

The Amazing Adventures of the Monogamous Duck

Written by

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EXT. VACANT LOT (FLASHBACK) - NIGHT

GRADY HERMAN (30/40) stands 60 feet away from a graffiti-covered wall. He fires a ball at the expanse of artwork in front of him, then fields it with the flash and flair of a seasoned shortstop.

GRADY (V.O.)

The single most abused, misused...I would go so far as to say perverted word in the English language -- not that I can claim to be any sort of authority on it -- but the single most abused word in the English language is the word "beautiful."

Grady produces a "bullet." Takes a hit of cocaine, resumes play.

GRADY (V.O.)

It's a precious word, and we should reserve it for precious people: Your mother; your daughter; a girlfriend. And I do obviously realize that in the grand scheme of things, it's pretty much useless to have this at or near the top of your list of pet peeves, but still. Just break down the actual word: Beautiful. Beauty-full... Full of beauty.

INT. NYC PARK (FLASHBACK) - NIGHT

Grady inhales coke, exhales pain. Plays chess with his DEALER.

GRADY (V.O.)

It may be trivial, but I hesitate at describing some random girl as being beautiful, full of beauty, when I find most girls to be full of something else. Most people.

Undercover COPS approach. Wrangler jeans, beige Timberlands. They arrest Grady and Dealer without any pushback.

GRADY (V.O.)

The only other word that approaches "beautiful" in terms of its overuse is the word "genius." Every other conversation I have, someone's like, "You need to meet my friend Steven. He's a genius." I mean, not for nothing, but "beautiful" and "genius" are not words you just float around.

INT. PHOENIX HOUSE TREATMENT CENTER - DAY

RESIDENTS sing, as per their ritual. An ALTO flies solo.

ALTO

Hark the herald angels sing, glory
to the newborn king! Pleased as man,
with men to dwell, Jesus our Emmanuel!

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Grady has been sitting across from DR. ROSEN (60). Jacket on and bag in hand, he's checking out. Alto SINGS off-screen.

GRADY

There's a difference between
being brilliant and being a genius.
Brilliant/Smart people know that
the capital of Burkina Faso is
Ouagadougou, they know the literacy
rate is 34%, the chief natural
resource is manganese, and the
percentage of arable land is whatever
the fuck the percentage of arable
land happens to be. Genius is deeper
than that. Dorothy Parker and
Rosalind Franklin were geniuses.
Cristóbal Balenciaga was a genius.
Fucking Greg Maddux was a genius.
Some guy named Steven who painted
an apple on a table is just...not.

EXT. PHOENIX HOUSE - DAY

Grady and Dr. Rosen weave their way through a garden.

GRADY

You know how the little things in
life are what's important?

DR. ROSEN

Children making rainbows with
garden hoses...their fascination
with bubble-wrap...sure.

GRADY

Well the last time I remember having
an identity outside of drugs, I was
this dynamic, swashbuckling romantic.
I had all the little things totally
covered. Now I feel like I've awoken
from this long slumber, but I don't
have anything basic to offer beyond
the eternal affection sunshine shit.

DR. ROSEN

It's the icing on the cake.

GRADY

But I'm missing the batter.

DR. ROSEN

You wrote a book. A published novel.

GRADY

A book no one bought or read doesn't mean much. I got like 17 dollars in the bank and a girlfriend that died four years ago... I still can't get over it, and don't know if I want to.

DR. ROSEN

I'm sorry to hear that.

GRADY

Well... The thing that sucks is that it's 17 dollars, and the minimum you can take out of an ATM is 20. Anyway. They did the same thing to the book that they did to my girlfriend.

Dr. Rosen gestures.

GRADY

They buried it. The book was sad, and people don't like sad stories.

DR. ROSEN

... You'll stay with your family?

GRADY

I'm actually gonna stay with my editor. It's hard to say, "my editor" without being insufferable, but yeah. We met in a mentoring program for at-risk teens when I was a teen-at-risk.

DR. ROSEN

And she's agreeable with you staying.

GRADY

She got divorced last year and moved to California for the job. Before I came in, we figured it might be good for the kids and all if I were there.

Grady picks up a garden hose. He alternates between the hard stream and gentle spray. The mist creates a rainbow.

DR. ROSEN

So she's excited you're coming.

GRADY

I don't know if "excited" is how I would couch it. I owe money on the second book; it was a two-book deal. If I don't show a second manuscript, the bonus is due back to house.

DR. ROSEN

How much?

GRADY

I spent it. Like a hundred thousand?

DR. ROSEN

What did you spend it on?

GRADY

Like a hundred fifty thousand?

DR. ROSEN

What did you spend it on?

GRADY

I dunno, drugs. College basketball. The book never got off the floor; that's my fault. But it's their own fault for assuming sales would catch up with the reviews on this next one. Or that there would be a next one.

Grady fires water straight up, steps aside upon its re-entry.

DR. ROSEN

So, California.

GRADY

California. Manifest Destiny. "Go West, young man."

DR. ROSEN

Do you know the actual quote?

GRADY

That's not it?

DR. ROSEN

The full quote...was "Go West, young man...and grow up with the country."

INT. LAX - DAY

On an escalator, Grady looks down. Sees an errant shoelace. He looks back up. After a beat, he bends down, tucks it in.

EXT. AIRPORT - DAY

DARLA NATHANSON (50s) walks. Radiating competence and warmth, she carries herself with little effort, but high regard.

GRADY

Darla.

She sees Grady, leaning against a pillar. They face off.

INT. CAR - DAY

Grady's elbow, awkwardly perched on two inches of raised glass. He looks at a salt-and-pepper notebook. Hits the window button.

GRADY

Hey, uh...Grandma. You wanna cut me a little slack with the child safety thing here?

Instead of lowering the window, Darla raises it.

GRADY

How's Ed? He still dating that nurse?

DARLA

It takes ambition to be a nurse. Try "Trixxi," spelled with two Xs.
(beat)
Ed is Ed. I appreciate you asking.

GRADY

That's what I'm here for.

DARLA

And where were you when it counted? What was I supposed to tell Meghan? Mommy and Daddy are splitting up, but Grady can't get in a car cuz he's too busy self-destructing?

GRADY

The truth never hurts, Darla.

DARLA

... Are you wearing your seatbelt?

As Grady reaches for his belt, Darla SLAMS the brakes. Grady flies into the dash. On the recoil, he's flung back into his seat. Darla then grabs his earl as if he's an insolent child.

DARLA

The truth never hurts? The truth never hurts? The truth always hurts. Understand that, you shit.

INT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

Darla pushes a cart. Grady drops in items. Darla, in turn, casually removes them. Grady doesn't notice, and Darla doesn't care about re-shelving items in the wrong sections.

DARLA

Grady, you have a drug problem. As such, you will attend meetings. In addition, you will address any and all mental issues, gambling issues --

GRADY

A'right. First of all, I wouldn't have had any gambling issues if this guy on the Indians, Russell Branyan? If Russell knew how to make contact with any incarnation of an off-speed pitch, gambling would've never been a problem. Or -- or...if way back in 2001, Jeremy Giambi figured out that it might be a good idea to slide at some point in his career. Fucking Victor Conte forgot to put that one in the BALCO instruction manual.

Darla shelves soda among nuggets, pasta among milk.

DARLA

You are here to shape up and write. By invoking something so pedestrian as baseball --

GRADY

Baseball is not pedestrian.

DARLA

Hemingway said the only true sports were bull fighting, auto racing, and mountaineering.

GRADY

What has Hemingway ever done for you?

DARLA

He's never let me down. That's what.

INT. CAR - DAY

Darla and Grady drive home.

GRADY

How's your love life going...? Have you been dating at all...? Have you been dating at all?

DARLA

Dating leads to love. And love is an illusion created by lawyers to perpetuate another illusion called marriage that creates the reality of divorce and the illusionary need for divorce lawyers.

GRADY

People get divorced every day, Darla.

DARLA

I don't get divorced every day.

(MORE)

DARLA (cont'd)
 Have you considered that? The fact
 that I don't get divorced every day?

She sees his shoes on the dashboard.

DARLA
 Get your feet off the car.

Grady complies. After a moment, he puts on his seatbelt.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Darla's middle child, still growing into his mind and body,
 is ANDREW NATHANSON (15). Enter Grady, timidly.

GRADY
 Hey. How have you been?

ANDREW
 Good. What about you?

GRADY
 I'm okay. How's the new school?

ANDREW
 ... Jury's still out.

GRADY
 Are you hungry?
 (off a nod)
 What are you in the mood for?

ANDREW
 Anything... Actually, can you make
 your mac and cheese?

Andrew opens a cabinet. They ease into their familiar ways.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Grady sits on the porch. A car stops out front. Out steps
 Darla's youngest, MEGHAN NATHANSON (9). A CLASSMATE waves
 as the car leaves. A subdued Meghan approaches.

MEGHAN
 What are you drinking?

GRADY
 I think you know exactly what I'm
 drinking.

MEGHAN
 Cherry 7-Up... Can I get a sip?

GRADY
 Maybe I'll save some at the end...
 So are the rumors true? Mommy said
 you got a boyfriend.

MEGHAN
 Mommy doesn't know what she's talking
 about.

GRADY
 Is he cute?

MEGHAN
 ... He's cute.

GRADY
 What's his name?

MEGHAN
 Cary Volkman.

GRADY
 Now, when people refer to you guys,
 do they say, "Meghan and Cary," or
 "Cary and Meghan"?

MEGHAN
 "Meghan and Cary."

GRADY
 Nice. That's key. I've never been
 first myself, but whatever.

MEGHAN
 You haven't dated that many girls.

GRADY
 Quality over quantity.

MEGHAN
 Don't drink it all. You said you were
 gonna save me some.

GRADY
 I said "maybe" I would save you some.

MEGHAN
 And?

GRADY
And, did you ever think that "maybe"
 is just a nice way of saying "no"?

MEGHAN
 You're trying to push my buttons.

GRADY
 I am... So are you just gonna stand
 there, or am I gonna get a hug?

She closes the gap. They embrace.

GRADY
I'm really sorry.

MEGHAN
It's okay.

GRADY
I'm sorry.

MEGHAN
It's gonna be fine.

GRADY
... A'right, get off.

She kisses his cheek. He gives her his Cherry 7-Up.

INT. GRADY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Grady opens a box, finds candlesticks. Places one aside. He gets another, takes a pen from the box. Hollows out the core from the stick's base. He then grabs the candle he set aside. Digs out its base as well. Two small vials of cocaine emerge.

Grady places one vial in the dug-out space from the second stick. He takes the first stick, melts it with a lighter's flame. Next, he drips wax onto the other stick. It forms a seal over the vial. That one back in hiding, he places the other one in his pocket.

INT. GRADY'S ROOM - MORNING

Darla's eldest, VANESSA NATHANSON (16), stands at the door. She watches Grady sleep. His covers don't cover; they reach for the floor. Vanessa enters, fix his sheets, tucks him in.

VANESSA
I fucking hate you.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Andrew works on a portrait of an unaware LYNDA CARR (15). Meathead ROB HILDRETH (15) pokes the back of Andrew's neck with a compass. Andrew jams up the nearly finished drawing. He rips it from his pad, balls it up, sticks it in his bag.

Teacher CAITLIN FOUNTAIN (30s) is at the head of the class.

GIRL 1
We just don't understand. How do you not have a boyfriend?

CAITLIN
Okay. Personal time is over.

BOY 1
I know the deal. You're a man hater.

CAITLIN

No, I love men. It's children I hate.
So how are your essays coming along?

ANDREW

How long do they have to be?

BOY 1

Same stupid question every time. As
long as it takes to get the job done.
(off Caitlin)
He slows us down. Andrew, you're not
cut out for AP classes. Get with the
dumb kids in General Pop.

CAITLIN

Write whatever you feel is enough.

Caitlin approaches Boy 1. Casually balls a sheet of paper.

CAITLIN

You guys shouldn't be able to sum
yourselves up that quickly anyway.

GIRL 1

I have a huge Bio test. I don't know
if I can write more than a page.

CAITLIN

Look, I sympathize with the fact that
your other teachers can't pass muster
with the Board of Ed based on a charm
offensive alone. Greg -- behind you.

Boy 1/Greg turns. Caitlin hits him with the balled up paper.
Kids laugh. Caitlin speaks into Boy 1's ear.

CAITLIN

I don't care how much Daddy pays in
tuition, or if he can have me fired.
(retreats)
Do you have something to say?

GREG

I'm sorry.

CAITLIN

Louder.

GREG

I'm sorry.

CAITLIN

He has a name.

GREG

I'm sorry. Andrew.

CAITLIN

The assignment: By asking you to write a mock college essay, I'm allowing you to go off the reservation and have fun. Since you're presenting it in front of the class, you might as well embrace the horror of it all. Plus, it's the one creative assignment I get to grade every year, so it's important to me on a personal level.

BOY 2

No wonder you don't have a boyfriend.

Kids laugh.

LYNDA

Ms. Fountain, do you really not have a boyfriend? You are so beautiful.

CAITLIN

I'm trying as hard as I can; believe me. I don't wake up like this. As for men? Slim. Pickings.

LYNDA

But aren't older guys so much more mature? College guys are so mature.

Girls murmur approval. Caitlin stares. She then turns around, writes in large, chalk letters: It Only Gets Worse.

LYNDA

What are you looking for in a guy?

