

BETWEEN THE SEAMS

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. CLOTHING STORE - DAY

A YOUNG WOMAN - mid-20s, Asian, androgynous - pushes through the ornate, too-heavy glass doors of a hyper-trendy boutique. They resist, then give too easily; she stumbles half a step inside. The doors swing shut behind her with a soft, final click.

She stands alone in a boutique that is far too quiet.

Just mannequins.

Dressed in impossible, beautiful things: LED halos, sculpted corsets, sleeves that pour to the floor like water. Each one posed mid-gesture, theatrical and lovely.

She doesn't move. Listens.

Nothing.

She takes a breath and steps deeper in.

She moves down a rack of garments, fingers not quite touching. Wanting to. Not letting herself.

Then she sees it.

A dress, alone on a form near the center of the room.

She stops.

A DARK ROOM -

A hand rests on the arms of a worn leather chair. Older. A plain gold band on one finger.

The index finger twitches - small, precise. Reaching for nothing.

BACK TO THE STORE -

The Young Woman's hand lifts toward the dress. Slow. Almost afraid.

CLOSE ON her fingertips as they meet the fabric.

Her breath catches. Just slightly.

CLERK (O.S.)
That one's... dangerous.

The Young Woman flinches.

She wasn't alone.

REVEAL - THE CLERK.

An unnervingly put-together saleswoman stands behind the counter. Not a hair out of place. She's been watching for a while, and doesn't pretend otherwise. Her face gives away nothing.

For half a moment too long, the two of them just look at each other.

Then, lightly:

CLERK (CONT'D)
Don't let me stop you.

The Young Woman's hand has gone still on the fabric. She doesn't know whether to run. She forces something like a smile.

WOMAN
Sorry. I didn't see you.

CLERK
Don't be. No one notices me with that dress in the room.

A silence. The Clerk lets it sit. Her bracelets clink as she brushes something unseen off the counter.

CLERK (CONT'D)
Take your time with it. No one comes in, this time of day.

She means it kindly. It doesn't-quite land kindly.

It's just the two of them, and the locked-in quiet of an empty store.

The Young Woman looks back at the dress. The wanting is stronger than the fear. Barely.

WOMAN
(quiet)
Can I try it on?

A flicker in the Clerk's eyes. Pleased, maybe. Or amused.

CLERK
That's what it's here for.

INT. FITTING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A narrow room. One mirror. A curtain that doesn't quite close.

She hangs the dress with both hands. Careful. Reverent.

She glances back at the gap in the curtain. Listens.

Then she begins.

CLOSE ON her fingers at the zipper – the small click of teeth parting.

MACRO – the lining sliding free under her thumb, impossibly smooth.

She steps out of her own clothes. Folds them. Sets them aside, too neatly.

She lifts the dress. Lighter than she expected. She holds it to her chest, eyes shut, and just – feels it.

The cool of it against her collarbone. A breath in. Slow. Her shoulders drop, a fraction.

She steps into it. Draws it up. The fabric moves over her skin.

CLOSE ON the hem rising along her calf. Her thigh. The whisper of it settling at her hip.

Her fingers find the seams and trace them. She reaches back, pulls the zipper slow. The dress closes around her like a held breath.

She turns to the mirror.

EXTREME CLOSE-UP – her eyes. They go wide. Then wet.

CLOSE ON her hand drifting to her sternum, pressing flat, as if to keep something from getting out.

Her breath hitches – once.

A tear breaks loose. She lets it

For this one moment, there is no fear in her face. Pure joy.

Then she opens the door.

INT. FITTING ROOM HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

She steps out.

The Clerk is there. Closer than expected.

She reads the Young Woman's face. Finds the wet shine at the corner of one eye.

Something crosses her unreadable face.

CLERK

Oh - here sweetie, let me get that
for you.

The Clerk steps in and wipes the tear away with the side of her thumb.

The Young Woman goes rigid at the touch. Then, slowly, doesn't.

A breath-laugh from the Young Woman. Half relief, half something breaking open.

WOMAN

(sniffles)
I look so good.

The Clerk studies her. Not the dress. Her.

Then - she nods. Small. Certain. She dabs away the last glint of wetness.

CLERK

(warm, meaning it)
You really do.

The Clerk steps back. Takes in the silhouette.

CLERK (CONT'D)

Honestly, you're just way too
adorable.

Then, lighter - almost conspiratorial. She's already moving.

CLERK (CONT'D)

I think this calls for a
celebration.
Just don't tell anyone. My boss is
seriously way too uptight.

The Young Woman smiles. Wide now. No hesitation.

WOMAN

Okay.

CLERK

Be right back.

As she slips behind the curtain, the Young Woman turns back to the mirror. She doesn't adjust anything. She just looks. Still glowing.

INT. BOUTIQUE - CONTINUOUS

The cork pops – loud in the empty store. The Young Woman startles, then laughs at herself.

The Clerk pours. Not full. Just enough.

They clink. They drink.

"Girls Just Want to Have Fun" hums low from the store speakers.

And for a little while, she forgets to be afraid.

They sweep through the room like they own it. Runway struts. Coats dragged behind them. Sunglasses indoors. They twirl, collapse into each other laughing.

