

### Dancing In Time

Eyes closed, she could feel as the stifling air of the studio parted to give passage to her gliding, supple form. The rays of the late afternoon sun permeated and warmed her eyelids. One of Praetorius' joyous voltas issued forth from the gramophone in the corner. Wrapping herself in the violin's waltzish ebb and flow, Anne danced around the room, barefoot, alone, and carefree.

Comment [ 1]: Question semantics.

Comment [ 2]: Consider italicization.

The dance was building to its climactic crescendo as the door opened. A tall, slim man entered the studio, wearing a black double-breasted jacket and equally black thick-rimmed glasses. He carried a battered, beige briefcase which seemed to barely be holding itself together.

Anne, who'd still been immersed in the music, was facing away from him, but saw his reflection in the wall-length mirror. She pirouetted to face him, galloped over to the turntable, and drew the needle off the record. "Hello, Mr. Hughes," she said, looking directly through his lenses.

"Good afternoon, Ms. Warwick. Are you ready to begin today's lesson?" Mr. Hughes replied, laying the briefcase on the floor.

"Sure. Hey, did you hear about Brian Jones? The Stones guitarist?"

Comment [ 3]: Question punctuation.

"Did I hear about him? When can I not hear about that man? Cultural decline it is, when the attention of the whole sodding country is diverted by the suicide of some second-rate rock guitarist," Hughes said, contempt visible in his face. "1969, my arse. More like the dark ages."

"Excuse me? What's the matter with you today?" Anne said, walking toward the suitcase.

Hughes let out a deflated sigh. "Nothing. Just a very long day is all. Do me a favor and get the Noverre, will you? This baroque habit of yours is unsettling to say the least. And don't disorganise the vinyls. They're in alphabetical order by composer."

Comment [ 4]: Consider italicization.

"Very well, sir," Anne said demurely.

She flipped open the latches of the suitcase, and the cover practically leapt backward. Besides the substantial stack of records, the inside of the piece of tattered baggage was lined with small pieces of paper. Annie took little note of them, only to say, "I certainly would've thought you were a bit more of an organised type, Gregory."

Comment [ 5]: Consider revision.

"Right...and since when were we on a first name basis again? Come on...we've only an hour to work."

At this point, as Anne filed through the records, one of the dozens of papers slipped off the inner lining to reveal a small orange rectangle. She paused to scan the note, scrawled hastily in thick felt tip. "MLT@0630," it read. She briefly thought that was interesting, but continued her search for the Noverre. She found it, put it on the turntable, placed the needle, and out came the elegant swells of Hypermnestre.

Comment [ 6]: Consider italicization.

Comment [ 7]: Consider italicization.

"Much better, Ms. Warwick. Shall we dance?"

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Anne walked back to her flat that evening with blunt soreness in her calves and feet, not terribly overjoyed at the prospect of another night in her kingdom of squalor. The street on which she walked was calm that night, most vendors having closed up shop for the evening. Brick Lane was always a center of activity, an integral part of the overcrowded mass of paupers and immigrants that called itself London's East End. Anne made her humble home on the south side, near Whitechapel. On her daily walk to and from her job at the local library, she would pass by La Neuve Eglise, the "new church." At this time, the church no longer served its original purpose, nor would it serve its current one for long.

Comment [ 8]: Consider italicization.

The building was originally occupied by French Huguenots, and later housed several other religious groups in succession, including Protestants and Catholics. In recent years it had been a synagogue, but it was now becoming a point of congregation for the rapidly growing population of Bangladeshi Muslims. The building had an unremarkable appearance--which was why she found it remarkable that it changed hands so seemingly often. Anne would occasionally take solitude in the church on weekends to study for her courses; she took classes on philosophy at the Queen Mary College.

Her mind being drawn to that realm of thought, she realized with dread that she had left a colossal essay completely to the last minute; it was, of course, due the next day--horror of all horrors, tomorrow was a Monday. Close to her flat, she decided to sprint the rest of the way home. It was just a few seconds later when she noticed her feet had forgotten to touch the ground for a step. She sailed through the air, and viewed her carefully made-up visage in a murky puddle before she landed flat on her face. The coup de grâce, Anne thought. As she lay in the puddle, trying to determine whether or not her nose was broken, two figures clad in unseasonably heavy clothing came into her field of vision.

They were murmuring to each other very hurriedly, keeping their hands in the pockets of their overcoats. Anne realized after a few seconds that they were speaking French.

"Tu penses qu'il desire ça? Quelle bêtise!"

"C'est pas de ma faute! Je n'avais pas l'intention de l'amener ici!"

"Ça ne change rien. On doit le trouver, ou..."

The Frenchmen had passed out of earshot by this point, and Anne found herself wondering why she'd even eavesdropped on their conversation. She had too many other things to worry about to be making a point of practicing her French. Nonetheless, she was both pleasantly surprised at how much of it she remembered, and intrigued at this fleeting glimpse into the struggles of other people.

Anne rose unsteadily, attempting in vain to brush the caked dirt and mud off her favorite blouse, and, just knowing this was going to be the perfect start to a long and winding all-nighter, finished the walk to her block of flats. She walked up the ancient, eroded stoop and went into her apartment complex, a brick-red construction nestled between two behemoth office buildings.