CAITLIN

(beat)

Someone to go to garage sales with.

INT. GRADY'S ROOM - DAY

As he sleeps, Meghan's eyes are right up against Grady's. After a moment, his eyelids flutter open.

MEGHAN

Are you awake?

GRADY

Shouldn't you be in school?

MEGHAN

I might have the flu.

Grady moves away. After a moment, Meghan moves closer.

MEGHAN

We have to pick up Vanessa.

A beat. Meghan blows air at Grady's forehead. His eyes open. Then close. Meghan blows again, and Grady palms her face.

GRADY
You were adopted.

MEGHAN
So were you.

GRADY
I wasn't. But more or less, yeah.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

The first real look at the indomitable Vanessa Nathanson.

Also, JOCELYN FELDMAN (16), WILL HERZOG (16), KICKER, and COACH. They lounge, close to where Kicker boots field goals. Will & Coach have a bag of balls between them. Set up kicks.

JOCELYN
You going to the Art Show?

VANESSA
My brother's gonna present.

Kicker pulls up lame. They're testing an injury.

COACH
That's it. We're done here.

Kicker and Coach head off. Will joins the girls on the grass.

WILL
I thought you were a vegan. Why are you eating McDonald's?

VANESSA
Because I love McDonald's. It's delicious and tastes like America.

She and Jocelyn exchange high fives. Jocelyn, to Will:

JOCELYN
Didn't they fire you?

WILL
I was stealing too many hamburgers.

VANESSA
What's "too many"? Don't they have thousands in the back?

WILL
Do you know Ronald McDonald?

VANESSA
Obviously. He's terrifying.

WILL

Especially the newer version they introduced last year. So, Ron has a rival who cosplays as a prisoner.

VANESSA

The Hamburglar. We know.

WILL

Well, McDonald's HQ in Illinois? They take hamburger theft seriously.

VANESSA

This will be a stupid story. A story as convenient as it is precious. And kinda sad. A million senior citizens, parents, and high school school kids who actually do need the money can't get a job at McDonald's. But for you, it's just a funny story to tell on a field trip when you're trying to act cool in front of some senior bros on the lacrosse team.

WILL

"A story as convenient as it is precious"? Who are you trying to impress? You sound like the blonde chick we're reading in English.

VANESSA

"The blonde chick we're reading in English"? Jane Austen?

WILL

Relax.

VANESSA

One, don't tell me to relax. Two, Jane Austen had brown hair.

WILL

How would you know? She lived 1000 years ago. Was Shakespeare a man?

VANESSA

Jane Austen died at 42 in the 1800s. My mom's an editor; Shakespeare was definitely a man. We know these things, because we have paintings.

(beat)

Don't fuck with me, William. You're out of your league.

WILL

It's cool that your mom's an editor.

(MORE)

WILL (cont'd)

My dad's a greeter at Walmart. And he said Shakespeare is a conspiracy. That it was probably three women who did the heavy lifting: His cook, a seamstress, and a chambermaid.

VANESSA

That's funny. Are you finished?

WILL

There's a reason your parents pay 60 grand a year, while scholar-athletes pay nothing.

Vanessa gathers her books, heads off.

WILL

Vanessa: No one calls me "William."
It's just "Will."

Regarding Kicker/Coach testing a leg, Will turns to Jocelyn.

WILL

I think she can kick.

INT. CAR - DAY

Grady and Meghan pull up to Andrew and Vanessa's school.

GRADY

What do you wanna listen to?

MEGHAN

Metallica. "Seek and Destroy."

GRADY

There are other bands out there.

MEGHAN

What's wrong with Metallica?

GRADY

They're gods, but there are better ways you can be spending your time.

MEGHAN

You're a music snob.

GRADY

Did you read the book I sent?

MEGHAN

What book?

GRADY

The Color Purple.

MEGHAN
I started then I stopped.

GRADY
Why?

MEGHAN
Cuz it's not about the color purple.

GRADY
It's not.

MEGHAN
It's about slavery.

GRADY
I'm glad that came across in the read.

MEGHAN
Also... Mommy said I'm not old enough.

GRADY
Mommy said you're not old enough?
You're old enough to know all the
moves from the booty-shakin' videos,
but you're not old enough to read
The Color Purple?

Grady steps out, rests his arms on the car.

GRADY
Look at me. Don't go anywhere.

MEGHAN
I won't.

GRADY
The roads are different out here.

MEGHAN
I don't know how to drive.

GRADY
That's what I'm afraid of. Neither
did Vanessa when she was your age.

INT. SCHOOL - DAY

Ms. Caitlin Fountain (Andrew's teacher) puts up flyers. They advertise her tutoring services. At the bottom of the flyers are sliced strips with her phone number on them.

At the end of the hall, Grady sits across an office. GIRL (16) and BOY (16) wait, sitting in chairs across from him. Caitlin heads towards the office, and them. As she passes:

GIRL
I love your shoes. Who made them?

CAITLIN

I'm not sure.

BOY

They look expensive.

CAITLIN

They weren't that expensive.

GRADY

They were very expensive, and they're Proenza Schouler... Do you have a job interview at a better school?

CAITLIN

No, and they were a gift.

GRADY

Good for you. I bet you wrote one heck of a thank you note.

CAITLIN

I did. A student's mom was appreciative of my help, so...

GRADY

Oh, nice. It's that kind of school. Sure. I can respect that.

Boy and Girl laugh.

CAITLIN

It's not "that kind of school." And how would you know the designer?

GRADY

My boss has me organize hers, so...

CAITLIN

Your boss.

GRADY

She carries herself like she's my boss, that's for sure. Technically, were colleagues, but...

CAITLIN

She's your boss.

GRADY

Right. She has 500 shoes and 50 bags. And she always makes me...index them.

CAITLIN

That sounds great.

GRADY

It's funny you say that, cuz it's not great. It's actually pretty terrible.

Girl and Boy, locked in.

GRADY

She takes off her shoes and just throws them anywhere she pleases. It's inconsiderate, and makes it that much harder for me. She also throws her tissues all around the garbage, and not actually in the garbage, but that's a whole other can of worms.

CAITLIN

I appreciate the peacocking and showing off the fact that you're the only guy in a ten-mile radius who knows who Proenza Schouler is.

GRADY

Uh, I'm new around here, but we are in Los Angeles. I can't be the only guy who's more curious about a girl's shoes than --

CAITLIN

Yeah. That's not okay.

GRADY

That came out wrong.

CAITLIN

It sure as hell did.

INT. CAR - DAY

Motionless, Meghan listens to ear-splitting death metal.

INT. SCHOOL - DAY

Back with Grady/Caitlin. Boy/Girl, loving every moment.

CAITLIN

If you want to walk around, you have to get proper authorization.

GRADY

That's alright. I'm just gonna freelance it and check out the trophy cases or whatever.

CAITLIN

Are you here to pick someone up? We worry about threats to the children.

GRADY

Do I look a threat to children?

CAITLIN

Textbook. White male, 30 to 40,
five-foot-eleven...

GRADY

Six foot? Six feet tall?

CAITLIN

It's always the clean-cut ones who
have a little girl tied up in the
basement with duct tape and jumper
cables. Maybe a red plastic bucket.

GRADY

That's a little too specific.

CAITLIN

I asked if you were here for someone.

GRADY

I'm a threat to children? Back to you
and your red plastic bucket, creeper.
And yes, I'm here to pick someone up.

CAITLIN

I meant a child.

GRADY

... She's not answering her phone.

CAITLIN

I'm sure you get that a lot. Describe.

GRADY

Well she's very bright. Very pretty.
A little standoff-ish, but that's a
function of her intelligence and like,
The Invisible Hand of the Patriarchy.

CAITLIN

Ohhhh... You're one of those.

Caitlin heads to the office doorway.

CAITLIN

Mrs. Witter, can you be a dear and
help this person find his child?

Caitlin heads off, never looks back. Grady watches. A moment,
until he rips off a flyer strip that advertises her services.

INT. GYM - DAY

Previously, Vanessa was sitting in on Kicker's practice.

Now, with her soccer TEAMMATES kicking in the background, she sees Grady. He approaches, they converge.

GRADY

Andrew said you're pretty mad at me.

VANESSA

I'm not mad at you.

GRADY

No?

VANESSA

I was. At one point I was. But now I realize I should accept you for who and what you are.

Anticipating this for a year, Vanessa lays into him.

VANESSA

I was watching the 30 for 30 about Darryl Strawberry and Dwight Gooden. They both had New York in the palm of their hands at a young age. Just like you. And both they had their demons, just like you... And you know what they did with the city in the palm of their hands? You know what they said?

She extends her palm.

VANESSA

Here. Take this. I don't want it... You know what the problem with having heroes is? They have a nasty habit of disappointing you in the end.

GRADY

Vanessa, stop. I fucked up, I know I fucked up, and no one knows I fucked up more than I know I fucked up. But I'm in a bad spot right now --

VANESSA

Well boo-hoo. You put the rest of us in a bad spot.

GRADY

That's not the point.

VANESSA

You're right; it's not the point. The point is that people cared about you. I had shit invested in you.

GRADY

There's --

VANESSA

I'm speaking... I had shit invested in you. I'm an extension of you. Not by blood maybe, but something more important than that.

GRADY

What's more important than blood?

VANESSA

Love.

GRADY

Vanessa, for however long I'm here, I'm not gonna let you beat me down. I'm not your father; I'm your friend. And you're not gonna take me granted.

VANESSA

I take you for granted? Wow.

Soccer balls fly across the gym.

GRADY

I gotta admit. I was hoping for a more enthusiastic reception.

VANESSA

... I was hoping for a little more humility.

INT. GRADY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Darla enters, sees Grady at a desk.

DARLA

Did you get any work done today?

GRADY

I did.

DARLA

Yeah? What did you do?

GRADY

I actually read the love letters... that Napoleon...sent to Josephine.

DARLA

And?

GRADY (crinkling nose)

They weren't very good.

EXT. BACKYARD - NIGHT

Andrew looks at the stars through a telescope.

Grady joins him, salt-and-pepper notebook in hand.

ANDREW
What are you up to?

GRADY
Just wondering how I got here.

ANDREW
You and me both.

GRADY
What's your girl situation like?

ANDREW
My stuff doesn't translate. Fine, it's California, but compared to your average New York girl, anything else is a step down.

GRADY
Well, it's New York. Even the ugly girls are hot.

ANDREW
There is one girl. Lynda. I've never talked to her, but we're in the same English class. We have this mock college essay due, and we have to read them in front of the class. I want to impress her, but I don't know what to write.

GRADY
Let's see if I can help.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

They look at Andrew's portraits: Darla, Vanessa, and Meghan.

ANDREW
What was it like in rehab?

GRADY
It's all cleaning. You clean toilets, and they make you clean them again to test your patience. The idea is, the world's gonna test you, so you can't turn to drugs when you're frustrated.

ANDREW
What happens if you don't hand in a manuscript?

GRADY
I can't be the first writer who took the money, and didn't turn a book in.

ANDREW

You would be. From the conversations I've overheard, that's what makes your situation so unique, and so terrifying for everyone involved.

GRADY

The draft is due in two weeks. Then it's a breach of contract type-deal. I have to check.

ANDREW

Mom says you've probably been working on the same 50 pages for the past two years. I was hoping you had the final draft in a safe somewhere.

GRADY

Eh. Somewhere in-between.

ANDREW

Everything in life is somewhere in-between. You're the king of saying everything, without saying anything.

They see a painting of Diane, Grady's late girlfriend.

ANDREW

We had fun that day.

INT. BATHROOM - MORNING

Grady and Meghan wear green facial masks, stare in the mirror.

MEGHAN

You lost weight.

GRADY

I had to go on a hunger strike.
(off her look)
It's when you stop eating.

MEGHAN

Why would you do that?

GRADY

To prove a point.

MEGHAN

Knowing how you are, I'm sure you showed them a thing or two.

GRADY

Yeah. It didn't work out like that.

MEGHAN

Why not?

He takes a towel off her head, brushes out the knots.

GRADY

They had a lot of Kryptonite there, you know what I mean? A lot of smart people worked there. I think most of my little schemes would've benefited from...I dunno, a little more effort during the planning stages, maybe?

MEGHAN

My skin is burning.

GRADY

That means it's working.

MEGHAN

... So how come you use drugs?

GRADY

People who get in too deep, they often don't like something about themselves. Their past...present...

MEGHAN

You don't like yourself?

GRADY

I love myself. I just don't always ...like myself.

MEGHAN

I understand.

GRADY

Good. At least one of us does.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Vanessa, Will, Jocelyn, HEATHER CHURCH (16). All at a table. Heather leans on Will's arm, indicating that they're dating.

WILL

Okay, favorite Monopoly property.

JOCELYN

Indiana Avenue.

HEATHER

Boardwalk.

VANESSA

... I'm gonna say Baltic Avenue.

HEATHER

Why? Boardwalk's better.

WILL

But it's not fun. She's being
ironic. Boardwalk's too obvious.

JOCELYN

What's yours?

WILL

I've always liked Marvin Gardens.
It'd be a good name for band. You
could see them playing on Saturday
Night Live. "Ladies and gentleman,
once again... Marvin Gardens."

HEATHER

I don't get it.

WILL

Anyway. I hate group work, so let's
get this out of the way. Vanessa,
you're gonna hafta pull your weight.

