

Minus Lara
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FADE IN:

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE. DAY

Tired-looking people peruse the aisles of a dreary department store, tracking mud on the vinyl floor. An elevator-music rendition of "Lara's Theme" from the movie *Dr. Zhivago* trickles from overhead speakers.

LARA, a twenty-something woman clad in a frumpy parka, browses the aisles, dreamily humming along to the music. She passes a child's synthesizer in the marked-down bin, pauses, and goes back to it.

She scans the room and catches the eye of a young SALES CLERK in an orange smock stocking shelves. She smiles at him, but his face is unfriendly. She drops her eyes.

She looks at the synthesizer, switches on the power button, and fiddles with the keys. Soon, she is hesitantly tapping out the first few bars of "Lara's Theme," in tandem with the elevator music. She stops.

A OLD WOMAN nearby smiles and gestures at her to continue.

OLD WOMAN
Go on, that's lovely!

Lara plays the leitmotif once more, with confidence. She continues, and the elevator music fades and is replaced with faint orchestral accompaniment. Terrified, she stops and looks around. The other customers are oblivious - absorbed in their own activities.

Lara resumes the last few notes of the tune, and the orchestral accompaniment starts up again, louder this time. She taps on the last note and holds it for a few seconds - the orchestral music is likewise sustained.

She looks up to see the sales clerk gazing at her. An orchestral version of "Lara's Theme" swells through the room. People drop what they're doing and begin to waltz. Snowflakes flutter from the ceiling.

An elderly STORE MANAGER tries to subdue the commotion, summoning more employees in orange smocks. The employees approach the couples, but soon join hands and begin waltzing as well.

Lara and the sales clerk weave their way through the dancers, staring into each other's eyes. She removes her parka and he removes his orange smock, revealing Russian period clothing.

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They clasp hands and begin dancing in circles, and throngs of waltzing couples cluster around them. The flowing skirts of the women whirl into colorful rosettes, culminating with the sales clerk and Lara in the middle.

Lara and the sales clerk slow the pace of their dancing - he leans in for a kiss.

The music abruptly becomes somber and forbidding. A YELL is heard - Lara looks up and sees security guards at the store entrance conferring with the store manager - he points at Lara and the sales clerk.

SECURITY GUARD #1 and SECURITY GUARD #2 march towards the crowd, which dissipates. The guards seize upon Lara and the sales clerk, and a chase gives way.

Lara and the sales clerk are pursued throughout the store aisles. But despite being fast on their feet, security catches the sales clerk, tears him from Lara's arms, and carry him away.

Lara sobs and runs after the guards as they haul the clerk towards the store exit. Lara meets the sales clerk's eyes, and they stretch their arms out towards each other.

All at once, the music ceases, and the store is as prior, with no snow or security in sight. Customers quietly browse aisles and purchase products.

The sales clerk stands before Lara, once more clad in his orange smock, gazing at her with hostility.

STORE CLERK

You gonna pay for that?

He motions at the toy synthesizer.

LARA

No. Er, I'm sorry.

She heads to the store exit amidst the other customers. As she leaves, a lone snowflake flutters from the ceiling.

THE END