SHING! Steel swords are drawn.

BORIS and GANG are almost to the EXIT -

- But HIGHLANDERS, with military precision, BARRICADE the
DOORS. They AIM SWORDS at BORIS and GANG.

DRUM MAJOR (CONT'D)
Hip-hop! R-r-r-r-rah-grump!

MUSIC: BAGPIPES

HIGHLANDERS MARCH, SWORDS TWIRLING. One THUG AIMS a GUN -

- A HIGHLANDER SPINS. His SWORD KNOCKS the GUN FLYING.

A HIGHLANDER SLASHES a THUG'S SLEEVE. He DROPS his GUN.

BORIS
These guys are crazy! Go this way!

BORIS and GANG DASH for ANOTHER EXIT. The CROWD accidentally
BLOCKS the HIGHLANDERS.

SHAQ and HECTOR RUN to KEEP UP.

HECTOR
There's still a hundred ways out'a
here.

SHAQ
So? You wanted to let 'em go.

ANOTHER EXIT is BLOCKED by MORRIS DANCERS with clubs.

BORIS and GANG STALL at the MORRIS DANCERS.

BORIS
That's it! Shoot our way out!

MUSIC: Weird PENNY WHISTLE DANCE TUNE

MORRIS DANCERS LEAP, DANCE, and SWING CLUBS. GUNS go flying, THUGS get WHACKED.

Disarmed, BORIS and GANG fall back.

BORIS (CONT'D)
This way. We'll get out through the main arena.

BORIS and GANG RUN pell-mell.

SHAQ and HECTOR WATCH as they run past.

HECTOR
Why didn't you do something?

SHAQ
Why didn't you?

HECTOR
Do I gotta do everything around here?

SHAQ
Everything you done tonight was wrong. What were you thinking, putting the mariachis on with the cowboys? What'd you want to show off? World War III?

HECTOR
At least I didn't send no little Chinese girls to get trampled by African elephants.

SHAQ
You sicced strippers on my polka
dancers. What's your mother gonna
say 'bout that -

VONDA and ROSITA ARRIVE.

ROSITA
There you two are. What's going on?

HECTOR
Boris robbed the ticket office.

SHAQ
They went that way.

VONDA
Well, get after 'em, heroes.

HECTOR and SHAQ run. The GIRLS follow.

HECTOR
I'm getting mighty tired of women
telling me what to do.

SHAQ
You and me both, brother.

VONDA
You two are the luckiest ducks alive
to have me and Rosita look after
you. Did you hear we made expenses?

HECTOR
What?

ROSITA
S'true. With the concessions and
the T-shirts sales and the corporate
donations and all, we broke even.

SHAQ
Broke even. Story of my life.

HECTOR
I never even got my drink.

INT. ARENA FLOOR

The FOUR burst onto the ARENA FLOOR.

BORIS and GANG, without guns, panting and flustered, GAWK.

BORIS
(points)
Try the back doors. They go down to
the dressing rooms or something.
We'll get out that way.

BORIS and GANG run for REAR DOORS. Our HEROES follow.

BORIS and GANG almost gain the DOORS. But they BURST OPEN.

MUSIC: Wild IRISH MUSIC

RIVERDANCE, a long line of DANCERS with ARMS LINKED, FLY
THROUGH THE DOOR.

Exhausted, BORIS and GANG fall back.

MUSIC comes for a GIANT BOOMBOX. A RIVERDANCER spots HECTOR,
SHAQ, and the GIRLS in ID tags.

RIVERDANCER
(shouting over music)
Hi. Sorry we're late. Did we miss
anything?

HECTOR points to BORIS and GANG.

HECTOR
Yes, them. Round 'em up.

Game for anything, the RIVERDANCER WHISTLES. The CHORUS
LINE, legs churning, ENCIRCLE BORIS and his GANG.

Worn out, BORIS and GANG surrender.

AUDIENCE TAUNTS and CHEER.

MORRIS DANCERS APPROACH.

MORRIS DANCER
We'll take 'em in. We're cops.

SHAQ
Cops?

RIVERDANCE keeps DANCING. MORRIS DANCERS arrest BORIS and GANG.

ARENA MANAGER RUNS UP. CLAPS HECTOR and SHAQ on the back.

ARENA MANAGER
You got them. Good. You guys saved the day.

ARENA MANAGER WINKS to VONDA and ROSITA, who SMILE.

HECTOR
We did?

SHAQ
Us?

GRANDFATHER TIP-TAPS UP. Grabs SHAQ.

GRANDFATHER
Are you all right? I heard something about robbers with guns and came running.

SHAQ
I'm fine, Granddad, just fine.
(looking over his
shoulder)
You did fine too.

GRANDFATHER
(confused)
Me? I didn't do nothing.

SHAQ turns GRANDFATHER around. For the first time, the old man sees HIMSELF TAP-DANCING on the BIG SCREEN.

Recognizing GRANDFATHER, PEOPLE laugh and slap him on the back. OLD LADIES kiss him.

SHAQ
(laughing)
How do you do that, anyway? I never
knew you could dance.

GRANDFATHER
There's a lot you don't know 'bout
me, grandson. But all you do is -

GRANDFATHER makes some lively TAP-DANCING MOVES.

GRANDFATHER (CONT'D)
It's just the same thing over and
over, but fast. Try this -

SHAQ
Granddad, I can't dance!

VONDA shoves SHAQ from behind.

VONDA
Learn, sucker. I'm tired of being a
wallflower.

Slowly, SHAQ follows GRANDFATHER'S instructions. And has
fun.

PAULO GRABS HECTOR.

PAULO
You should learn too, Hector.

HECTOR
What? Tap dancing? I'm not gonna
look like a puppet on a string.

PAULO SPINS HECTOR around.

PAULO
No, salsa. I know someone can teach
even you.

MR and MRS DIAZ STAND with the FAMILY.

MRS DIAZ OPENS her arms. Gingerly HECTOR holds her.

MR DIAZ pushes HECTOR close.

MR DIAZ

Don't stand way back, hijo. You got to hold onto that girl or some Anglo steal her away -

HECTOR

And zoom off in his Ferrari. I know.

MRS DIAZ WHIRLS HECTOR. Laughing, MR DIAZ steers from behind.

MR DIAZ

You did well, son, setting up this contest. It's the best thing's happened to this city in years.

HECTOR

Oh, I didn't do much. It was the others -

MRS DIAZ

Hush, muchacho. You did fine and we're very proud. Tonight you can be our hero.

Elated, HECTOR DANCES. Then, overreaching, he SLINGSHOTS out of his parent's arms -

- and CRASHES into SHAQ. BOTH TUMBLE.

And START LAUGHING and can't STOP.

GRANDFATHER

Just a couple of dancing fools.

CAMERA PANS BACK TO SHOW...

EVERYONE IN THE ARENA DANCING.

FADE TO BLACK