VANESSA

It's Jocelyn we have to worry about.
Watch: She'll ask to go nurse a lot.

Will smiles. He and Vanessa hold eye contact.

INT. ST. MARTIN'S PRESS - DAY

Darla holds court. Grady and Meghan sit in front of her.

DARLA

I'm getting déjà vu. Feels like our
Doubleday revision meetings.

GRADY

Doesn't it?

DARLA

No, it doesn't, come to think of it.
You've lost your innocence, and I'm
getting old... Or maybe I've lost my
innocence, and you're getting old...
Do you have pages for me?

GRADY

I don't have those, but do have this.

He hands her the strip from Caitlin's flyer.

GRADY

It's a tutor for Meghan. Flu or no
flu, she's missing a lot of school.
You don't want her to fall behind.

DARLA
Agreed. Now, NA meeting. Let's go.

GRADY
Can you not ruin this by --

DARLA
Ruin what? You failed me personally
and professionally.

GRADY
A tree fell in the woods, and no one
was there to hear it: Good book, great
editing, rave reviews. You can't take
it personally when people don't wanna
spend 26.95 on a sob story.

DARLA
You do.

GRADY
What, take it personally?

DARLA
Yeah.

GRADY
... How else should I take it?
(beat)
What about you? I don't think it's a
big deal that you're not dating, cuz
I know the kids come first. But I do
think it's a big deal that I can't
even ask you about it. To me, that's
troubling. That's a concern.

DARLA
This isn't about me.

GRADY
I know; it's about me. It's always
about me. That's half the problem.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Andrew crosses paths with Lynda.

LYNDA
Hey. Don't let Greg get to you.
He's like that with everyone.

She continues on her way. Andrew smiles.

INT. CAR - DAY

Darla drives Grady. Pulls up in front of a building.

INT. NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS - DAY

Grady walks down a hall. Takes note of an EXIT sign. As he nears the door to freedom, he looks into the NA room. Sees a face that's been ravaged by drugs. Grady enters.

He sits by an ADDICT near a window. Addict whistles/leaves. Grady knows Addict is about to make a drug deal. He follows.

INT. DARLA'S CAR - DAY

Darla waits, wanting to be sure that Grady stays put.

INT. NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS - DAY

Grady, through the door. Sees a sketchy DEALER in a car.

INT. DARLA'S CAR - DAY

Satisfied, Darla drives out of the lot. Before she can grab pole position, Grady and Dealer pull out from around the building. An unsuspecting Darla pulls up behind them.

INT. DEALER'S CAR (INTERCUT) - DAY

Grady puts a rock in a stem, prepares to smoke. He and Dealer reach a light. Darla's about to pull up in the adjacent lane.

Grady hits the pipe. Darla pulls up, windows align. When she looks, Grady's nowhere in sight. He lays low under the window-line. Darla, oblivious. Dealer looks at her with haunted eyes.

INT. SCHOOL - DAY

Vanessa and Jocelyn cross paths with football PLAYERS.

KID 1

I'm Jeff; I'm Will's friend. I got
you some cookies from First Street.

(off Vanessa)

Don't be shy.

Vanessa accepts.

KID 1

Let me know if you like them.

They head off.

JOCELYN

What was that?

EXT. STREET - DAY

Grady, sans Dealer, burns time and drugs until Darla arrives.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Grady in a tub with lots of bubbles. Andrew sits on the edge.

ANDREW

Lynda stopped me in the hall and
talked to me. I don't believe it.

Andrew produces paper, hands it to Grady, who hands it back.
He first dries his hands on Andrew's pants, then takes it.

GRADY

What is this?

ANDREW

That assignment my teacher gave us.
That mock college essay I told you
about? She's all amped up about it.

GRADY

These are like the writing exercises
your mom gives me. Juvenile busywork.
You should introduce them.

ANDREW

Yeah, right. Over my dead body.

INT. GRADY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Vanessa searches through Grady's belongings for anything fun.
Finds candy, takes it. Finds his cocaine candles, takes them.

INT. ST. MARTIN'S PRESS - DAY

Darla sits before two SUPERIORS. High on the org chart.

SUPERIOR 1

I noticed that Grady came by.

DARLA

He did. You should've popped in.

(beat)

I told him that if we show an outline,
maybe we can buy some time.

SUPERIOR 1

How is he doing?

DARLA

He's doing well.

SUPERIOR 1

... How is he doing?

Darla, fearing for her job.

DARLA

I don't know.

EXT. SOCCER FIELD - DAY

After school. Soccer practice, outdoors this time. Vanessa plays defense. The action is upfield. As such, she stands near the sideline and negotiates with Will.

WILL

Play football with us. I know you.
You're bored.

VANESSA

You don't know anything about me.

WILL

You're intense; you want a challenge.

VANESSA

I appreciate your friend and his
candy, but I'm not interested.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Caitlin grades papers. Andrew's perched on a desk.

ANDREW

We have a family friend staying with
us. I showed him the assignment, and
he said to give you this.

He hands her a sealed envelope. Caitlin tries to open it.

CAITLIN

Is this a wax seal?

ANDREW

He's different.

CAITLIN

What is he, the Duke of Windsor?

ANDREW

No.

CAITLIN

Is he an Earl?

ANDREW

No.

CAITLIN

Is he a Count?

ANDREW

No, he's just...creative.

CAITLIN

(reading)

Oh, okay... Really...? I understand.

She puts it back in the envelope, drops it in the garbage.

CAITLIN

Time for you to run along and play
Dungeons and Dragons or...Weeknite.
Whatever it is boys do.

ANDREW

Dungeons and Dragons? I play Magic
the Gathering.

CAITLIN

Like there's a difference. I gotta go.

ANDREW

Anything fun?

CAITLIN

Nope. Tutoring session. Tutoring,
tutoring, tutoring. Tu. Tor. Ing.
(beat)
That's a funny word when you say it,
right? Tutoring. Tutoring. Tutoring.

ANDREW

Are you done?

CAITLIN

Sure.

INT. CAR - DAY

Grady and Andrew arrive home, only to find an unknown car
(Caitlin's) in the driveway. It's near Andrew's hockey net.
Andrew sees that a tire has ruined the base.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Ms. Fountain tutors Meghan. Grady appears.

CAITLIN

What are you doing here?

GRADY

What are you doing here?

MEGHAN

You know each other?

GRADY

We met at school yesterday.

CAITLIN

This is awkward.

GRADY

Right? Especially for you... So what
do you teach?

MEGHAN

English.

CAITLIN

Uh, that's Honors English, mind you. I've made the leap. *Gatsby*, *Catcher*, *A Tale of Two Cities*... CliffsNotes.

(beat)

It is "CliffsNotes," by the way, not "Cliff" Notes. Most people say, "Cliff Notes." But it's "Cliffs."

GRADY

Now we know.

Andrew enters and immediately plops face-down on a couch. As a result, he mistakes Caitlin's female form for his sister's.

ANDREW

Vanessa, your friend's piece of shit car is blocking the net.

He flips over. Eyes lock on Caitlin's. Neither of them move.

ANDREW

What I meant to say...

Caitlin looks at Grady, then back at Andrew. The wax seal.

CAITLIN

How do we move on from this?

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Darla, Grady, and the children hash things out.

DARLA

Andrew, I'm concerned about boundaries. She never connected you and Meghan having the same last name?

GRADY

When you made the appointment, you didn't know she was Andrew's teacher from like, parents' night and parent-teacher conferences?

DARLA

No one goes to those things.

ANDREW

There's also the separation of Church and State factor. I saw Mrs. Bell with her family at Costco a few months ago, and it's been weird ever since. She's embarrassed, and I'm embarrassed for her. Plus, she was also wearing jeans.

VANESSA

You adore Ms. Fountain.

ANDREW

I do. Mom, can you cover your ears
and go to the living room?

Darla leaves. Andrew turns to Vanessa.

ANDREW

I need to be able to count on your
vote on this one. I don't wanna be
writing AI porn while my teacher's
here, much less have her pissing and
shitting in the downstairs bathroom.
Cuz you know that's the next step:
Denial, Anger, Bargaining... What's
next? Oh, that's right: Pissing and
shitting in the downstairs bathroom.

Darla enters.

DARLA

You write porn...? AI porn?

ANDREW

You were listening.

GRADY

She should stay for pizza.

VANESSA

Are you trying to fuck Ms. Fountain?

DARLA

Vanessa, go to your room!

Vanessa leaves. Andrew leaves. Comes back, takes Meghan, too.

DARLA

Well?

GRADY

Well what?

DARLA

Are you trying to fuck Ms. Fountain?

GRADY

You think as a writer, I'd ever like
an English teacher? Pillow talk about
split infinitives? Past participles?

DARLA

She's stunning.

GRADY

I suppose. In a conventional way.
If you're into that sort of thing.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Caitlin's flawless face. Darla and pizza arrive mid-scene.

CAITLIN

So, Vanessa: You're a junior, right?
Have you thought about which schools
you want to look at?

VANESSA

I'm applying to Smith. Early decision.

GRADY

What about Harvard-Princeton-Yale,
or schools like Wesleyan? Or even
Berkeley if you wanna stay out here?

VANESSA

I'm applying to Smith.

GRADY

Smith. Hitching your wagon to Smith.

CAITLIN

Do you have a problem with her
attending an all-women's college?

GRADY

No, I just wish she would check out
Wellesley or fucking Mount Holyoke.

VANESSA

He's not like that. He's like other
things, but he's not like that.

GRADY

I want Vanessa to go to Harvard, cuz
not everyone gets to go to college,
much less the top school in the world.

VANESSA

Ms. Fountain, my mom went to Harvard
and my dad went to Harvard. Then they
met at the Harvard Club in Manhattan.

CAITLIN

That's amazing.

VANESSA

It's tragic.

GRADY

I wish you could hear yourself talk.

(MORE)

GRADY (cont'd)

Harvard's racist to all those Asian and Indian kids. And if anyone's gonna benefit from that gross miscarriage of justice, my Asian friends would want it to be you.

VANESSA

I'm not going to Harvard. You can't learn anything from smart people.

CAITLIN

Ultimately it's up to you, and I'm sure you'll get in. But what about safety schools? Do you have one?

VANESSA

... Stanford. Soccer scholarship.

CAITLIN

And you, Sir? What do you do?

GRADY

Uh, I like to play basketball and baseball. I go to the beach a lot. I like to dance. I collect stamps.

CAITLIN

I was asking what you do-do.

DARLA

He's been minimizing shareholder value since 1987.

CAITLIN

No, seriously.

DARLA

No. Seriously.

VANESSA

Grady likes to play baseball in Central Park. He freebases cocaine in the locker room between innings. He claims there's a body/mind energy that informs his writing, but really, he just likes freebasing cocaine.

ANDREW

He also likes cooking...gardening...

GRADY

Why would you tell her that!

(to Caitlin)

I don't want to put you on the spot. I have a question for you...and I'm so curious to hear your perspective.

(MORE)

GRADY (cont'd)
 As a teacher... What've you noticed
 about Andrew that makes him special?
 (beat)
 I'll start.

Caitlin, not expecting an earnest, kind-hearted question.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Andrew takes pizza from the oven. Drops it, cheese side up.
 He stares at it. Decides to put it back on the serving tray.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Vanessa looks at Grady.

VANESSA
 I can't eat pizza. Cook something.

GRADY
 There's a way to ask, fuckgirl.

CAITLIN
 There's also a child in the room.

GRADY
 ... I'm sorry, who are you again?

Darla enters, fills glasses. Andrew enters with the pizza,
 serves. Caitlin stands up to help.

DARLA
 Sit, sit. You don't lift a finger in
 my house. I'm embarrassed it's pizza.

CAITLIN
 Don't be silly. I wasn't expecting
 lobster bisque.

GRADY
 Eating lobster goes against Meghan's
 personal ethics. She lives by a code.
 Listens to a lot of dude-bro podcasts.

CAITLIN
 Why don't you like lobster?

MEGHAN
 You tell her.

GRADY
 She doesn't defend her views.
 Basically, lobsters mate for life.
 Did you know that?

VANESSA
 Everyone knows that.

GRADY

I didn't know; neither did she. Sue us.

DARLA

Please do not. It's a sore spot lately.

GRADY

Anyway, when Meghan found out, it put a stop to lobster for all of us.

CAITLIN

Just lobster?

GRADY

A rabbit or a calf, they're cute, but they're not monogamous. They don't form a pair bond. But every time you eat a lobster, you're robbing another lobster of its life partner.

MEGHAN

Isn't that sad?

GRADY

Mountain lions are monogamous. Foxes ...wolves...ducks. You don't eat ducks, either, do you Meghan?

MEGHAN

No. They're also more greasy than chicken... They are cuter, though.

CAITLIN

That factors in?

MEGHAN

I think so.

ANDREW

Prairie voles are monogamous.

VANESSA

Marmosets.

MEGHAN

I like your outfit, Ms. Fountain.

CAITLIN

Do you?

MEGHAN

Oh, yeah. It's totally boss.

Feeling at home, Caitlin smiles.

INT. BOOKSTORE - NIGHT

Vanessa is in the stacks. Will approaches.

VANESSA

Are you stalking me, William?

WILL

It's "Will." And no, I'm with my mom. We just came from practice.

VANESSA

You're here with your mom?

