

AT LAST

Irene, a vintage thrift store owner, imparts her wisdom on her young employee, all while finally reconnecting in her own relationship.

INT. THRIFT SHOP (2019) - EVENING

The vintage clothing and everyday items compliment the look and sound of the thrift shop. On a jukebox near the register, The Temptations "My Girl" plays to an empty shop about to close for the night.

Inside there are two employees: DAWN, a young adult balancing work with her last year of college, and IRENE, the owner of the thrift shop. Midway through the song, the music box cuts out and starts playing "Can't Help Falling in Love" by Elvis.

DAWN

This damn jukebox always cuts back to this song.

Dawn bangs on the machine.

IRENE

Ahh, let it play. You know this was my husband's favorite song.

DAWN

Yeah well this song playing on loop may starting annoying the customers if that is all they hear.

IRENE

Maybe we can fix it enough to play more of the Temptations or some Etta James. "At Last" is a personal favorite of mine. My wedding song, actually.

DAWN

Aw that's sweet. But maybe we could get it to play some music from this century?

Irene lets out a laugh and heads into her back office.

Dawn finishes her end of night chores; meticulously cleaning the register area and wiping down the front windows. After wrapping up, she walks to Irene's office and lightly knocks on the open door.

DAWN (CONT'D)

I'm heading out.

IRENE

Oh.. Do you have any plans tonight, maybe with that boy you were texting with?

DAWN

Ha.

She hesitates for just a second. Irene struck an awkward nerve.

DAWN (CONT'D)

No. I don't know. I'm not really in the mood to date anyone.

IRENE

He seems so nice though; how he comes in here acting like he's actually shopping. You know, I bet he only comes here to see you.

DAWN

(grinning)

I'll see you in the morning.

Dawn slings her bag over her shoulder and leaves the store.

Irene's concerned expression changes when Elvis comes on again. She smiles. She lifts herself out of her chair and walks towards the doorway of her office. On the back wall leans a full body mirror. Irene walks into its frame.

Seemingly out of no where PAUL, her late husband, appears in the reflection of the mirror. He is dressed in his wedding tuxedo which has a white boutonniere pinned on the left side. He is small in stature, but his voice commands the room.

PAUL

You know you've gotta tell her at some point.

IRENE

I know. It's just the girl doesn't have much going on, this shop is the only thing she really has outside of school.

Irene reaches out her hand to touch her husband. It phases right through him. She freezes her hand in mid air acting as if she can feel her husband. Paul looks down at her longingly.

IRENE (CONT'D)

Soon, we won't have to imagine anymore.

PAUL

You need to tell Dawn.

IRENE

Tomorrow.

Paul drifts out of the frame. Irene hears the song switch to "At Last" by Etta James. The elegant instrumentation and soulful vocals wrap the empty store in warmth. Paul appears back in the reflection and outstretches his hand to Irene.

She smiles and floats her hand above his. The two dance in tandem, synchronizing every move perfectly without touching, as if they have done this a thousand times before.

PAUL

Your favorite.

IRENE

Nice of you to play this instead of Elvis for a change. You know, I think Dawn is right about that. You may be annoying the customers.

The two dance and laugh the rest of the night.

INT. THRIFT SHOP - DAY

The sun rise just breaks on the horizon, reflecting off the morning dew glued to the windows. The latch on the front door clanks open and the lock above the door handle clicks. Dawn strolls in, coffee in hand, already trying to unwind the scarf around her neck.

Irene sits waiting in the office, her impending conversation weighing down her demeanor. She takes a moment to prepare herself before she calls out.

IRENE

Dawn, dear could you come in here?

Dawn walks over.

DAWN

Hey Irene, didn't expect you in this early. What's up?

INT. THRIFT SHOP/IRENE'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Silence. Not even the jukebox wants to make a sound. Dawn finally comes to terms with what she just heard.

DAWN

You're what!

The serene scene of the sunrise already feels like a lifetime ago.

IRENE  
I'm dying, don't have much time  
left.

Irene looks to the right of Dawn at the mirror leaning against the wall. In the reflection, Paul gives her a sad, but comforting nod. Dawn still stands motionless in shock.

IRENE (CONT'D)  
I'm also selling the store.

DAWN  
No! Wait, what?

This is too much information to process.

DAWN (CONT'D)  
What if...

She needs a beat to collect her thoughts.

DAWN (CONT'D)  
I've have been here two years now.  
I can run things while you recover.

Irene eases her with a soft smile.

IRENE  
That is exactly what I do not want  
you to do. You come in early  
everyday and stay late every night.

DAWN  
But I..

IRENE  
Working hard is good, but so is  
living a life, a full life. Get in  
trouble, spend time with your  
family, text that nice boy back.

Dawn can't help but let her tears flow.

DAWN  
Well, maybe there's treatment or...

IRENE  
No. I don't think I want to spend  
my remaining days trying to tick  
some number up. I've had a full  
life;

(MORE)

IRENE (CONT'D)

I can honestly look back with few regrets. When it's my time, it's my time.

Irene gets up to console Dawn. She approaches her employee with warmth and greets her with a hug. The two women hold their embrace. The jukebox glitches back on. Elvis again.

IRENE (CONT'D)

Plus, I've got someone waiting for me.

Irene breaks the silence.

IRENE (CONT'D)

Let's go get some brunch, shop's closed for a while.

Irene leads Dawn out of her office and out the door of the store.

INT. THRIFT SHOP (2021) - DAY

Some time has passed, but the only thing that's changed about the thrift shop is the owner. That warm, vintage feel has remained through the years. The front door opens and the bell dings. It's Dawn and man with his arm wrapped around her.

They head towards the clothing. Her boyfriend aimlessly runs his hands through the racks, just so he's doing something. He has never cared about the merchandise here. Dawn, on the other hand, emotionally strolls down each aisle.

As she passes the register, her attention is caught by the old jukebox as it cuts out mid song. A new song stumbles on; she recognizes it, but can't place it just yet.

Dawn glances into Irene's old office. She peers into the full body mirror, still leaning against the wall. Something in the reflection catches her eye. The music takes over.

ETTA JAMES

*You smiled, you smiled. Oh, and  
then the spell was cast, and here  
we are in Heaven. For you are mine,  
at last.*

She sees a beautiful elderly woman in a flowing wedding dress adjust the white boutonniere pinned on the handsome man's suit. The music feels like it engulfs the shop. Dawn realizes what she sees.

Irene and Paul dancing, hand in hand.