

LAST DANCE

A dramedy in one act
by
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PREVIEW ONLY!

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SYNOPSIS

Friends light up an eighth grade black light dance, packed with neon outfits, snappy banter, and heartfelt realizations as they contemplate turning fourteen. By dropping their defences to celebrate exactly who they are, they offer a luminous look at stepping into your own spotlight and dancing straight into the future.

CHARACTERS

(4M + 4F)

BEATRICE.....Confident & pretty, female, 13.
CHESTER.....Smart & sensitive, male, 13.
EVELYN.....Insecure & restless, female, 13.
FRANK.....Quirky & nostalgic, male, 13.
NEWTON.....Tough & sporty, male, 13.
RUTH.....Sweet & organized, female, 13.
STANLEY.....Charming & dramatic, male, 13.
VERA.....Unsure & sarcastic, female, 13.

SETTING

A gymnasium.

RUNNING TIME

10 minutes.

(AT RISE: The stage is flooded with ultraviolet black light. Neon decorations glow everywhere. Music thumps in the background. The entire cast of characters, except BEATRICE, dance around the stage. STANLEY, wearing neon pink, and RUTH, wearing neon yellow, are center stage. They are armed with neon glow paint, joyfully splattering the outfits of the others as they become featured in a scene. This "paint" is actually neon confetti.)

STANLEY

Hold still, darling! Your shoulder needs a splash of "Electric Orange" to truly capture your inner superstar!

(He spatters RUTH with "paint.")

RUTH

Careful, Stanley! We have a strict limit of three splashes per student if we want the paint to last until the final slow dance. I have a spreadsheet for this on my phone.

STANLEY

Spreadsheets are for algebra, Ruth. Tonight, we're doing art! Look at this gym! We aren't just eighth graders anymore. We're a walking constellation!

RUTH

We are! And for the record, your outfit is blinding. I love it!

(The others form a cluster around them, moving to the beat of the music.)

EVERYONE

Glow! Glow! Turn it up, burn it bright!

(The group disperses back into the shadows of the gym, leaving VERA and FRANK center stage. They both wear psychedelic neon outfits from the 1970s.)

VERA

My mom is currently hosting a live stream titled "Raising a Radiant Teen," completely unaware that I'm wearing this ugly dress and my phone is at the bottom of the punch bowl.

FRANK

(Laughs)

It's not just a dress, Vera! It belonged to a woman named Rosey who won a disco marathon in 1976. I found the original ticket stub in the lining. When we dance, Rosey dances. We're keeping the groove alive!

VERA

I like that! It's the ultimate counter culture move. We look like a lava lamp exploded on us, and for the first time all year, nobody is trying to monetize my face for a multi-level anything!

FRANK

You look exactly like yourself! And the best part of tomorrow is that nobody has written the script for it yet. Our only job is to make sure it's wonderfully weird.

VERA

I actually think high school might not be too bad. If we can survive polyester, we can survive anything.

(The others move forward into a tight circle, clapping to the rhythm.)

EVERYONE

Step to the left, step to the right! Catch the rhythm, hold it tight!

(The group disperses, leaving NEWTON and CHESTER center stage. CHESTER wears neon sunglasses and NEWTON wears a neon green bow tie. He cranes his neck, scanning the crowd anxiously.)

NEWTON

Where is Beatrice? She's not by the photo booth. She's not by the DJ table. If someone blocked her at the door, I swear to God I'll go out there and --

CHESTER

Newton, breathe. She probably just wants to make a big entrance. Your blood pressure must be through the roof.

NEWTON

She broke my heart, man. She went all ice queen on me before the break. But I just need to see her. I bought this stupid bow tie because she said green was her favourite colour.

CHESTER

Sometimes people have things going on that you don't know about. So dance with me, cuz. Get out of your head. You don't always have to protect everyone, including yourself. Remember when we were cleaning pools in the blazing heat, trying to fix what our parents broke? Well, it's time we let that anger go.

NEWTON

Yeah. Okay. You're right. I guess turning fourteen means I have to learn to drop my fists and just... I dunno... let the future happen. But if someone messes with your stupid glasses, I'm still taking them down.

(The others rush together, forming a kick line, jumping to the beat.)

EVERYONE

Bounce! Bounce! Don't let it stop! Fourteen is coming, ready to drop!

(The group scatters. EVELYN and STANLEY wind up center stage. STANLEY splatters her with "paint.")

EVELYN

Stanley, stop! I actually want people to see my face tonight.

STANLEY

Oh, honey, they *are* seeing you! Look at you! You're practically vibrating! That exercise club has turned you into an absolute powerhouse.

EVELYN

It's true! I didn't hide in the bathroom once tonight. I walked right through the gym doors, and four people said hello to me before I even reached the punch bowl. I'm not a shadow anymore, Stanley. Spinning our wheels in that garage actually taught me how to steer. Next year, I'm running for class president. Or maybe I'll start a neon fashion line. Watch out, world!

STANLEY

You were never a shadow, darling! You were just waiting for the right lighting! Now, let's go find Ruth and see if we can organize a conga line! The future isn't just bright, it's a sold out Broadway opening!

(The others swarm together, moving into a conga line.)

EVERYONE

Step, kick, flash, glow! Keep up the tempo, put on the show!

(The line breaks. RUTH and CHESTER find themselves center stage, out of breath. RUTH checks her smart watch.)

RUTH

Chester, look at the time. Our fourteenth year begins in exactly nine minutes, and my itinerary is completely falling apart because I can't find Beatrice. Have you seen her?

CHESTER

It's hard to see anyone clearly in this light.

RUTH

Stop avoiding! You always over-complicate things when you're hiding something. What do you know?