She bade a good evening to her landlady, old Mrs. Simmons.

"Ello, dearie. I just finished making some tea. Would you like a cup?" She inquired, her out-of-place Cockney ringing like a bell in the sparse, darkly lit lobby.

"No, thank you. I was just on my way upstairs to finish some schoolwork."

"Oh, yes. Ain't not gone to college meself. Didn't see the need for it, at least when old Mr. Simmons were still kicking around," she said, pouring herself a cup.

"Certainly," Anne replied.

"Oy, and don't let me forget! You got a letter today. From one Mr. Tannenbaum. At least that's what it say on the envelope," Mrs. Simmons chuckled.

"Thank you," Anne took the letter. "Well, good night."

"Good night, Ms. Warwick."

Anne had to stoop slightly to take the spiral staircase which led to her room on the top floor. She fetched her key from her bag, unlocked and opened the door, and stepped inside. She threw her bag onto the sofa, which was the only new thing in the room, a product of impulsivity she'd had a few months

**Comment [ 9]:** Expression not taken full advantage of. Consider revision.

**Comment [ 10]:** Question effectiveness.

earlier. She was still paying for it now; her pocketbook seemed to groan each time she reached into it. She stepped into her cramped lavatory to nurse the cuts on her face and hands from the fall earlier.

People had always told her she had a pretty face. She never supposed it was actually true; her cheeks were dotted with freckles, and she felt her nose was almost too small for the large, stridently blue eyes she possessed. Now her cheek was adorned with a long cut, but at least her nose wasn't broken. Wondering if she should thank God for that, Anne cleaned her wound, put one of her favorite records on the turntable, and sat down to begin her thesis on the merits of the philosophical system called determinism.

Comment [ 11]: Misspelling of "philosophical."

Comment [ 12]: Consider italicization.

First, though, she had to open this letter. Who was this Tannenbaum character? She was nervous, mainly because she'd never received anything from a total stranger in the post before. Was this safe, she wondered? Momentarily casting her reservations aside, she unsealed the envelope to find a small note tucked in one of the corners.

Dear Ms. Warwick, it read. Please meet me in the Neuve Eglise. The thing I would like you to see is there, but you would be unable to find it on your own. I hope you can be there tomorrow morning at nine o'clock. I know you're the right person for this. I look forward to seeing you again. Sincerely, Mr. Lawrence Tannenbaum.

Comment [ 13]: Consider italicization.

Comment [ 14]: Consider italicization.

Anne suddenly found it a lot harder to concentrate on her essay. Her rogue mind kept flashing back to the oddest parts of her day: The note she discovered in Mr. Hughes' case, the two secretive Frenchmen, and this letter...None of it meant anything, she reasoned. On top of all her other worries, she was developing a habit of paranoia...not good. She momentarily wished she could write her paper on synchronicity or apophenia, for that reason among a host of others. She also figured there was no way she could finish the paper that night, so she gave up on it and went to sleep.

Comment [ 15]: Unnecessary capitalization.

Comment [ 16]: Unnecessary capitalization.

She awoke the next morning to the sound of rain pattering on the roof above her—one of the unfortunate downsides of renting a room on the top floor. She breakfasted on stale bread and hazelnut paste, and, with a bit of reticence and a lot of curiosity, began her walk to the Neuve Eglise.

Though the exterior of the building was brown and non-descript, it possessed a certain quaint charm. The interior was fairly understated as well, but, once inside, one could find a measure of solitude, especially during this part of the week.

Anne took a seat in the frontmost pew, and, seeing no one who sought her out, opened a study book. She'd not gotten far in her reading when someone tapped her lightly on the shoulder.

Comment [ 17]: Misspelling of "front-most".

"Ms. Warwick?" Said a familiar voice.

Comment [ 18]: Unnecessary capitalization.

Anne started; it was Mr. Hughes. "What? Are you the one who—?"

"Yes, yes, I called you here today. Please take care, girl, we must be discreet," he whispered.

"But we're alone!" Anne hissed.

"Not until we get into the basement. Come on! The stairs are this way." He turned and briskly walked to a wooden door. He paused and rapped his knuckles on the door. He waited.

Two knocks came from the other side of the door, followed by four in quicker succession.

Mr. Hughes knocked the same pattern, but backwards.

A voice on the other side said, "Mot de passe?"

Hughes replied, "Tempus fugit."

The door opened slowly.

“Come on, Anne. Let’s go in,” Hughes said, gently coaxing her forward.

Anne, transfixed by the ritual, gave no further thought, and followed. They descended a dark, spiral staircase of creaky, bending wood, which ended in a long, spacious room, sparsely lit by dying candles. The candles were scented, giving off an odour of some sickly sweet fruit. In the middle of the dark chamber was a rectangular table, at which two people were seated. One, she saw, was chained to his chair by the arms, making the occasional, desperate attempt to free himself. The other was slumped back in his seat, **poring** over a Rolling Stone with a couple of faces on the cover she didn’t quite recognize. Her eyes wandered around the cover, and she numbly noticed a pair of dates: 1946-2006.

“What’s that?” Anne asked the unchained man.

He turned the magazine around, looked over the cover, and in a light French accent, he said, “This, my lady? This is the future.”

**Comment [ 19 ]:** Misspelling of “pouring”.