WILL

Yeah, everyone's waiting for me... Listen, you gotta help us out. We're 0-8, but we've lost three games by less than a field goal. It's about kicking under pressure, and no one on the boys' soccer team has the goods. Your coach thinks you can do it, our coach thinks you can do it, and as far as the guys go, everyone knows you have the best legs on the team.

VANESSA

I have the best "legs" on the team?

WILL

I meant what I said. You have the best legs on the team. Your kicking leg and your plant leg.

VANESSA

I'm not gonna be that girl.

WILL

No, you're not. And it's too bad.

(beat)

My mom's tired. Everyone's waiting.

Will leaves. Vanessa eyes books, then looks for Will at the door. He reaches MRS. HERZOG, FOOTBALLERS. They're smiling and carrying on. They lack the angst that her family is steeped in.

Will turns, waves. Vanessa waves back sarcastically, so as to counteract the almost off-putting kindness. Will's mom thinks Vanessa is waving to her, as do Footballers. So they all wave. Vanessa can't help but be charmed.

LATER Darla eyes a HANDSOME MAN. His PARTNER is obscured.

HANDSOME MAN

When I used to see a woman with a ring on her finger, I had to superimpose myself onto her to figure out if she was married or not. I had to imagine my body rotated 180 degrees to sit in the same position she was in.

(MORE)

HANDSOME MAN (cont'd)
 Then I could match up my left hand
 with her hand left to see if she was
 single.

Darla smiles, until his Partner appears. Darla bites her lip.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

As he did earlier, Andrew works on a portrait of Lynda.

INT. CAR/EXT. DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Grady sits in the front seat, covered in grease. Engine work.

He takes out a vial. Grady dips a key, sniffs coke. Soon,
 Andrew appears. He settles into the back seat.

GRADY
 You working on the Art Show?

ANDREW
 I need your help with the mock
 college essay for Ms. Fountain.
 (beat)
 What do you think about her?

GRADY
 She's a thoughtful person.

ANDREW
 She's ridiculously pretty.

GRADY
 I'm not moved by a girl's appearance.

ANDREW
 Oh, God. That's something chads say
 when they date the prettiest girls
 in the world. I think she likes you.

GRADY
 ... "Like" is a strong word.

Grady exits to work on the engine. Andrew follows him.

ANDREW
 If Diane were still alive, she'd
 want you to move on with your life.

GRADY
 Maybe. She'd also appreciate that I
 can't just move on from her so easily.

ANDREW
 ... Why did you get into cocaine?

GRADY
 It helped focus the writing.

ANDREW

When did you get into cocaine?

Concerned, Grady wipes his dirty hands with a rag.

ANDREW

In New York, I saw your boy Frankie.

GRADY

... What did he say?

INT. HOUSE - MORNING

Meghan, in uniform, blends a shake for her softball game.

EXT. FIELD - DAY

The family sits in the bleachers. A foul ball is hit.

TEAMMATES

Holy cow / the ball went foul /
Mooove it over / Hey-hey, whaddaya
say / Hit that ball the other way /
Hit it high, hit it low / Hit it down
to Mexico!

In the dugout, Meghan and her TEAMMATES sing more cheers.

TEAMMATES

We don't play with Barbie dolls /
We just put the bat to the ball /
We don't wear no miniskirts / We just
wear our pants and shirts / We don't
drink no lemonade / We stick to our
Gatorade.

Andrew sees Lynda across the way. She sees him, too.

TEAMMATES

Strawberry shortcake / Banana split /
We make your team / Look like / Shift it
to left / Shift it to the right / Stand
up / Sit down / Fight! Fight! Fight!

EXT. STAND - DAY

Andrew's in line to buy a snack. Lynda saddles up to him.

LYNDA

Hey. Why didn't you come over to me?

ANDREW

What?

LYNDA

I saw you during the game. We know
each other now; don't be shy.

ANDREW

I didn't say hello cuz Rob Hildreth was right there. I don't wanna deal with that... I would be embarrassed to admit that I'm being bullied, but he's probably hurting inside... Also, if he messes with me and I ignore it, he won't get bored and move on to the kids who can't handle it.

EXT. SOFTBALL FIELD - DAY

After Meghan's game, Lynda underhands softballs to Andrew.

LYNDA

Why don't you just stand up to him?

ANDREW

There's a lot of after school special, propaganda bullshit about how all bullies are cowards. And if you just stand up to them, they'll respect you.

LYNDA

Yeah. Just walk into school, first period, and punch him in the mouth.

ANDREW

This isn't prison, this is high school. This is real life.

LYNDA

Girls want men, Andrew. Not boys.

ANDREW

I'm fifteen.

LYNDA

It's the principle behind it.

She underhands a softball. He hits it, but meekly.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Grady reads from a marble notebook. Enter Darla.

DARLA

We need to have a conversation.

GRADY

I'm editing.

DARLA

You need to write; I can't cover you any longer. And they will sue you. St. Martin's has hungry, in-house counsel.

(MORE)

DARLA (cont'd)
They're like desk duty cops who
haven't seen any action in years.

GRADY
They're sharks?

DARLA
Yeah. And you're chum in the water.
They can't wait to sue a piece of
shit like you.

GRADY
... I always wanted to be a lawyer.

DARLA
You'll be blackballed. Even if you
write the Great American Novel.

GRADY
What if I already did?

INT. FOYER - DAY

DOORBELL. Grady answers. It's Caitlin.

GRADY
Hi, can I help you?

Caitlin offers a megawatt smile.

CAITLIN
You know what your problem is? You
have a lot of unearned confidence.

GRADY
Is that my problem?

CAITLIN
It's one of them.

GRADY
Sarcasm is the lowest form of wit.
It has its place, but in this house,
I review applications for a permit.

Caitlin brushes past him.

CAITLIN
Sorry, slugger. There's a new Sheriff
in town.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - DAY

Grady and Andrew play "Asses Up" against the garage door.

ANDREW
"Girls want men, Andrew. Not boys."

GRADY
That's what she said?

ANDREW
That is what. She fucking said.

GRADY
But you're fifteen.

ANDREW
I know. I'm too old for this shit.

GRADY
When I got arrested, you know what
the cop who took my prints said?
(off Andrew)
"This too, shall pass."

ANDREW
I'm sure that was comforting.

GRADY
It wasn't. But in retrospect, it
was kinda profound.

ANDREW
Everything's kinda profound in
retrospect... It sucks, cuz I
have Lynda whispering advice in one
ear, Mom in the other --

GRADY
You told your mom about this?

ANDREW
I'm a Mama's boy; you know that.
(beat)
Besides. I have nothing to hide.

Andrew throws the ball against the wall. Grady fields it.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Grady works on a crossword puzzle. Darla prunes a plant.
Enter Caitlin and Meghan.

GRADY
Ms. Fountain. You're Irish, right?
I'm Irish.

MEGHAN
You're not Irish; you're Jewish.

GRADY
Woah. Ease up there, Fraulein; I'm
half-Jewish. And don't say it like
it's a bad thing.

CAITLIN

She didn't mean it like that.

GRADY

Maybe not, but the little brown-shirt's tone was concerning, no?
(beat)

Anyway. I was just telling Darla about my best friend from rehab, this kid Lashaun Scantlebury. Lashaun was obsessed with blonde-haired girls; that's all he ever talked about. Thing is, he was only interested in blondes who are Irish, cuz he says there's a sociocultural hierarchy of blondes. With Nordic girls at the top, German girls in the middle, and Irish girls at the bottom. Now, this is Lashaun speaking, not me. But his whole attraction was based on his theory that that blonde Irish girls are like the n-words of blondes.

At the sink, Darla closes her eyes.

ANDREW

You're an asshole.

DARLA

You're the asshole. Go to your room.

ANDREW

I'm the asshole? I'm the asshole?

He gets up, then places his hand on Vanessa's shoulder as a means of dramatically addressing her.

ANDREW

He just called my English teacher the n-word, and I'm the asshole.

DARLA

Grady, what was the point of that? To make her uncomfortable?

GRADY

I'm sorry.

DARLA

You're not. And why is people's pain fodder for your punchline?

Grady taps his pencil against the newspaper.

GRADY

The reason I asked if I she's Irish
was because of the crossword puzzle.
(to Caitlin)
What's an eight-letter word for
"bagpipes"?

CAITLIN

(beat)
Warpipes. And bagpipes are Scottish.

GRADY

They're originally Irish.

CAITLIN

They're originally Persian... And I
am Irish, by the way.

GRADY

I thought so. I'm from Long Island,
which is -- you know -- everything
you've imagined and more, so, I do
know a few things when it comes to
Irish girls... Irish girls...are
always right.

Caitlin calls back to Lashaun.

CAITLIN

You went to rehab?

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Grady and Grady exit the house, stand on the porch. Grady
slaps his salt-and-pepper notebook against his hands.

CAITLIN

Do you want to maybe...do something
tomorrow night?

GRADY

You don't mean like a date, right?
Cuz I'm not in a place where I --

CAITLIN

Not a date, no... God no... I just
don't get to spend time with people
my own age. You're in the same
boat, and to be honest, I'm bored.
Also... You seem like a good person
for me to complain about things to.

GRADY

I'll ask Darla.

CAITLIN

It was her idea. She gave me the skinny on you when you were in the basement. Let me give you my number.

GRADY

I have it... I mean, I don't have it, I just don't need it. Darla's got it.

CAITLIN

Cool. Call or text when you're free.

GRADY

I'll call you... I'll call at three.

Caitlin sees he doesn't play games. Heads to her car. Turns.

CAITLIN

One more thing... Date or no date?

(beat)

I'm a flowers and candy kinda girl.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

The family eats dinner.

DARLA

This is nice. When was the last time we all ate together?

VANESSA

... There's a football game the same night as the Art Show. Does anyone wanna walk over after Andrew's done?

DARLA

I'll probably be tired.

(to Grady)

Do you wanna talk about the meeting?

ANDREW

You have to go to another meeting tomorrow. It's a daily thing.

DARLA

He's going... I read that 80% of addicts relapse within 72 hours of leaving a treatment center.

GRADY

It's less than that. I'm sure you read that somewhere reputable, but it's less than that.

His thinly veiled confession goes unnoticed.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Grady wanders the stacks. Arrives at Doris Lessing's *Canopus in Argos: Archives*. He pulls it from the shelf.

LATER Grady copies a passage. He soon produces a vial, heads to the bathroom, and enters a stall. He slides the slab lock.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Andrew and Vanessa play ping-pong with Jocelyn.

ANDREW

17-5, yours.

VANESSA

17-4.

ANDREW

Fine, 17-4.

VANESSA

No, not "fine." I want you to understand that it's 17-5.

Andrew smiles. They play.

JOCELYN

What's going with you and Will?

VANESSA

William? He's not on my radar.

JOCELYN

He's so cute.

VANESSA

He's not my type.

ANDREW

He's really down-to-earth, Vanessa.

VANESSA

I don't like down-to-earth. I want a boy with their head in the clouds. With dreams... Come out with us.

ANDREW

What are you doing?

VANESSA

We're going to the pool hall. Your girl Lynda usually shows up.

ANDREW

Does she?

VANESSA

Come. We never hang out anymore.

Under Grady's influence, the siblings are growing closer.

EXT. NATURE PRESERVE - DAY

Sunset. Grady picks flowers.

INT. GRADY'S ROOM - DAY

Grady gets dressed for Caitlin. Meghan walks in, sits down.

MEGHAN

Why don't you wear your sneakers?

GRADY

I would, but you can't wear sneakers for something like this.

Vanessa enters, sits with Meghan.

VANESSA

I don't like that shirt on you.

GRADY

You wouldn't like anything on me. Besides, you guys lack the male perspective of this sort of thing.

Andrew at the door. Takes in the scene.

ANDREW

Is that what you're gonna wear?

Vanessa/Meghan laugh. Grady shuts the door on Andrew.

INT. DARLA'S ROOM - DAY

Darla's in bed. A hand towel on her face. Grady enters.

GRADY

Are you feeling okay? I can stay.

DARLA

Grady... I'm fat.

GRADY

You're not fat, Darla; you weigh like 130 pounds. Besides: Beauty comes in all shapes and sizes.

DARLA

Are you insane? Women come in all shapes and sizes. Beauty is a much, much smaller category.

Grady sits.

GRADY

I don't want to go out tonight.

DARLA

You can't love yourself until you let go of Diane.

GRADY

People have their demons. You edited a book about mine. My parents didn't give me what parents give their kids, so to write a book? That's conquering demons, and yes, letting go. Allow me some self-pity over Diane, cuz over the years, I've had demons on top of demons.

(beat)

You and your stupid books.

DARLA

You and your stupid you... The two of us are dodo birds that have been selected for extinction. So any urgency I convey is about money, not art. It may be sad, but let's not conflate the two, cuz that's what got us in trouble the last time.

GRADY

I can respect that.

DARLA

You better. Like it or not, Art is Dead; Cash is King. Back to basics.

INT. FOYER - DAY

DOORBELL. Andrew open the door a tiny bit. Peers through. Caitlin SLAMS it against him. Andrew recoils.

CAITLIN

Don't even front. Know your role.

She enters. Meghan appears.

CAITLIN

Hey, chica.

MEGHAN

Hey, girl friend.

ANDREW

Her name is Ms. Fountain.

CAITLIN

Are you jealous that your sister and I are like, bros? While all you have is...Grady? Who may become my friend?

