

INT. BELLBOTTOM SOUL VINTAGE CLOTHING SHOP - SAME DAY  
- AFTER SCHOOL

Cynda steps through the door of Bellbottom Soul, owned and operated by her good friend, MR. EDDIE VINCENT, LATE 60's. Mr. Eddie is surrounded by a group of men in his age group. Cynda sits off in the corner and listens as he talks.

MR. EDDIE

She came into the Indigo Lounge that night, all dressed in red. Her hair was up to HERE. I sat down at the piano the way I always did, but I knew right then that night was going to be special. One I would never forget.

(beat)

The audience was dead silent and everyone seemed to be waiting for that first note. But she took her time. Yes, she took her time and let us know without saying a word that she wouldn't sing until she was good and ready to sing. And we waited, because we knew that when she was good and ready, she wouldn't disappoint. We waited some more. And then she raised her arms and threw back her head and she let out the longest, fullest, richest note I'd ever heard in my life. The crowd went wild, and when her arms came down, so did my fingers on them keys! And suddenly there was music everywhere. Bass, guitar, piano, drums—every instrument sang in the key of this grand diva. And it didn't stop until every single person in the room was on their feet, screaming her name and swaying from side to side like it was a Sunday morning church service.

(beat)

She came right up to me  
afterwards, gave me a big hug,  
posed for that picture you see  
there on the wall, kissed me on my  
check, handed me the one shoe she  
had left—'cause she had kicked the  
other one out into the audience—  
and told me I was the best darn  
piano player she had ever met.  
Then she walked out of there in  
her bare feet, just as down-to-  
earth as you pleased.

(beat)

And that, fellas, was the night I  
met Miss Patti LaBelle.

The men applaud and talk amongst themselves as they  
get to their feet and slowly make their way from the  
shop. Cynda approaches him as the shop empties out.

MR. EDDIE

(affectionately)

I was thinking about you today,  
Lady.

CYNDA

And what were you thinking?

MR. EDDIE

How fabulous you would look in  
this.

He disappears behind the counter and reappears holding  
a colorful outfit.

MR. EDDIE

Just came in today. That little  
actress you like so much wore  
something like this in her last  
film, but personally, I think  
you'll look much better.

CYNDA

Ooooooh, I like!

MR. EDDIE

I thought you might. Well, go try it on.

Cynda disappears into the dressing room. Mr. Eddie continues talking to her from the front counter.

MR. EDDIE

So how was school today?

CYNDA

(from the dressing room)

You ask me that everyday and the answer never changes. I'm still invisible.

MR. EDDIE

Being invisible might not be such a bad thing.

CYNDA

(from the dressing room)

And you say that everyday too!

MR. EDDIE

(chuckling)

I guess I do.

The dressing room door opens a few moments later and Cynda steps out, completely transformed from her drab clothing to the retro-funky, colorful outfit.

MR. EDDIE

Wooooo weeeee! You see? Fab-u-lous. You totally look the part.

CYNDA

Of what?

MR. EDDIE

The singing sensation you're going to be someday. Mary J Baker, look out.

CYNDA

(giggling)

It's Mary J Blige, Mr. Eddie.

(beat)

And I don't know if I'll ever be a singer.

MR. EDDIE

You will. Just promise me one thing.

CYNDA

What?

MR. EDDIE

That you'll let Mr. Eddie be your stylist. You've been coming here after school almost everyday for over two years now, and I've never steered you wrong.

CYNDA

(with a sigh)

I just wish I could take the clothes home with me instead of only playing dress-up with them.

MR. EDDIE

I could wrap it up very discreetly in a plain brown paper bag and you could sneak it into the house and hide it in the back of your closet.

CYNDA

(sadly)

And my stepsisters would find it, take it from me, and tell Gertie I stole it or something. And then I'd have to confess that I got it from you and she'd stop me from coming here and then what would I have left? You're my best friend in this whole world, Mr. Eddie. You're the only one who really understands me.

MR. EDDIE

I want you to have this outfit, sweetheart. I'll tell you what. I'll keep it here at the shop. It'll be here for you whenever you need it.

CYNDA

(woefully)

But where would I ever wear it?  
Thanks, anyway, Mr. Eddie.

She heads for the dressing room.

MR. EDDIE

Cynthia. It's gonna get better  
someday. I promise. You just hang  
in there, hear? Your Daddy never  
meant for you to live like this.

CYNDA

(turning back to face him)

I miss him, Mr. Eddie. I miss him  
so much.

MR. EDDIE

I know you do, babygirl. I miss  
him too. There isn't a day that  
goes by that I don't think about  
him. And your mama too. They spent  
nearly as much time in this shop  
when they were kids as you do now.  
But what am I saying? You already  
know the story quite well.

CYNDA

(eagerly)

But I like to hear it. Tell me  
again, Mr. Eddie.

MR. EDDIE

They didn't like each other at  
first. Your daddy used to pick on  
your mama something terrible!  
She'd run in here everyday after  
school-'cause she liked to play  
dress up just like you do—and  
she'd complain about how that mean  
little Bernard Scott did this and  
that to her, or said this or that  
to her, or hit her here or there.  
I told her way back then that boy  
liked her, and all she'd do is  
wrinkle up that cute little nose

of hers and say "ew, mr. eddie,  
that's nasty!"

CYNDA

And then one day she stopped  
wrinkling up her nose...

MR. EDDIE

Yes, she did. And she'd say  
instead, "I guess he's not so  
bad".

CYNDA

And then one day when they were  
about fourteen years old, they  
walked in here together!

MR. EDDIE

Blushing, both of them! Your daddy  
told me a secret that day—well, at  
least he thought it was a secret  
anyway—that he was gonna marry  
your mama someday.

CYNDA

And they did get married a few  
years later! On a crisp October  
day.

MR. EDDIE

A Saturday. The first most  
beautiful Saturday I ever  
remember. And then, one whole year  
later—

CYNDA

I was born!

MR. EDDIE

The second most beautiful Saturday  
I ever remember.

CYNDA

And then Mama died a few months  
later...

MR. EDDIE

Hurt my heart, that thing. Broke it all to pieces. But I still had you to remind me of her. And I had your Daddy to look after. And I knew he'd be alright.

CYNDA

But you didn't count on him marrying Gertie...

MR. EDDIE

Didn't see that coming at all! She was newly divorced and she'd just moved to town, she and her daughters. I never even knew they were dating until the day I ran into them in the park. Your daddy came to see me later and asked my advice, which I did not hold back from giving him, of course.

CYNDA

And he went back and told her what you said...

MR. EDDIE

Must have. Because she stopped by here one day and we had the most unpleasant conversation I've ever had with a woman. And then the next thing I know, they're married.

CYNDA

And you didn't even get a wedding invitation!

MR. EDDIE

And we both know who saw to that!

They both laugh and then grow quiet.

CYNDA

And then my Daddy died...

MR. EDDIE

(tenderly)

And I knew I'd have to look after you because you really didn't have anyone else. It hurts my heart that I can't do more. If I could, child, I'd take you away from that place.

CYNDA

(gently)

It's okay, Mr. Eddie. I can deal with anything as long as I have you.

They hug and then Cynda pulls away.

CYNDA

I'm late, I'd better go!

She grabs her backpack and races towards the door.

MR. EDDIE

Cynda! Your clothes!

CYNDA

Right!

She drops the backpack and rushes in the opposite direction to the dressing room. A moment later she drops the outfit Mr. Eddie had given her into his arms and races from the store in her old clothes. Mr. Eddie watches her go sadly.