

TEASER

FADE IN:

INT. DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

ROSE JOHNSON, 25, sits before a mirror and puts on makeup. She's dressed for an Irish step dance performance.

CELEBRITY VOICE (OS)  
Twenty minutes, Miss Johnson.

She smiles at a sign on her mirror:

NEVER FORGET WHO YOU REALLY ARE.

ROSE  
I won't forget, Mama.

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

Scene A

FADE IN:

INT. CHURCH BASEMENT - DAY - DAY 1

ROSE, ANGELICA, RICO, BOOKER, and GINGER tap dance. Rose is the best dancer, Booker the worst.

JESSE drums his fingers against the old tape player.

When he closes his eyes drifting with the music, the kids all dance their own steps.

Angelica does ballet.

Rico does a flamenco.

Booker tries to hip-hop.

Ginger fluffs her hair and straightens her outfit.

ROSE  
(to Rico)  
Watch.

Rose dances an Irish step dance.

The tape ends. Jesse opens his eyes. The other kids stop.

Rose is still step dancing. She's so involved, she grabs Jesse's arm and twirls around him.

JESSE  
Rose Johnson!

The kids stand in fear of Jesse.

JESSE  
What are you doing?

ROSE  
Like I said last time, I saw  
this TV show.

GINGER  
Girl, you're haunted by  
Riverstomp.

ROSE  
Riverdance. It was just  
wonderful, Mr. Williams. I  
need someone to teach me Irish  
dance.

RICO  
Fatty, have you noticed you  
ain't white?

Jesse quiets Rico with a stare.

JESSE  
Skin's got nothing to do with  
dancing. Dancing comes from  
the heart.

Rose gives Rico a satisfied smile.

JESSE

However, does this look like  
Ireland?

Booker flips through a worn pocket dictionary.

ROSE

No, sir.

JESSE

Are you Irish?

ROSE

No, sir.

BOOKER

Rosie's pulchritudinous.

JESSE

Watch your mouth, boy. Rose,  
your mother pays good money  
for me to teach you tap. All  
of you all.

ANGELICA

Lecture Twelve: How your  
parents sacrifice for you.

JESSE

Angelica, should I tell your  
father about your lip - again?

Angelica hangs her head.

JESSE

Then zip it. Now you all pay  
attention.

Jesse turns on the tape.

JESSE

I showed this step to Sammy  
Davis Junior. Five, six,  
seven, eight.

He gracefully shuffles and slides. He signals for the kids  
to join in.

He stops to catch his breath.

JESSE

Easy. Easy, Angelica. You ain't smashing grapes. There you go, Ginger. Booker, don't ever tell anybody I'm your tap teacher, dig?

Jesse removes his glasses and hands them to Rico.

JESSE

Rico, put these up.

RICO

Mr. Williams, class is over.

JESSE

Oh, Lordy. I got to start supper for the shelter.  
(to himself)  
I need some help around here.

The kids grab their street clothes and pull them on.

JESSE

Rose, I want to see you.

Rose goes to him.

JESSE

You put this idea of Irish dancing right out of your head, hear? It'll lead to trouble.

ROSE

Because I'm black, you mean.

JESSE

I didn't say that. When you're older, you'll understand. Now get on home. All of you all. Straight home. And practice.

Rose walks slowly out with the other kids.

BOOKER

I practice every day, but I'll  
never be as good as you, Rosie.

ROSE

My Mama says we can do anything  
if we work at it.

Scene B

INT. KITCHEN - DAY - DAY 1

LORETTA peels potatoes while she's on the phone.

Rose comes in through the back door and drops her backpack.

LORETTA

(to phone)

Marquitta Mae, I'm going to  
knock your socks off.

ROSE

Hi, Mama.

Loretta caresses Rose's hair as Rose heads for the  
refrigerator.

LORETTA

Marquitta Mae, I'll talk with  
you later. The kids are getting  
home.

Loretta hangs up.

ROSE

She bragging about her big  
tomatoes?

Loretta nods.

ERNEST walks in the back door, bouncing a basketball.

Loretta kisses her fingers and reaches up to touch his  
forehead.

ERNEST

Hi, Mama. Hi, Ugly.

ROSE

Ernest, if I had those big feet,  
I'd be careful who I call ugly.

Loretta snaps her fingers and points at the basketball.

LORETTA

Put the ball up, son.

ERNEST

You wish you had big tomatoes.

Ernest holds the basketball to his chest.

ERNEST

Two of 'em, right about here.  
You ain't even got blueberry  
pancakes.