ANDREW

You got the claws sunk in. I see you.

CAITLIN

I won't bring him back too late.
Don't be a jackass.

ANDREW

You're a teacher. You can't curse.

CAITLIN

A jackass is a donkey.

ANDREW

You're a teacher. You can't curse.

Caitlin leans into his ear.

CAITLIN

I can do whatever I want, pendejo.

Andrew holds on her, calls up the stairs.

ANDREW

Hey, Grady? Ms. Fountain is here!
(beat)
And don't keep her waiting! She
totally changed her hair for you!

Mortified, Caitlin closes her eyes. Grady comes down.

GRADY

You showed up.

CAITLIN

Looks that way.

Caitlin sees a vase. Drops her guard.

CAITLIN

You got me flowers?

GRADY

You told me to.

CAITLIN

I was just being sassy. I didn't
expect you to actually get them.

GRADY

I know. That's exactly why I did.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Meghan and Caitlin at the table. Grady at the counter. He opens Tupperware that Caitlin brought.

GRADY

Gingerbread men. Thank you. Are they laced with arsenic?

CAITLIN

Arsenic? Like *Flowers in the Attic*? I always wanted to read that.

GRADY

Have you? Great book. Great book. But yeah, the mom poisons her kids by lacing their gingerbread cookies with arsenic. The kids figure it out after one of the brothers dies, so they escape from the attic and run away. But...you know, not before telling everyone at the reception how their mom tried to kill them all. It's a really good ending. So well-executed.

MEGHAN

You ruined the book for her.

GRADY

She's got tons of unread books at home. Oh, I almost forgot. I made a special flower formula so they stay fresh.

CAITLIN

What's wrong with water?

Grady begins replacing the flowers.

GRADY

Water alone doesn't cut it. You take a quart of water, add one tablespoon of vinegar, one teaspoon of sugar, one teaspoon of mouthwash...then just a little bit of dishwashing detergent. Liquid or powder; doesn't matter. And never put flowers in the fridge if there's fruit in there. Fruit releases ethylene gas, and ethylene gas makes them age faster.

DARLA (O.S.)

Hey Grady?

GRADY

Hey Darla?

DARLA (O.S.)

Do you think you could grab a hold of your sexuality and send Caitlin over?

GRADY

She's funny, right? That was a little inside joke between her and the kids and all. Darla's pretty cool as far as super serious people go.

INT. HOME OFFICE - DAY

Darla pours wine. Caitlin eyes photos of Darla and writers.

CAITLIN

Is this you and...Jeffrey Dahmer?

DARLA

That's right. We did a book together in the 90s. Doubleday sent us to Wisconsin to visit him in prison. Believe you me, I did not want to be in that shot.

CAITLIN

A book? Like what, a biography?

DARLA

I voiced my opposition, believe me. Unfortunately, when you find yourself at the intersection of art and commerce, you recalibrate your moral compass and align yourself with some pretty loathsome creatures.

(beat)

Publishing is ugly people doing ugly business. You don't want to know how the sausage gets made. Literally, in Jeffrey's case... Sit down, sit down. May I pour you a glass of wine?

CAITLIN

I don't know if that's appropriate.

DARLA

(nodding briskly)

Sit down.

Caitlin quickly sits.

DARLA

Ms. Fountain... Do you know why I asked you to take Grady out?

CAITLIN

You wanted him to...get some air?

DARLA

No. I just think he would be less inclined to use drugs if his peer group included people like yourself.

CAITLIN

Oh.

DARLA

But that's not why I asked. At some point, Grady will leave, and I don't know anyone in Los Angeles. I was hoping that if you and Grady became friends, we could be friends, too.

(beat)

We could do...you know...fun things.

CAITLIN

What would we do for fun?

DARLA

Good question... Okay, what are the most expensive restaurants in town?

CAITLIN

Oh, wow. I know a few of the names from reading about them online. That said... I'm not sure if price is the best indicator of quality.

DARLA

Welllll, it's gonna have to do.

CAITLIN

Okay, there's Providence. Urasawa. There's an LA outpost of a French restaurant. Lamb... Lamb Bass...

DARLA

L'Ambassade d'Auvergne du Grenier St-Lazare?

CAITLIN

... I'd have to ask, but that sounds about right. There's also Melisse, Mastro's, WP24 --

DARLA

Let's go there.

CAITLIN

Which one?

DARLA (waving a hand)

All of them.

CAITLIN

Okay. Well I look forward to that.

INT. VANESSA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Grady irons Vanessa's shirt. She considers her involvement in a potential love triangle involving Will and Heather.

VANESSA

You missed a crease. By the collar.

Annoyed, Grady looks at Vanessa. Then back at the shirt.

VANESSA

Grady... Have you ever like, stolen someone's girlfriend?

GRADY

What? That's stupid. Of course not.

VANESSA

You never stole someone's girlfriend?

GRADY

(beat)

You can't steal someone's girlfriend. That assumes that women are property.

VANESSA

I never thought of it like that.

(beat)

Okay. So have you ever...moved in on anyone's girlfriend?

GRADY

Oh, fuck yeah. All the time.

VANESSA

Shifting gears: Monopoly. What would your favorite property be? And please don't say Oriental Avenue.

GRADY

St. James Place. It gets a little love, but not nearly enough.

VANESSA

Are you taking about me?

GRADY

I'm talking about St. James Place. No one gets excited about landing there.

VANESSA

I like Baltic Avenue.

GRADY

Baltic's great.

VANESSA

You don't like Boardwalk?

GRADY

I mean, if you're playing the game, Boardwalk and Park Place are where you wanna be. But they're not cool.

VANESSA

Baltic's cool?

GRADY

It's got street cred. Baltic and Mediterranean are like the low-income housing projects of Monopoly.

He finishes ironing her shirt, tosses it at her.

INT. POOL HALL - NIGHT

Vanessa runs the table vs. Jocelyn. Sees Will, Footballers.

TABLE

Andrew plays with Lynda. Sees his bully Hildreth, looming.

LYNDA

Your sister is really pretty.

ANDREW

That's the feedback I get. But she hates the attention. Sometimes she dyes her hair weird colors cuz she thinks girls in L.A. don't take her seriously as an academic powerhouse.

LYNDA

I wish people wouldn't take me seriously as an academic powerhouse.

As Andrew sets his shot, Hildreth grabs the butt of his stick.

HILDRETH

What's up, Baby GAP? You here with Lynda? She checks me out sometimes.

ANDREW

I bet. I'm sure you're her type.

HILDRETH

Is that supposed to be a back-handed compliment?

ANDREW

It's not supposed to be any kind of compliment.

Hildreth SLAPS Andrew. Will notices, Vanessa doesn't.

ANDREW

Stop.

HILDRETH

Stop? You're such a bitch.

Andrew calmly plunges a dagger.

ANDREW

And you have bad breath. We all bond over it. Would you like to know your nickname? Trust me, you fucking don't. Never ask anyone. It'll break your spirit. The same you break mine.

Hildreth, humiliated. In the distance, a voice:

VOICE

Andrew. "A" for effort? But that shit was mad corny, yo.

Andrew smiles. Hildreth, however, pushes him into a table. More Kids notice. Will calmly heads over. A "Fight! Fight! Fight!" chant breaks out.

Just as Hildreth's about to hit Andrew, Will grabs his wrist. Spins him around. Places him in a wrestling hold.

WILL

You're twice his size.

HILDRETH

I'm choking!

WILL

We have an honor code and it applies everywhere. I am disappointed in you.

Will applies pressure. Hildreth's face turns red. Will releases, Hildreth gasps for air. Will locates, puts an arm around Andrew.

WILL

Let's take a walk.

EXT. POOL HALL - NIGHT

Will sits on a milk crate. Little Andrew rips into him.

ANDREW

What in the fuck did I just fucking watch? "I'm disappointed in you"? Will, you are a linebacker, but you act like you manage a Dairy Queen in Kansas.

WILL

Well you're not in New York anymore.

ANDREW

Thanks for the heads up, you cowardly fucking lion.

WILL

I'm not a coward. I'm a stand-up guy.

ANDREW

I don't care if you're the Queen of Spain! Hit someone!

Andrew calms down. Will offers him a cigarette.

ANDREW

You smoke?

WILL

I do a lot of things... If it means anything, I don't inhale.

ANDREW

Of course you don't. So why bother?

WILL

I don't smoke for the nicotine, I smoke because I'm insecure.

ANDREW

You're insecure?

WILL

... Isn't everyone?

ANDREW

Not guys who date Heather Church.

WILL

You know her?

ANDREW

I don't "know her" know her, but we're both in Chorus. She's nice.

WILL

We're talking about Heather.

ANDREW

I dunno; she seems nice. There's always a joke at my expense, and she's the only person who doesn't laugh at me.

WILL

If she's not laughing, it's not because she's nice. It's because she doesn't get the joke.

ANDREW

Why do you like her? She's pretty?
 (beat)
 Because you're insecure?

WILL

... Why do people call you Baby GAP?

ANDREW

I don't fit into a "Small." All my
 shirts are a "Youth Large." I wear
 children's clothes, so... Baby Gap.
 (beat)
 It's okay if you need to laugh.

WILL

I don't.

ANDREW

I do.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Caitlin drives Grady.

CAITLIN

I'm just curious as to how you're
 inclined towards this feminine world
 of flowers and bunny rabbits and...
 show tunes or what have you.

GRADY

My dad wasn't around much, so an
 appreciation for dance, or a passing
 familiarity with beauty and fashion?
 It was allowed to develop cuz things
 weren't gender specific. There was
 Aunt Mary, Aunt Pat, Aunt Caroline...
 Speaking of Irish women, I'm sorry
 again about that whole Rashaun spiel.
 I was trying to get you to laugh at
 yourself, and I aimed too high. Or
 maybe I aimed too low. It was cruel.

CAITLIN

You forgot something.

GRADY

I'm sorry.

CAITLIN

bell hooks had a lot to say about
 people who find that word funny.
 She'd roll in her grave if she knew
 a black man and a cis white male --

GRADY

What did you just call me?

(beat)

By the way, bell hooks is alive.

CAITLIN

She died in 2021. You can Google it.

GRADY

I don't. You're here now. It's fine.

CAITLIN

... You don't look like a writer.

GRADY

You don't look like a teacher.

CAITLIN

Things have changed since you were young... How do you know bell hooks?

GRADY

Never assume that the men you meet are as boring as the boys you date.

CAITLIN

Did you write that in your special book, or was that a freestyle made just for me? I'm sorry; where are my manners?

GRADY

I think you left them at the house.

CAITLIN

Ooh! I noticed you forgot my candy. It's fine. I was obviously kidding. And the flowers were...appreciated.

Grady reaches into his pocket. Places something on the dash. He pulls his hand away to reveal two Hershey's Kisses.

Caitlin looks at them. Then looks back at the road. She stops at a red light. Takes one of the Kisses. She examines it, then places it back next to the other Kiss.

CAITLIN

You fancy yourself as being quite smooth, don't you?

GRADY

Not really.

CAITLIN

Fancy, fancy, fancy.

GRADY

Hm. Do I tickle your fancy?

CAITLIN

Yeah, you tickle me... I don't know about my fancy, though.

EXT. POOL HALL - NIGHT

Vanessa comes outside, joins Andrew and Will.

VANESSA

Were you guys having a moment?

WILL

We were. It was nice, right?

VANESSA

(to Andrew)

I think there's someone waiting for you in there.

Before heading in, Andrew stops at the door.

ANDREW

Thanks for taking me out, Vanessa. I had such a magical night. I hope we can do this again sometime.

WILL

Wait, that's your brother? I would have helped him with Hildreth before.

VANESSA

It's fine, William.

WILL

It's "Will"... What are you doing right now? You should come with us.

VANESSA

Where?

WILL

Practice... Sunday night practice, under the lights with my old team. Not our prep team; my old high school.

VANESSA

You lost me.

WILL

You need to see how the other half lives, Vanessa. It's like, fun. You met some of the guys; they're great.

(MORE)

WILL (cont'd)

(beat)

It's not practice like we practice here. It's like a block party. It's this family affair on Sunday nights.

VANESSA

Those kids with the candy are there?

WILL

Six of us from our public school team came here to play prep in 9th grade. You're not the only new kids; you're just the newest... I'm not asking you to kick field goals, I'm inviting you to a cookout. And I know you eat meat.

VANESSA

... How does the other half live?

WILL

Well.

VANESSA

Where does the other half live?

WILL

Watts.

VANESSA

I thought Watts wasn't that bad. You say it like it's the barrio.

WILL

A lot of guys live there. It's home, but it's not for everyone... I just want you to feel safe.

VANESSA

I feel safe... Do you?

They hold eye contact.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Will drives Vanessa, Andrew, and Lynda.

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

Grady and Caitlin balance on a see-saw. Eat ice cream cones.

CAITLIN

So your book: I heard about it from Darla yesterday... I've never met a real writer before.

GRADY

Darla's hosting a party for Jonathan Franzen next month. You should come.

CAITLIN

I'd love to. What's he like?

GRADY

Jon's great. I adore him... But yeah, everyone else thinks he's an asshole.

(beat)

Darla actually has a feud going with Nicholas Sparks, cuz...she calls him "Nick." And the only thing Nicholas Sparks hates more than his own fans? Is being called "Nick." Darla knows this, so she does it to tweak him. She'll be like, "This is one of our top writers: Nick Sparks." He gets so upset. It really chaps his ass.

