

I Dance For You

by

Kelly Stone

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PROLOGUE

My heart pounded. I rubbed my sweaty hands on my purple tights and noticed that I was the only one seemingly nervous. I looked around the room not able to find one familiar face. This was odd because audition opportunities rarely came around. I usually knew at least one person whenever I had booked an audition because strangers were rarity in a small town such as ours. Everyone pretty much knew everyone else's business.

I longed for my nerves to just calm down. I closed my eyes and took a deep breath. As I opened my eyes, I took note of the exit at the end of the hallway. I could have easily darted and thrown away a chance at a lifetime opportunity.

My normal confidence was replaced with uneasiness, which placed me in flight mode. As I started towards the exit, a lady old enough to be my grandma surprised me when she grabbed my arm.

I immediately took in her classy appearance. She didn't fit the description of the average Southern Belle. Her salt and pepper hair was pulled back into a tight bun. The spandex dress she wore accentuated her immaculate physique.

This woman mesmerized me with her emerald eyes. The orbs seemed to calm me as she placed a piece of paper in my hand.

"Jessamine, darling, you dropped something," the woman chirped in an accent that I hadn't heard since I left New York.

I examined the white sheet of paper that displayed the number fifty. A number that I wished not to have because it meant that I would be the last one to audition.

"Thanks," I managed to muster up. After waiting for more than two hours, I watched as the crowd dwindled. I had a first row seat as I watched the auditioners go in determined and come out defeated.

Soon, it would be my turn to put my all into four minutes. Four minutes seemed like such a short time for me.

“May I ask how long you've been dancing?”

I let out a breath that I didn't know I was holding before I answered in a rush, “I've been dancing since I was three years old. My mom started me out with ballet and I fell in love with it.” I smiled at the thought of how lucky I was to have a mom that made sure that I was exposed to the different arts. Now at the age of twenty-eight, I felt compelled to make good on her investment in me.

A man startled me as he called out my number. "Number fifty. Last call for number fifty. Fifty!" That was my cue that it was time for me to do just that, but something was wrong. I just stood there like an idiot unable to move. My heart pulsated in my ear. The sound of horses galloping in my ear made me nauseous.

"Jessamine! Jessamine! They called your number, darling. You need to calm down." The uptown lady rubbed her hand soothingly across the top of my back just like my grandma would have done in a moment like this.

"Mother, what are you doing? I thought I told you to wait in my office."

"Hush that fuss, son," she countered. I could definitely see the resemblance. His hair was black and he shared the same emerald eyes as his mom. “This is my friend, Jessamine, and she's here to audition. You and your little judge friends better be on your best behavior. I want you to take good care of her."

"Yeah....yeah," he replied nonchalantly.

"Come on, Number 50. Let's get this over with. All of the judges are tired and hungry."

I jogged to catch up with him and struggled to match his steps. As we marched along, my eyes wandered back to his mom. She seemed like such a kind lady. But, there was something strange about her. As if she could hear my thoughts, she gave me a reassuring smile before I disappeared behind a closed door.

My impatient escort led me to a stage that was dimly lit warning me that I only had four minutes. I could make out the silhouette of four other judges seated in the audience. Fortunately, the bright light made it impossible to make out their faces. I could only hear the rustle of papers and an occasional whisper.

I took a deep breath.

“State your name, style and selection,” a stern woman's voice instructed from the audience.

"Hello. My name is Jessamine Thompson. I will be performing an original liturgical dance to a song entitled 'Find You On My Knees' by Kari Jobe."

The music started. I could finally breathe. My nerves disappeared as a heart of worship undoubtedly appeared.

The lyrics to the song ran through my veins propelling me into a high that was indescribable. I danced with all my might. I danced with all my soul.

Find You in the place I'm in.

Find You when I'm at my end.

Find You when there's nothing left of me to offer

You except brokenness.

You lift me up...

You never leave me thirsty...

When I am weak...

When I am lost and searching...

I find You on my knees.

I danced and danced. I gave it my all. I gave until there was nothing else to give.