CHESTER

It's not my variable to share. But I really hope she makes it. For Newton's sake. And for hers. Whatever is going on, I'm sure she's fighting hard to get here.

RUTH

Well, I certainly hope so. She belongs in the formation. Even if she's acting like a queen on a pedestal, we're still a team. And if there's one thing I've learned from organizing our messy lives, it's that the best formations are the ones where we catch each other when someone falls.

(The others raise the roof around CHESTER and RUTH.)

EVERYONE

Hold the line, guard the space! Everyone matters in this place!

(They break apart, leaving FRANK and EVELYN center stage.)

FRANK

Evelyn, your dress catches the light like the neon signs on the old buildings downtown. The ones they haven't torn down yet. You're history in the making.

EVELYN

Thanks, Frank. I used to think I needed to copy Beatrice just to be noticed. But tonight? I feel completely solid. Like I'm standing in my own spotlight. No more blending into the lockers.

FRANK

Things stand the test of time by being exactly what they are. We aren't letting our past get erased, and we aren't letting our future intimidate us.

(The others swirl around FRANK and EVELYN, clapping to the beat.)

EVERYONE

Two clicks left, two clicks right! Building up the heat tonight!

(They scatter. STANLEY runs up to NEWTON and splatters him with "paint.")

STANLEY

Newt! You're pacing like a Shakespearean hero, which is entirely the wrong genre for a dance. Let me give that neon green bow tie a touch of magenta!

NEWTON

(Dodges the "paint")

No way, Stan. This bow tie is the only thing keeping me from running out to the parking lot to look for her.

STANLEY

She'll hear the music. Nobody can stay away from a show this fabulous for long. Keep your chin up. The lighting is perfect for a dramatic entrance.

(The others rush together, forming a pulsing wedge that points toward entrance.)

EVERYONE

Tick, tock, watch the gate! Something big is worth the wait!

(The wedge breaks apart. VERA and NEWTON cross paths.)

VERA

You look angry, firefly.

NEWTON

I'm not angry, Vera. I'm just emotional.

VERA

You're wearing a colour that represents growth and harmony, but your fists are clenched like you're about to fight a superhero.

NEWTON

I just miss Beatrice, okay? I know she was mean to people before the break. I know she pushed everyone away. But I remember when she wasn't trying to be perfect. I remember the girl who used to play in the mud.

VERA

We all change. Look at Frank and me. We're wearing clothes from a dead era just to feel alive in this one. Give her a chance to show up. Fourteen is going to bring things we can't even dream of. Maybe even a world where nothing is sponsored, and everything is completely real.

(The music shifts. Instead of dancing, the characters pace the perimeter of the gym in a circle. The anticipation is palpable.)

RUTH

(Checks her smartwatch)

It's 8:58. If she doesn't walk through those doors in two minutes, the last dance is entirely compromised.

EVELYN

She'll come. I know she will. She wouldn't leave us behind.

FRANK

The floor feels empty without her.

VERA

For once, I'm cheering for the favourite.

CHESTER

The neon is losing its lustre!

STANLEY

She needs to get here before the spotlight fades!

NEWTON

She's coming. She has to. I can feel it.

EVERYONE

Turn the clock, spin the wheel! Make it bright, make it real!

(Suddenly, the music stops. A silence falls over the gym. EVERYONE freezes, except STANLEY. He throws a handful of neon confetti into the air.)

STANLEY

Turning fourteen isn't about blending in to make everyone else comfortable. It's about standing center stage, rewriting the script on the fly, and singing until the final bell rings. High school isn't a threat, it's just our next big venue. And trust me, the marquee has our names written all over it!

(He freezes. VERA throws a handful of neon confetti into the air.)

VERA

Standing here right now, I realized something strange. I'm actually hopeful. Fourteen means we get to drop the filters, ignore the likes, and just be totally awkward and completely real. Next year, I'm not a brand. I'm just Vera. And honestly? No ring light can compete with how bright that feels.

(She freezes. FRANK throws a handful of neon confetti into the air.)

FRANK

The past isn't wreckage to be painted over. It's a foundation. Turning fourteen doesn't mean erasing who we were. It means carrying those memories with us. The future isn't scary if you know exactly what you're standing on, so let's build a history worth saving.

(He freezes. CHESTER throws a handful of neon confetti into the air.)

CHESTER

Human beings aren't equations. We have variables we can't predict, like finding a sweet piece of hope when life gets sticky, or having a cousin who will punch a wall just to keep you safe. Turning fourteen means accepting that life is unpredictable. Our hands might shake, but one fact remains: we're going to catch the groove.

(He freezes. RUTH throws a handful of neon confetti into the air.)

RUTH

A funny thing happens when your perfect plan falls apart. You realize you don't need a spreadsheet to survive. Turning fourteen means stepping out of the background because my voice sounds incredible all on its own. Forget the itinerary. The best moments are the ones you never saw coming.

(She freezes. NETWON throws a handful of neon confetti into the air.)

NEWTON

It takes a lot more strength to drop your fists than to clench them. I bought this bow tie because I'm a softie, but that doesn't make me weak. It makes me brave. Fourteen is coming, and I'm leaving the fighting behind. From now on, my knuckles are strictly for high fives and holding on tight.

(He freezes. EVELYN throws a handful of neon confetti into the air.)

EVELYN

Look at me tonight. I'm standing in my own skin, and for the first time in my life, I'm completely visible. Turning fourteen means realizing you don't need to blend in to be beautiful. We're our own spotlights, and I'm never stepping back into the dark again.

(She freezes. Suddenly, a spotlight appears by the entrance. BEATRICE steps into the light. She wears a simple white dress with green trim that catches the black light completely. Her hair is done up, dusted with a layer of glitter. She looks beautiful, but fragile.)

END OF PREVIEW

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