CAITLIN

... I lied to you. I got your book yesterday. I read it in one sitting.

GRADY

Thank you.

CAITLIN

I didn't say it was good.

GRADY

Want me to sign it for you?

CAITLIN

I returned it on the drive over.

GRADY

Okay.

CAITLIN

A line stood out. "The most inspired choice a man can make...is to wander the path to a woman's heart... Sadly, much time has passed since I have last been out for a walk."

GRADY

I made it myself.

CAITLIN

No wonder no one bought your book.

GRADY

The reviews were glowing.

CAITLIN

Gag me with a spoon.

GRADY

It's not Jennifer Egan, but it's better than the trash you peddle. Ethan Frome? Why? Silas Marner? How?

CAITLIN

... What would you write about me?

GRADY

I don't know you.

CAITLIN

Take a stab. First impressions.

GRADY

So...you're a high school teacher. What were you like in high school?

CAITLIN

Use your imagination.

GRADY

(beat)

"Ms. Fountain is the kinda girl who would kiss you under the bleachers... as long as you promise not to tell anyone about it."

They go up and down on the see-saw. With Caitlin's end on the ground, she quickly dismounts, sending Grady crashing down, grade school-style.

EXT. DUCK POND - NIGHT

Caitlin and Grady feed ducks.

CAITLIN

Is being a writer a dream come true?

GRADY

It's more like a nightmare I never want to wake up from. And teaching?

CAITLIN

Teaching is rough. You go in thinking you'll mold these young minds. But it ends up being a perfect complement to one of those flat, suburban marriages.

(beat)

I'm up for tenure. I either get it, or I start over at another school... I don't think I have the right stuff.

GRADY

I'm sure you do.

CAITLIN

I don't. It's a top private school. You need the right car, the right clothes, the right pedigree. And I don't have any of those things.

GRADY

At least you have skills.

CAITLIN

At least you have talent.

GRADY

I can turn a phrase; let's not get carried away. It's not like I'm in a band or anything... You know, I don't think I'll be around long enough for me to consider sleeping with you.

CAITLIN

I wouldn't be intimate with someone unless it's something real. Boys I date don't qualify.

GRADY

Ms. Fountain?

(beat)

It's not a date.

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

Will, Vanessa, Andrew, Lynda. Walk to Sunday night practice. A tailgate of sorts. Happy football FAMILIES get together. Charcoal briquettes and red wine, double dutch and dominoes.

While PLAYERS practice, action occurs at the field goal posts. Folding chairs are set up behind the end zone. FAMILY MEMBERS sit in them. KICKERS attempt field goals. Family Members in the chairs try to catch the kicks.

Each time a kick misses, a hat full of money is passed to the next chair. When Lynda catches a kick, everyone celebrates.

INT. SUPERMARKET - NIGHT

Darla and Meghan shop. SINGLE DAD and SON walk towards them. Both pairs come to the check-out line. Our girls first. After Darla places items on the belt, Single Dad follows suit. The four of them wait. Son kicks Dad, nods towards Darla.

SINGLE DAD

Interesting selection.

DARLA

Pardon? Oh, right. It's high fructose corn syrup night. A.K.A. Girls' Night Out. In, rather.

SINGLE DAD

Same. We're having a Guys' Night.

Darla sees condiments, plus packages of hot dogs.

DARLA

Talk about your sausage fest.

Dad smiles. Soon, he angles to see Darla's food.

DARLA

I'm sorry; did I take something from your pile?

SINGLE DAD

Oh. I was just craning my neck to see if you had a wedding ring on... It's so hard to tell sometimes.

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

Vanessa and Will in the bleachers. Andrew and Lynda, nearby.

WILL

Do you miss New York?

VANESSA

I do. But it's a love-hate relationship. New York is like the dirty uncle that molests you, then pays your way through college.

(off his smile)

Our family friend came up with that. He grew up poor on Long Island, we grew up well-off in New York and Long Island. My neighborhood was more like Beverly Hills, his was more like this. He wrote a book about the differences.

WILL

I wish I could write a book.

VANESSA

My mom used to work for Doubleday, but now she works for St. Martin's. It was a lateral transfer.

WILL

What's a lateral transfer?

VANESSA

It's a demotion... I can't kick field goals, William.

WILL

The guys are all psyched about you.

VANESSA

Like who?

WILL

(avoids saying "Me.")

The game's the same night as the Art Show, and you said you're going. So come Wednesday, support your brother, then walk over to the field. Warm up, kick or don't kick...and get back to your normal life. No one'll care. In 48 hours, whether you join us or not, we're gonna get out there, and we're gonna lose. It's what we do best.

Vanessa, unmoved.

WILL

If you get to kick, it's won't be a game-winner we all remember. It's gonna be in a 4th quarter blow-out. But if you do kick a field goal, you can check the box score tomorrow and see your name in the paper.

VANESSA

... Is that why you play football? To see your name in the newspaper?

WILL

I play for my teammates... And stop calling me "William." It's not cool.

He leaves her in the bleachers, walks to midfield.

EXT. LAKE - DAY

Grady and Caitlin fish for fish. Sit close to one another.

CAITLIN

How'd you end up in rehab?

GRADY

I got arrested, and the choice was either one month in jail or six months in a treatment center. It was Phoenix House, which isn't a rich kid rehab where they sing Kumbaya and play dodgeball before lunch.

CAITLIN

What did people say? Your friends,
family...girlfriend?

GRADY

That was subtle.

CAITLIN

Don't flatter yourself.

GRADY

Friends are supportive. I've only
been in one serious relationship.
The others were platonic friends
that became whatever the opposite
of platonic is. Non-platonic.

CAITLIN

The word you're looking for is
"romantic." How did it end?

GRADY

It just sort of died one day... Ms.
Fountain, don't get any ideas about
me turning into Mr. Right. I'm
ashamed of the things I've done. Of
things I don't even remember doing.

CAITLIN

Despite what they may say, a lot of
girls would settle for Mr. Right Now.
Not me...

GRADY

I don't qualify as Mr. Right or Mr.
Right Now.

CAITLIN

You're Mr. Not Right Now.

Grady smiles.

CAITLIN

I'm funny. I know you don't know me,
but if you asked people who know me
superficially, they wouldn't say I'm
all that funny. But it's sort of a
not-too-secret secret that I'm quite
funny once you get to know me. When I
say things, people don't always laugh?
But I have a great reputation for fun.

GRADY

How is a girl like you still single?

CAITLIN

Hm. I probably spend too much time making voodoo dolls out of people who ask, "How is a girl like you still single"?

GRADY

There are plenty of fish in the sea.

CAITLIN

... We have to stop telling people that there are plenty of fish in the sea. Because that's not true anymore, literally or figuratively.

GRADY

Can I use that in my book?

She turns to him.

CAITLIN

Don't ask. Just go in for the kill.

A moment.

GRADY

I dunno if I'll ever get over the fact that you made me gingerbread men on our first date.

Caitlin gives Grady a kiss on the cheek.

CAITLIN

It's not a date.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Will drives Vanessa/Andrew/Lynda. Lights go down in L.A.

INT. ANDREW'S ROOM - NIGHT

Andrew writes. Enter Grady.

GRADY

How's the essay coming along?

ANDREW

I'm not a writer.

GRADY

Whenever I'm blocked, I just take a sentence from someone else. It sets me on my way, so then I delete that first sentence and replace it later.

ANDREW

How did it go by the way?

GRADY

Not sure. We didn't really do much.
But I can't imagine having more fun
than I did. Do you know what I mean?

ANDREW

I know the feeling.

INT. VANESSA'S ROOM - MORNING

Vanessa gets ready for school. Grady appears, upset.

GRADY

Where are my candles?

INT. N.A. BATHROOM - DAY

Grady sniffs lines. He exits the bathroom...

INT. MEETING ROOM - DAY

Right into the middle of a meeting he's attending.

LATER It's Grady's turn to share with ATTENDEES.

GRADY

At Phoenix House, they gave us this
definition of "character." They say,
"Character is what you do...when no
one is watching." It struck a chord.
Because it's never about the drugs,
it's about the terrible behavior
that's part of the package when
dealing with people like us. Like me.

(beat)

I don't know how to tell people the
truth. I want to, but don't know how.

ADDICT 1

I find the best way to tell someone
the truth...is to just write it down.

Grady smiles, albeit painfully.

INT. ART ROOM - DAY

Again, Andrew works on a portrait of Lynda. Vibrant colors.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Vanessa and Will collect water samples at a pond. The CLASS
employs microscopes and eye droppers.

WILL

Do you believe in God?

VANESSA

Now that I'm older, I definitely do.

WILL

Assuming there's a Heaven and Hell,
what's your idea of a personal Hell?

VANESSA

What's wrong with you?

WILL

It's called small talk.

VANESSA

Small talk is saying how you messed
up your Math test cuz the Scantron
had bars instead of bubbles. And how
you couldn't change answers cuz your
pencil had one of those hard, Chinese
erasers that don't erase... After we
got home last night, Andrew told our
mom about kicking field goals. If --

WILL

I told him not to; she might not let
you play... Why did he tell her?

VANESSA

He tells her everything... Are you
and Heather going to the Art Show?

WILL

We're taking a break.

VANESSA

Since when?

WILL

... Heather's dad was a tight end in
the NFL, so she acts like a princess
cuz of it.

VANESSA

Heather's dad is Robert Church?

WILL

You know who he is?

VANESSA

Of course I do. He never met a pass
he couldn't drop.

WILL

You know Meredith Sims? Heather didn't
like that we hang out. We go surfing
before school on Tuesdays. Wanna come?

VANESSA

I don't know how to surf.

WILL
Neither does Meredith. That's not
why I hang out with her.

INT. ST. MARTIN'S PRESS - DAY

Grady and Darla evaluate dust jackets hanging on clothespins.

DARLA
Football? Did she think about safety?

GRADY
Right? Like what if she hurts someone?
You're gonna be in enough financial
trouble once you lose your job.

DARLA
Andrew said she's not interested at
all, and I believe it. She's won't
compromise her femininity in the eyes
of boys.

GRADY
Vanessa does not care about that.

DARLA
She wants to make a name for herself,
but football isn't the answer.

GRADY
You're wrong.

DARLA
(beat)
When you Google me, what comes up?

GRADY
Book shit.

DARLA
When I Google you, what comes up?

GRADY
Book shit... And pictures of me with
my shirt off.

DARLA
Pictures of you with your shirt off.
(beat)
What happens when you Google Vanessa?

GRADY
... Is that a trick question?

DARLA
Nothing comes up. She's a blank slate.
She's not gonna fill it with football.

Grady indicates one of the dust jackets.

GRADY

It's weird how writers have no input with covers. You did great with mine.

DARLA

Andrew says you're giving girl advice?

GRADY

He wants to woo her with his writing.

DARLA

And you? How was the meeting?

GRADY

Be it here or Phoenix House, hearing people tell their crazy drug stories? It makes me feel like I didn't get as much out of drugs as I could've.

DARLA

That's not cute.

GRADY

I'm being honest. There are things I wanna tell you, but I don't know how.

INT. HALL - DAY

Vanessa at her locker with Jocelyn. Andrew walks by, taps her, continues walking. Hildreth crosses his path. He knocks Andrew's hat off. As Andrew bends over to get it, Hildreth knocks the books out of his hands.

Hildreth to his locker. Vanessa follows, confronts.

VANESSA

Your name's Rob, right? I'm Vanessa.

HILDRETH

We call you the Long Island Lolita.

VANESSA

What's that supposed to mean?

HILDRETH

Don't tell people you're from New York when you're from Long Island.

VANESSA

Fuck you.

HILDRETH

You're not better than anyone else. You're pretty...but...you look old.

Vanessa had been twirling a flute like a majorette weaponizing her baton. Vanessa BASHES Hildreth's face. He DROPS. Vanessa kneels down.

VANESSA

Now you listen, and you listen good,
because I'm only gonna say this once.

EXT. SHOE REPAIR STORE - DAY

A SUIT sits in a high chair while getting his shoes shined. Darla's in a chair as well, with Grady polishing her boots.

DARLA

We need to see pages.

GRADY

I'm editing; be patient... I'm also kinda sad. Diane's birthday is soon.

The Suit and Buffer finish and clear out.

DARLA

You can't keep mourning Diane. I lost my husband to divorce, and I'm going to lose the kids to college... I won't lose my grip on you.

GRADY

That's sweet. Your best work yet.

DARLA

It is sweet, you ungrateful fuck.

GRADY

Divorce and college are not death.

DARLA

They sure as hell feel like it.

GRADY

Your happiness isn't determined by college...or marriage.

DARLA

You don't know anything about either of those things.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

JOHN GEREMIA (60) on the phone. Vanessa sits opposite him.

INT. KITCHEN (INTERCUT) - DAY

As Grady washes dishes, he lies to Principal Geremia.

GRADY

Darla's away on business, so.

(MORE)

GRADY (cont'd)
I'm looking after the kids.

GEREMIA
I see. "In loco parentis."
(beat)
It means "In place of a parent."

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Soon, Grady and Vanessa sit opposite Principal Geremia.

GRADY
No blood? She didn't break the skin?
(off Geremia)
So it's nothing. Girls will be girls.

Geremia reads from a sheet of paper.