The Young Woman spins at the mirror, flings a coat off her shoulders. Her reflection is ridiculous. Radiant. Hers.

The Clerk pulls things from the racks like gifts – a feathered coat, heels, a wig in a shade she'd never have dared.

Quick cuts: each new piece, each new version of her in the glass. Bolder. Brighter. More herself with every change.

Beat

The Clerk laces a corset at her back – firm, sure.

CLOSE ON the Young Woman's face as she breathes in against it, eyes shining. The silhouette is indecent. And perfect.

Then – for just a fraction of a second – she catches her own eyes in the glass, and her smile dims.

The Clerk doesn't notice. She drapes a gown across her shoulders. Like she's placing something holy on an altar.

INT. BOUTIQUE - LATER

The music is softer. The first bottle is empty; the second, half gone. They sit on a bench, flushed, mid-conversation we can't hear. Every so often one gasps "No!" or "Stop!" – and they collapse into laughter again.

The Young Woman gestures too big, clips a wig stand. The wig topples, she grabs, misses – and it lands on her head anyway. Crooked. Undeniably fabulous.

She freezes. The Clerk stares

WOMAN

(Ab-Fab impression)
How do I look, darling? It's the newest thing from Paris.

CLERK

Incredible. Darling, you've never looked better.

They lose it. Laughter. Full-bodied. Unrestrained.

The Young Woman leans back into the velvet chair, tears in her eyes, trying to catch her breath.

INT. FITTING ROOM - LATER

She's back at the mirror. Alone. The laughter is gone from her face. The music reaches her thin and far.

CLOSE ON her hands smoothing the front of the dress. Slow. Following the seams. It fits like it was made for her.

She exhales, slow. A moment of pure stillness.

Like she's saying goodbye to it.

Then –

A phone rings.

Not hers. Hers is on the bench. Dark.

It comes from somewhere outside the room. Muffled. Insistent. Wrong.

She goes very still.

CLOSE ON her eyes, darting to the curtain. The gap.

The light flickers—no, it doesn't. Did it?

It rings again. Closer, somehow. Or just louder.

She stares at her reflection in the mirror, it's a half-second behind her.

Her breath comes faster. She presses back against the wall.

The ringing stops. Silence.

Then – a soft knock.

CLERK (O.S)
Everything all right?

The same warm voice. She's not sure anymore.

WOMAN
(too quick. too forceful)
Fine.
(a beat)
I'm fine.

Footsteps, fading.

She stares at her reflection. Then glances at the bench.

Her phone remains dark.

INT. HOME OFFICE – DAY

A dim, tidy room. The worn leather chair. Architecture books.
A half-drunk glass of water.

The OLDER MAN – 50s, fit – sits very still, a sleek visor
over his eyes. The hands. The gold band.

A phone buzzes on the desk, face-up, lighting the room. On
the screen: SON.

He goes still. Then lifts the visor off, slow, like coming up
for air.

A thread of music leaks from the headphones at his neck –
bright, tinny, far away. He thumbs it silent.

He looks at the phone. Lets it ring once more. Then answers.

MAN
Hey.

SON (O.S.)
Oh – you picked up.

MAN

I'm here.

A beat.

SON (O.S.)

I was just checking in...Mom said you might come this weekend.

MAN

I don't think so. Work's pretty swamped right now.

SON (O.S.)

Oh. Okay.
Well... I'm around. If you change your mind.

MAN

I know.

SON (O.S.)

All right. Night, Dad.

MAN

Night.

He sets the phone down. Looks at his hands in the lamplight.

Slowly, he works the gold band off his finger. Holds it a moment. Sets it beside the phone.

A pale band remains.

He doesn't move for a long moment.

Then he turns the phone face-down, and slides the visor back on.

INT. BOUTIQUE - CONTINUOUS

The fitting room door opens.

She steps out. Steadier now. Whatever reached for her has let go.

The store is warm. The Clerk waits by the counter, easy, like nothing happened.

CLERK

There you are.

The Young Woman holds her gaze a beat. Reads her. Finds nothing to fear.

WOMAN

Here I am.

AT THE COUNTER

CLERK

Want me to send it over?

The Young Woman looks at herself one last time in the mirror behind the counter. Steady. Hers.

She nods.

WOMAN

Yeah.

CLERK

(a small smile)

It'll go to the address on file.
You've got a couple of days, if you
change your mind.

The Young Woman almost laughs.

WOMAN

I won't.

INT. CLOSET - NIGHT

A man's hand opens a closet door. Inside, in the dark:
dresses. Wigs. Shoes. A second life, hung in careful rows.

None of it worn. All of it loved.

He lifts the new dress - her dress - and hangs it among the
others.

CLOSE ON his hand resting on the fabric. The same reverence.
The same touch.

The pale band on his finger catches the light. Then he looks
up. Straight at us.

He holds it. Not ashamed. Not sorry.

A smile - completely unguarded.

On his smile, the opening of Shania Twain's "Man! I Feel Like a Woman!" hits - bright, unrepentant, alive.

SMASH TO BLACK.

The song plays on, full, over the credits.

THE END.