After the song finished, I composed myself and waited for a response from the judges. As I waited, I wiped a midst of sweat from my forehead along with a tear that I hadn't noticed falling.

The lights were still dim and the bright stage light continued to shine in my face.

I could hear whispers and a few chuckles from the judges. Unable to make out what they were saying, doubt began to make it's ugly appearance. After waiting for what seemed like hours, my eyes lowered in defeat.

Growing impatient, I began to take small steps toward the stage door. It was becoming annoying obvious that they weren't blown away by my audition.

"Thank you for your time." My hand covered ears as screeching speakers echoed loudly through the room. I hadn't meant for that to come out so loud. "S-sorry," I stuttered embarrassed. "I should go."

As I hurried off the stage, I heard one of the judges yell, "Wait!"

Chapter 2: If Looks Could Kill

(JESSAMINE'S POV)

After graduating from high school, I went straight to New York City to start a professional career in dance. Being a small town girl from the backwoods of Mississippi, New York City proved to be like a foreign country to me. The people were always in a hurry. I was used to people waving at me as they drove by in their vehicles. I began to miss the friendliness I grew up around. I found myself lonely and afraid.

My mom, Bessie Thompson, was very supportive when I told her that I wanted to go to New York to follow my dreams at the young age of thirteen. She worked two jobs to save up enough money over the years to take care of my first three months of expenses in New York. She didn't want me to struggle like she did growing up.

In a way, I felt guilty. There were many nights that I fell asleep waiting on her to get home from work. She worked a full-time job as a secretary for a state agency and cleaned up offices in the evenings. Sometimes she got home early enough to eat dinner with me. Other nights, it was just me and my grandma, Mama Maggie.

Mama Maggie was my mom's mother and best friend. She looked young for her age. People would always say that they looked like sisters. Mama Maggie always got a kick out of that. They

both had long black wavy hair and charcoal gray eyes. Their dark brown skin looked like dark chocolate. They both looked like models. I had the same features. The only difference was that my eyes were emerald green.

While my mom was at work, Mama Maggie would make sure that everything in the household was taken care of. She would cook, clean, wash, take me to dance classes and even help me with my homework. Even though Mama Maggie didn't get a chance to finish school, she was smart as a whip! Her mother taught her a lot of things at home. Today, we would call that home schooling.

We weren't rich people, but we had enough. We kept a garden and hung clothes out on the clothes line to dry during the warm months. I would love running through the sheets and getting tangled up inside of them. And the smell was fresh and crisp.

One night, Mama Maggie had to take me to a dance performance at the Brandon Day Festival. I can remember it like it was yesterday. I was sixteen and looking forward to performing in front of the whole town. Hopefully, my mom would finish up her second job in time to see me perform. She promised to be there, but I knew that it all depended on if everyone showed up for work. My mom always ended up taking up the slack if someone called in sick.

Mama Maggie must have known that my heart was just yearning for my mom. She was a great grandmother, but I wanted my mom to brush my hair and tell me not to be nervous about my performance. After a while, I really started to feel selfish because I was the reason she had to take the second job.

Mama Maggie walked over and grabbed my brush. She started brushing my long hair and it was so soothing. It was like she was brushing my nervousness away. She pulled my hair into a ponytail and made me a ball at the top of my head. I don't know how she managed to get my waist length hair into a ball. Maybe it was the years of practice she had with her and my mom's hair.

“You know your mom loves you, don't you?”

I prayed my eyes wouldn't flood with tears as I carefully nodded my head.

Mama Maggie turned me around to face her.

“She has always wanted the best for you. And nothing will keep her from making provisions for you to follow your dreams.”

“I know, Mama Maggie. It's just that for once I would like her to be here. She works so hard and it's all my fault.”

Mama Maggie wiped a tear that ran down my eye.

“Don't cry, Jess. I know this is hard, but when you look back at this very time in your life...years from now, you will know that she did the best she could.”

I watched as Mama Maggie pulled out a golden box from her