GEREMIA
"Vanessa proceeded to strike Robert with the instrument, sending him to the floor. She then stepped on his neck, knelt down, and said, 'Listen up, and listen good. Because I'm only going to say this once. Laugh at us as much as you like, but people from Long Island run this country. The rest of America is our whore.'"

GRADY
So, there's a lot to unpack here. I think we all could've done without the last line. We'll discuss that at home. Now, punishment.

GEREMIA
Not so fast. Rob's parents are reasonable people, and I did Vanessa the favor of drafting an apology.

He slides a document.

GEREMIA
As I understand it, the football team has two injured kickers. And Vanessa has a proven leg on the battlefield.

INT. HOME OFFICE - NIGHT

Darla works. Grady and Andrew enter.

DARLA
Let me see what you have.

Grades takes a square from his pocket, hands it to Darla.

DARLA

What's this?

GRADY

My writing. I write. I'm a writer.

Darla reads, then name-drops critic Michiko Kakutani.

DARLA

I can hear Michiko now: "Grady Herman's sophomore and sophomoric effort reduces a fine follow-up in the annals of American letters... to that of a cut-rate hack with the prose style of a bright, yet overly emotional high school student."

ANDREW

Why are you looking at me?

GRADY

I think there's something there.

DARLA

"Man is the hunter. Woman is his game. The sleek and shining creatures of the chase, we hunt them for the beauty of their skins. They love us for it, and we ride them down."

GRADY

You're right. When I read it over, I knew I could do better, too.

INT. ANDREW'S ROOM - NIGHT

Andrew and Grady recap Darla's assessment.

ANDREW

Doesn't it bother you?

GRADY

It would bother me if I wrote it. You think I would write that shit? "Man is the hunter, woman is his game"? It was a quote from Tennyson.
(beat)
You know who Doris Lessing is? She's a fucking demon. I stole a passage at the library to get your mom off my ass.

ANDREW

Will she notice?
(off Grady)
How do you know?

GRADY

Your mom is one of the great editors of her generation. She doesn't have time to sit around and read books.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

MUSIC plays. Darla notices the boys through the window.

EXT. BACKYARD - NIGHT

Four socks slowly move back and forth, in time with MUSIC. Andrew and Grady speak quietly and seriously, like lovers.

ANDREW

What if she tries to kiss me?

GRADY

Just close your eyes and follow her lead. Less tongue is better than more.

(beat)

There's a lot of nice things you can do with a girl other than making out and dancing.

ANDREW

Like what?

GRADY

I dunno. Hugging? Holding hands...? Okay, this is important: What's the hottest thing you can ask a girl?

ANDREW

... Her opinion.

GRADY

Nice. I like, "How was your day."

They dance in silence.

ANDREW

Why does Hildreth mess with me?

GRADY

They don't boo nobodies.

ANDREW

He isn't a jock stuffing me into lockers, he's a dirtbag. Things are going great with Lynda, so I should be on cloud nine.

GRADY

No one is on cloud nine. I don't ever expect to be happy. I just want to be.

ANDREW
... You should write a memoir.

GRADY
I've been told that.
(beat)
Andrew, do you want to hear the truth?

ANDREW
Yeah... Tell me.

GRADY
Only assholes write memoirs.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Vanessa eats dinner with Darla and Meghan. Watches sports programming. A HOST explains how to "cork" a baseball bat.

She watches footage of "super balls" spilling from the bat of Graig Nettles in 1974. She puts two and two together.

INT. VANESSA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Vanessa enters, grabs the candlesticks she stole from Grady.

She BANGS them against her dresser. They split in the middle. She does it again. Sees cocaine vials amidst the wreckage.

INT. ANDREW'S ROOM - NIGHT

Vanessa has told Andrew about Grady's use. He studies a vial.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Sun, sand, and surf. Vanessa, Will, and a chubby MEREDITH SIMS (16) relax on their boards. They float on the water.

LATER Will surfs alone. Vanessa and Meredith sit on towels.

MEREDITH
You know what I love about that kid?
He's just so polite. It's a lost art.

VANESSA
I could see maybe being his friend.

MEREDITH
It's a start.

VANESSA
For what?

MEREDITH
You know why he and Heather broke up,
right? I know you guys have been
talking a lot lately.

VANESSA

... Did they broke up because of me?

MEREDITH

No. They broke up because of me.

VANESSA

I'm confused.

MEREDITH

Heather didn't get why Will wanted to spend time with a fat girl. If he hung out with you, she could enjoy the drama of having competition. But me being fat? It meant she had no right to get upset. And that ended up making her seriously upset.

VANESSA

You're not fat, Meredith.

Seagulls cry out. Meredith smiles.

MEREDITH

When fat girls have to hear pretty girls tell us we're not fat... It makes us feel ugly.

INT. SCHOOL LIBRARY - DAY

Andrew sits with a copy of the literary journal *Granta*. He plagiarizes/adjusts a story. The byline: Grady Herman.

EXT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Caitlin smuggled in Grady. They furtively enter a space.

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

Grady looks around. Admires fine furniture.

GRADY

Is this heaven?

CAITLIN

No. It's the teachers' lounge.

LATER Caitlin picks from a box of Animal Crackers.

GRADY

Tell me something I don't know about you.

CAITLIN

There are 15 animals in the Animal Crackers cookie zoo.

(MORE)

CAITLIN (cont'd)

A lion, monkey, elephant, gorilla,
tiger, giraffe, cougar, kangaroo...
Seal, sheep, hippo, zebra, camel...
and bison.

GRADY

No ducks?

CAITLIN

There are also two bears. One is
walking; the other one is seated.

GRADY

Telling me about Animal Crackers is
something I don't know...as opposed
to something I don't know about you.

CAITLIN

I'm not too good at this game...
You mentioned your dad not being
around much. What's the story there?

GRADY

My father left when I was a kid. He
got re-married, and I think he lives
in Colorado now. My mom drinks a lot,
and she sees me as a reminder of him.
I guess that's why the drugs started.
Dad jets, Mom struggles, Grady's sad.
That's why Darla has looked after me.

CAITLIN

My dad was a dentist. He worked at
home. My mom was a teacher, too, so
she worked outside the home. And I
guess when I was around 10 or 11, she
began to think he might be cheating on
her. So one day, when he was at home
and she was at school, she sent him
flowers with a card that said, "I love
you." That's it. Just, "I love you."
Sadly...when she got home that night,
the flowers were nowhere to be found.
And my dad never said mentioned them.
And that's when she knew.

GRADY

Jesus. You are good at this game.

CAITLIN

I've had a lot of practice. The men
in my life always seem to have more
than one set of eyes.

GRADY

I'm sorry. I wish I could teach,
and you could stay with Darla.

CAITLIN

It'd be a good trade for both teams.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

Vanessa practices with the team. Spends time with Will.

INT. GRADY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Grady edits. Darla enters, references Principal Geremia.

DARLA

In loco parentis?

GRADY

It means, "In place of a parent."

DARLA

... Parenting isn't a theory that's
20 years on the horizon. It's about
what's happening here and now. And
if you're not actively helping me,
then you're actively hindering me.
Is something going on with you?

GRADY

You wouldn't be suspicious if there
was.

He hands Darla more fake, plagiarized pages. She leaves.

GRADY

It's because her dad can't see her.

(beat)

The reason Vanessa doesn't want to
play football is cuz her dad won't
be there to see her play. Half the
sport is fathers and sons bonding.
That's why she didn't agree to play
until the principal forced her hand.

DARLA

Did she tell you that?

GRADY

She doesn't have to. She's my
friend, and we've both been there.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Coach walks with Vanessa and Will. Welcomes her aboard.

COACH

Vanessa, after tomorrow, it's vital that you realize my commitment to you extends beyond the field. If you ever need anything, and I find out that you didn't come to me or my wife for help? We will have heavy hearts.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Caitlin at her desk. Sees Andrew in the back, drawing Lynda.

CAITLIN

Are you ready to meet your maker?

ANDREW

How come the meaner you are to me, the more I respect you?

CAITLIN

I'm a role model, I'm dope...and more clever than anyone you know.

ANDREW

You're right. Of course, in four months I'll be 16. And you'll be four months older.

CAITLIN (smiling)

Thank you, Andrew.

ANDREW

Four months older than however old you are now. Nowhere near...26?

CAITLIN (smiling)

Thank you, Andrew.

ANDREW

Nowhere near...36?

CAITLIN (still smiling)

I'm gonna count to three.

Laughs. Andrew heads to the front. Reads "his" college essay.

ANDREW

The expectations I have for love are not often met, as the majority who express their interest are either exceptionally brilliant and not particularly attractive, or exceptionally attractive and none too bright.

(MORE)

ANDREW (cont'd)

The precious few who toe the median on both qualities, and express slight-to-moderate interest in befriending me, are invariably matriculating at St. Ann's or Stuyvesant. Or, as is equally the case, have children who are. These mothers of high esteem and higher privilege, live with their families in old money brownstones and hand-me-down townhouses.

Caitlin grabs the *Granta* that Andrew plagiarized/alterred. Finds "Freeport" by Grady Herman. A finger follows along.

ANDREW

I live in a three-bedroom walk-up with one parent and two sisters. Our home lies among theirs, in the worst building with the most tenacious roaches on the wealthiest half-mile in America. After school on weekday afternoons, the Village sidewalks are dotted with socialites and their loved ones. The women, domesticated artists and standard-issue wives of the Seven Sisters among them, follow their Percocet sponsored naps with late lunches at Babbo. Over my left shoulder, a lone ingénue pretends to consider bath and body solutions as she poses for herself in the window of the L'Occitane boutique. And to my right, a mother and daughter wait on a sheet of brownies, as a nanny divides it with a plastic fork. Of the trio, one of them is gazing at me with a helpless, hopeless expression of both resignation and want. Slowly, a moment passes, and she turns away, aware that she's been smiling.

(beat)

I'm not going to college. I'm going back to New York... Who's with me?

A beat. Lynda smiles, raises her hand. Caitlin is furious.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Meghan and Grady study. Caitlin appears, out for blood.

GRADY

Can I talk to Ms. Fountain in private?

MEGHAN

Can it wait?

Grady pushes her head with his marble notebook.

MEGHAN

But it's Nancy Drew! You love Nancy!

GRADY

Nancy Drew is the biggest prude in the history of young-adult fiction, a'right? That's all you need to know.

MEGHAN

But she's about to crack the case!

GRADY

Meghan: If the girl dated Ned Nickerson from 1931 until 1985 without ever going past first base, she can wait fucking two minutes for me and Ms. Fountain to have a fight.

She leaves. Grady sees the cover: *The Secret of the Old Clock*.

GRADY

Meghan.

Grady taps the cover, then calls back to *Flowers in the Attic*.

GRADY

The minute hand on the clock points to where the minister's body is buried. Bess and George figure it out and tell Hannah Gruen, Hannah Gruen tells Nancy, and Nancy pins it on the farmhand. He used a shovel, I think. I don't remember it that well.

MEGHAN

I hate you!

She leaves. Grady holds on Caitlin, raises a finger. Soon, a door SLAMS in the distance. It opens, then SLAMS again.

CAITLIN

Does Andrew know what he's done to himself? What he's done to me?

GRADY

What are you talking about?

CAITLIN

Does he think I'm so stupid that I wasn't gonna read everything you've written? I told you how I'm up for tenure. How I'm not layoff-proof. If he gets expelled, I take the fall.

INT. DARLA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Grady, hashing out the situation with Darla.

GRADY

I copied the last batch of pages from Doris Lessing. The quote you criticized was from Tennyson. Andrew knew...and probably just ran with it.

DARLA

... You have to fix this.

INT. HALLWAY (INTERCUT) - NIGHT

Listening on the other side, Vanessa presses her ear to the door, while Meghan enlists the aide of a tall drinking glass.

GRADY

Granta's circulation is 50,000. And if you Google me or the story, nothing comes up. He didn't think she'd get a copy of it.

DARLA

So if he cheated and got away with it, it would've been alright?

Grady thinks.

DARLA

It would not have been alright you fucking dickhead!

Darla walks backwards towards the door. Once there (still facing Grady), she KICKS it with the bottom of her foot. On the other side, Vanessa and Meghan go TUMBLING down.

DARLA

Do you know how much trouble he's in?
(beat)

I'm in trouble for believing in you. What your mom never said about your writing, it doesn't matter. What Ms. Fountain says, that doesn't matter. Unfortunately, sales matter... What the critics say, it does not matter.

GRADY

It's the **only** thing that matters!

A silence descends.

DARLA

I purchased this house with my own money.

(MORE)

DARLA (cont'd)
 Not with family money, and not with
 my ex-husband's money. I purchased
 this house with my money.

(beat)
 Let this be the last time you dare
 raise your voice in it.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Andrew paints a final oil-on-canvas of Lynda.

INT. GRADY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Grady's been busted by Vanessa. She holds up a coke vial.

GRADY
 If you told Andrew about the candles,
 I guess that's why he plagiarized.
 Like, why not? He gets it from me.

VANESSA
 You didn't put him up to it?

GRADY
 I just showed him how I was copying
 stuff myself. And you know how he is
 with keeping things from your mom.

INT. HOME OFFICE - NIGHT

And now, Darla knows. She and Grady sit in silence.

DARLA
 I'm surprised. I shouldn't be.

GRADY
 Don't be surprised when mentally
 ill people do mentally ill things.

DARLA
 May I ask you a question?

GRADY
 Obviously.

DARLA
 Why do you lie to me?

GRADY
 ... Because I care about you.

INT. SCHOOL - MORNING

Caitlin transforms a chalky blackboard with a wet sponge.

INT. CAR - DAY

Darla drives Grady to school to address Andrew's plagiarism.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Grady, Darla sit before Geremia, Caitlin, ADMINISTRATOR.

GEREMIA

Ms. Fountain tells us that you're quite the writer. It seems Andrew agrees... Even if readers did not.

Darla places a hand over Grady's to calm him.

GRADY

This isn't Andrew's fault.

GEREMIA

I's lazy, laissez-faire parenting. The decline of the nuclear family.

Now, Grady places his hand over Darla's.

GEREMIA

Ms. Nathanson, we don't want Andrew to leave our school. Do you know why?

DARLA

Because you'll do anything you can to appease the board? And expelling my son is a strain on the endowment?

GRADY

Darla?

GEREMIA

That's not why.

DARLA

Academia needs boot-licking, bean counters, too. I know the score.

GRADY

Quit while your behind, Darla. Sir? Here's the deal. You brought up my first book. It was sold as a story about drugs, but it was about family.

(beat)

I've have a new a manuscript that's the opposite. A story about family, but it's really about drugs. I've been keeping a secret while writing it, and Andrew's been keeping it, too. He found out from my friend in New York -- Frankie -- that I never used drugs cuz I lost my girlfriend. I use them because I've always used them. I met Darla as my mentor when I was 15, and I used them back then.

(MORE)

GRADY (cont'd)

(beat)

With Andrew and his sisters, since they were born, I've left stuff in their rooms, forgot to pick 'em up, everything. People in my life know. Everyone but Darla knows the truth.

GEREMIA

You've written about this.

CAITLIN

I don't believe him.

GRADY

I don't expect you to.

CAITLIN

Good, cuz I don't expect anything from you at all... No one does, no one ever has, and no one ever will. Maybe you were a shit kid from the start, and your mom could sense it.

(beat)

That was unfair of me... I'm sorry.

GRADY

Don't be sorry. I just hope...this can serve as...a teaching moment.

CAITLIN

Motherfucker! I knew he would say that!

Grady winks at an ELDERLY ADMIN. She blushes.

GEREMIA

Let's breathe. We'll all be fine.

CAITLIN

Not me, and definitely not him. Have you even met this guy? Do you even go to this school...? Respectfully: Is someone paying you off?

GEREMIA

Respectfully? In a word? No.

DARLA

That's not what I heard.

GEREMIA

Your confession. This manuscript. If the Devil is in the details --

CAITLIN

The Devil is in the details!

(MORE)

CAITLIN (cont'd)
I saw the Devil up close. I looked
him in the eyes. They were gorgeous!

ADMIN
Is there something going on between
you two that we should know about?

	GRADY	CAITLIN
No.		Yes!

GEREMIA
If the manuscript can serve as an
alibi to explain Andrew's actions,
show it to me.

DARLA
I'm sorry. I apologize for my
behavior. Partly. Now, if it's
okay with you, I wouldn't mind
seeing that manuscript first.

GRADY
Sir, I write slowly. In longhand.

DARLA (to herself)
You savage.

GRADY
There's only one copy. I can only
share it with Darla at this point.
(to the Admin)
And her. She's cool.

GEREMIA
If you were telling the truth, you
wouldn't make flippant jokes while
discussing, well, sordid behaviors.

CAITLIN
He would. He's on to the next town.
You won't ever hear from him again.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Grady and Darla walk to the car. See Caitlin following.

DARLA
Make it quick.

Grady and Caitlin converge.

CAITLIN
When Andrew read it, I had to sit
quietly like a fool and listen to
your voice coming out of his mouth.
(MORE)

CAITLIN (cont'd)

You lied to my face, and who cares, but you did it through my favorite kid. You know I struggle with this job, yet you ruined the only joy I get from it.

(leans in)

I can probably kiss tenure goodbye.

(beat)

You live under this assumption that you're unique. But you're just like every other guy: You're very common. That's not a bad thing. You're just not special.

GRADY

I never said I was.

CAITLIN

You implied it. That's worse.

INT. CAR - DAY

Darla drives Grady.

DARLA

The Art Show was supposed to be cause for celebration. And the game.

GRADY

I thought you'd be yelling.

DARLA

I don't know what to do.

GRADY

I'll book a flight out.

DARLA

I have a lot of questions.

GRADY

It's all written down.

DARLA

I'm with Ms. Fountain. I don't believe you, either.

INT. SCHOOL - NIGHT

Art entries are set up. Uniformed Footballers walk through.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Kids clean. Darla gets ready. Phone RINGS. It's Single Dad.

DARLA

Hello...? Good, how are you?

(MORE)

DARLA (cont'd)
 I didn't expect you to call.
 (beat)
 I don't know; I just didn't.

Grady and the kids observe. She calmly swings her door SHUT.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - NIGHT

The game is underway. A Footballer gets TACKLED hard. Grady, Darla, Meghan watch from bleachers. Vanessa, Will ride pine.

INT. SCHOOL - NIGHT

Lynda wanders art exhibits. From a distance, Andrew watches.

Lynda comes to Andrew's work, stops in her tracks. She sees colorful, vibrant paintings of herself.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Lynda stops a STUDENT.

LYNDA
 Have you seen Andrew?

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Andrew walks. Lynda spots him in the distance, follows.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - NIGHT

In uniform, Vanessa and Will stand next to one another.

INT. SCHOOL - NIGHT

As Lynda closes the gap, Andrew feels her presence, turns.

LYNDA
 I saw the paintings you made of me.

ANDREW
 You did?

LYNDA
 Why would you embarrass me like that?

ANDREW
 ... What? I thought you'd like them.

LYNDA
 It's too much. My parents are here.
 They saw them... Everyone saw them.

ANDREW
 I thought you liked me.

LYNDA
 Why? I like guys who are confident.

ANDREW

You know who has confidence? Guys who have been successful with girls and sports since like, first grade... But I totally respect what you're saying. Don't get me wrong. I just figured...

LYNDA

That I like you?

ANDREW

... Do you not think I'm cute?

LYNDA

Of course I think you're cute.

Lynda drops her payload.

LYNDA

I'm just not attracted to you.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - NIGHT

Vanessa and Will. The kind, overly friendly Coach sees her.

COACH

The fuck are you looking at; we're moving the chains! Warm your ass up!

LATER Vanessa practices kicking. Offense nears the end zone.

A Footballer looks at a folding chair. He places the chair behind the end zone, just like in Watts. Andrew, now with his family, notices and heads over.

Seated in chairs, Footballer and Andrew await Vanessa's kick. The field goal unit assembles. Darla looks to Grady.

DARLA

Is this it?

GRADY

It's 4th and goal at the 16. It's a tough kick: 33 yards.

Vanessa's ready. The ball is snapped. She strides and KICKS. The ball is drilled through the uprights.

Andrew and Footballer hug. Facemasks BANG against Vanessa's. Grady and Darla CHEER. Will quietly watches from a distance.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Andrew sits on the floor. Back against a locker, head in hand. Someone approaches. Andrew looks up...sees bully Rob Hildreth.

HILDRETH

Are you crying?

(MORE)

HILDRETH (cont'd)

(beat)

I saw your stuff. You did good.

Hildreth offers his hand. Andrew takes it, and they shake.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

Vanessa exits the girls' locker room in a professional, post-game outfit. Will is waiting in street clothes.

WILL

Hey, champ. How are you feeling?

VANESSA

My name in the newspaper, right?

WILL

Do you need me to carry anything?

VANESSA

I'm alright. I'm glad you pushed me, but don't you dare tell anyone this: It felt...a little anti-climactic.

WILL

What were you expecting, sparks?

VANESSA

Kind of, yeah.

WILL

... I have a thing for you, okay? I think you're a tough, brilliant girl, and I'm only hard on you cuz don't think you have any idea how hard normal girls have it.

VANESSA

(beat)

Why are you dressed like a farmer? Everyone's wearing post-game ties and jackets... Who did this to you?

WILL

I can't afford a suit... I had one, but my brother stretched it out.

VANESSA

... I didn't know that.

WILL

Just stop... Let your guard down a little and people will surprise you. People admire you for the way you look, when you're a model for what people should be like on the inside. You're the coolest...

(MORE)

WILL (cont'd)
I'm just being honest; you're
incredible... But you have to let your
guard down a little.

VANESSA
... I'm only interested in guys who
are cold and dismissive. I'm sorry,
but that's who I am, Will. Love it
or leave it.

A beat. He kisses her. For the first time, Vanessa smiles.

WILL
I like it when you call me William.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Grady packs his things.

INT. ANDREW'S ROOM - MORNING

Andrew holds a deer skull.

GRADY
When I left Phoenix House, I had to
walk along these train tracks to get
to the Montauk station. There were
deer bones along the tracks, so...
(beat)
I don't know what to say.

ANDREW
Me neither.

GRADY
We'll figure it out.

ANDREW
We always do.

INT. VANESSA'S ROOM - MORNING

Vanessa examines a silver heart pin that says "Love."

GRADY
What's more important than blood?

VANESSA
Love... You keep it.

GRADY
It's not real silver. I'm sorry.

VANESSA
I know. I believe you this time.

She stares at it for a while, then pins it on his pocket.

INT. MEGHAN'S ROOM - MORNING

Meghan holds one of Diane's t-shirts. Puts it to her face.

MEGHAN

This was Diane's?

GRADY

It was her favorite shirt.

MEGHAN

It still smells like her.

(beat)

Does it ever go away?

GRADY

The scent?

MEGHAN

The way it feels when you miss someone. Does it ever go away?

GRADY

No... You only miss them more.

INT. CAR - DAY

Darla and Grady drive to the airport.

DARLA

I want to read the manuscript.

GRADY

You can read it when I'm gone.

DARLA

Print me a copy.

GRADY

... There's nothing to print.

DARLA

I knew it.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Caitlin pushes papers. Andrew appears, approaches.

ANDREW

I just want to apologize again.

CAITLIN

I don't wanna hear it.

A moment. Then, Andrew leans down, kisses her on the cheek. Caitlin freezes, wide-eyed. After a beat, she looks at him.

ANDREW

Grady said that when he gets some money together, he'd give me \$500 if I gave you a kiss on the cheek for him. I said I'd never do it for less than a thousand, and he said, "Deal."

EXT. AIRPORT - DAY

Grady and Darla stand in the same spot where they first met.

DARLA

Call me as soon as you land.

GRADY

Have fun on your date.

DARLA

Any advice?

GRADY

Make sure he's good to you.

DARLA

Obviously.

GRADY

Darla.

(beat)

Make sure he's good to you.

DARLA

I will. What else?

GRADY

Gingerbread men. Can't go wrong.

DARLA

You're my oldest baby. You know that, right...? I love you, Grady.

GRADY

I love you, too.

He puts down his bags. They hug, and Grady begins to cry.

INT. CAR - DAY

Darla arrives home. Andrew approaches her window.

ANDREW

How was it?

DARLA

Things tend to work out in life.

She extends a marble notebook, assuming it's his.

ANDREW

That's not mine.

He heads inside. On the passenger seat, Darla sees several marble notebooks. She then picks one up, opens it. Grady's writing covers page one. Darla flips pages. They're filled from top to bottom. She picks up another notebook and sees:

More writing. Darla closes the notebook, looks at the cover.

The Amazing Adventures of the Monogamous Duck. Darla smiles, and we flash back to four scenes featuring marble notebooks. Grady was always finished, just editing like he said he was.

INT. AIRPORT - DAY

About to board, Grady sees a wall of phones. GREETER smiles.

GREETER

Come see us again.

GRADY

I will.

Soon, Grady stops boarding. He takes out his phone, dials.

INT. APARTMENT (INTERCUT) - DAY

Caitlin answers her phone.

CAITLIN

What do you want?

GRADY

I'm sorry, I just...

CAITLIN

What?

(beat)

What?

GRADY

... I don't know your name.

CAITLIN

I don't understand.

GRADY

I don't know your name... At first it was cute that I called you Ms. Fountain. But then I realized that I never asked you your name.

CAITLIN

... It's Caitlin.

GRADY

Caitlin Fountain. That's such a beautiful name.

Grady calls back to his Page 1 beautiful/genius statement. Ms. Fountain, in turn, is no match for the oncoming tears.

EXT. PHOENIX HOUSE - DAY

Dr. Rosen stands near the garden he and Grady walked in. Previously, an Alto sang, "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing."

SOPRANO (V.O.)

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound /
That saved a wretch like me / I once
was lost, but now am found / Was
blind, but now I see.

A van pulls up. Grady steps out.

INT. PHOENIX MEETING ROOM - DAY

Residents, packed in the meeting room. Grady observes.

SOPRANO

'Twas grace that taught my heart to
fear / And grace my fears relieved /
How precious did that grace appear /
The hour I first believed.

Female Residents join the Soprano.

RESIDENTS

Through many dangers, toils and
snares / I have already come / 'Tis
grace hath brought me safe thus far /
And grace will lead me home.

Male Residents join the women. A hopeful Grady smiles.

RESIDENTS

Yes when this flesh and heart shall
fail / And mortal life shall cease /
I shall possess within the veil /
A life of joy and peace.

THE END